

The Rebellious 1960s via the Prosperous 1990s: Youth, Modernity and Consumption in Antonis Kokkinos' *Τέλος εποχής* (*End of an Era*) (1994)¹

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This article explores the movie Τέλος εποχής (End of an Era) by Antonis Kokkinos (1994), a key film in the regeneration of Greek cinema in the mid-late 1990s. The film constitutes a form of public history construing and problematizing relations between the images and the historical past, exploring the dictatorship (1967–74) through the consumer-oriented values of the 1990s. By scrutinizing historical (dis)continuities (similarities, differences, and transformations in consumer politics and sexuality in particular) between the dictatorship and the 1990s, the article argues that, focusing on 1960s youth, End of an Era underplayed the dictatorship's authoritarianism and (re)defined politics through the availability (or not) of consumer choices, expressing the relaxed ideological climate of the 1990s.

Keywords: cinema; Greek dictatorship; Greek 1990s; youth; consumption; modernity

Introduction

In a 2015 article, the journalist Alex Proud described the British 1990s as a decade that had started as one of confined opportunities and evolved into one marked by an easygoing attitude, a desire for (often conspicuous) consumption, and a hedonistic and optimistic climate like that of the 1960s.² The Greek 1990s were comparable:

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2 A. Proud, 'Why the Nineties were just as good as the Sixties', *The Daily Telegraph* (21 September 2015). For the optimistic 1990s see J. E. Stiglitz, *The Roaring Nineties* (London 2003); R. González Férriz, *La trampa del optimismo. Como los años 1990 explican el mundo actual* (Madrid 2020).

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bookended by a political crisis at the start of the decade and later marked by desires for modernization and rising living standards.³ This climate influenced the period's public history (the production of historical discourses outside the academic realm), manifestly including representations of the past in art and the media.

History is constructed in the way we anticipate, perceive, interpret and narrate facts in relation to past and present.⁴ There is a rich literature on film as a medium of (re) construction of the past and as a form which reflects the historical and cultural context of its production time.⁵ In the 1980s, Pierre Sorlin argued that history is built and shaped by the media, while cinema influences this process by providing historical 'facts' to viewers.⁶ Eleftheria Thanouli too has recently argued that films narrate and explain the past through a set of narratives, and argumentative and ideological mechanisms. Films do not pretend to objective representation of the past, but construe relations between images and the historical past.⁷

My discussion from a historical vantage-point examines a commercially successful film of the 1990s which narrates aspects of everyday life in the 1960s, scrutinizing the continuities and discontinuities between these two periods and examining how the film's view of the 1967–74 dictatorship contributed to its success. I explore its visions of the rebellious 1960s in the prosperous 1990s, arguing that *End of an Era* approached the dictatorship with a view to underlining the continuities between these two historical periods, especially in perceptions of modernity through consumption. Underplaying the authoritarian aspect, the film highlights the young generation's innate drive for defiance, manifested through a fascination with Western consumer trends. This choice was likely to appeal to viewers during a period when modernity was largely perceived as a consumer-oriented process focused on the embracing of popular Western cultural references.

The dictatorship has preoccupied historians, political scientists and other scholars, especially in the last two decades, yet a focus on cultural history remains marginal.⁸ Since the 1980s, the public sphere has often approached the dictatorship with a focus

3 The crisis started in 1988 when members of the PASOK government were implicated in a scandal of embezzlement in companies owned by the businessman Yiorgos Koskotas, and a proportional representation electoral law which made the formation of a stable government difficult. After three elections between June 1989 and April 1990 the conservative New Democracy party obtained a narrow majority: see Y. Voulgaris, *Η Ελλάδα της Μεταπολίτευσης, 1974–1990. Σταθερή δημοκρατία σηματοδωμένη από τη μεταπολεμική ιστορία*, (Athens 2001) 343–83.

4 H. Kouki and A. Liakos, 'Narrating the story of a failed national transition: discourses on the Greek crisis, 2010–2014', *Historiein* 15:1 (2015), 49–61 (esp. 49).

5 See R. Rosentone, *Visions of the Past. The challenge of film to our idea of history* (Cambridge, MA, 1995); E. Thanouli, *History and Film: A tale of two disciplines* (London 2018) 1–20.

6 P. Sorlin, 'Historical films as tools for historians', *Film and History* 18:1 (1988) 2–15 (esp. 2).

7 Thanouli, *History and Film*, 14–15, 87.

8 For the historiography of the dictatorship, see C. Tsakas, '21^η Απριλίου 1967. Τι (θα έπρεπε να) γνωρίζουμε 20 χρόνια μετά;', *Τα Ιστορικά* 65 (2017) 107–30.

on its kitsch aesthetics.⁹ This viewpoint led to the demarcation of a kind of ‘stylistic’ borderline between a kitsch authoritarian past and a more ‘tasteful’ democratic sequel. Such approaches saw the dictatorship as an archaizing parenthesis within a wider postwar period marked by the dynamics of modernization. *End of an Era* deviated from this norm, opting instead to portray the dictatorship as a period during which Greek consumer politics were already influenced by international trends. The film saw modernity as a powerful bottom-up process linked to cultural consumption, which the dictatorship failed to interrupt.

According to Lucy Delap, modernity tends to stress discontinuities between the past and the present, and is a blunt tool to uncover older phenomena which societies rework.¹⁰ Modernity is a non-linear, ever-changing process whose analytical valence is weak unless historically located. Western societies often valorize tradition as a call for a return to simpler, less sophisticated lifestyles. In Mediterranean societies, where attachment to tradition is strong, meanings attached to modernity are fraught with anti-modernist tendencies.¹¹ Modernity and tradition are often viewed as antagonistic, as are supporters of modernity who desire relations with advanced capitalist economies and supporters of tradition who view such contacts as alienating.¹² Such dynamics seem to largely depend on economic developments, as attested by the fact that the appeal of Westernization intensifies in prosperous times. (The financial crisis of the 2010s, on the other hand, showed that in times of hardship people tend to embrace tradition and institutions such as the nuclear family.)¹³ Historicizing the power of the desires for modernity in Greek society, this article argues that, despite substantially different political conditions, both the 1960s and the 1990s represented periods of economic growth during which desires for convergence with the West through the adoption of consumer trends were powerful. The impact of *End of an Era* is explored within this historical landscape.

My discussion unfolds in five stages. First, it presents the film’s importance, its reception and the ways in which it influenced Greek cinema; I then historicize the scenario, highlighting how the film was a comment on modernized lifestyles. I go on to argue that the modernizing trends of the 1990s were primarily focused on alignment with Western consumer culture, as earlier in the 1960s. I then discuss how the film frames the military regime’s failure to implement its conservative cultural agenda. Finally, I comment on how *End of an Era* highlighted consumer and cultural referents, viewing 1960s modernization in such a way as to appeal to 1990s audiences.

9 J. Kourniakti, ‘From fascist overload to unbearable lightness: Recollections of the military junta as kitsch in postdictatorial Greece’ *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 35:2 (2017) 339–68.

10 L. Delap, *Knowing their Place. Domestic service in twentieth century Britain* (Oxford 2011) 3.

11 V. Argyrou, ‘Tradition, modernity and European hegemony in the Mediterranean’ *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 12:1 (2002) 23–42 (esp. 23–4).

12 N. Diamantouros, *Cultural Dualism and Political Change in Post-authoritarian Greece* (Madrid 1994).

13 For quantitative data see T. Georgakopoulos, ‘Τι πιστεύουν οι Έλληνες το 2017’, https://www.dianeosis.org/2017/03/tpe_2017/ (accessed 14 August 2020).

The film that ended the drought

Released on 20 January 1995, *End of an Era* received positive reviews and won several awards in the Thessaloniki Film Festival (including best film and best screenplay). It screened in international film festivals such as those of Chicago and Karlovy Vary. The film was initially released in five Athens cinemas (four in central middle-class districts) and in one in Thessaloniki, a consumer geography which reveals that distributors felt the film would attract middle and upper-middle class audiences.¹⁴ It was also positively received by the press. The centre-left *Eleftherotypia*, often unsparing in its reviews, saw a lively, humorous, and fresh approach to the passage into adulthood, influenced by British Free Cinema and the French Nouvelle Vague.¹⁵ For the centre-left *Ethnos*, the film explored the 1960s through a nostalgic prism. Kokkinos' intention to evoke nostalgia in viewers (for example, through black and white shots and 1960s style opening credits reminding viewers over forty of the visual culture of their youth) is obvious, and nostalgia aesthetics also marked the film's advertising campaign.¹⁶ Nevertheless, reviewers downplayed Kokkinos' emphasis on issues pertaining to daily life (especially those concerning 'rebellious' consumer choices) sidelined in earlier films dealing with the dictatorship, such as *Λούφα και παραλλαγή* (*Loafing and Camouflage*) by Nikos Perrakis (1984). Such issues were also understated in the (public) historiography of the dictatorship in the 1980s and the 1990s, which focused almost exclusively on student resistance to the regime.¹⁷ *Ethnos* noted the enthusiasm for rock music and cars, but pretty much ignored Kokkinos' fresh approach to the public history of the dictatorship.¹⁸ A key point in the film is that the authoritarianism of the dictatorial regime is underplayed. Violent scenes are absent, and aspects of authoritarianism, like police arrests, are commented upon in dialogues but never depicted on screen. As Periklis (Yiorgos Pырpasopoulos) recalls, 'anxiety was [...] unknown at that time'. Athens is depicted as a peaceful city connected to international culture. The epitome of this rapport is the foreign saxophonist (Andreas Natsios) seen playing jazz in the streets in several scenes: he, not coincidentally, features as the main figure on the film's promotional poster. This choice capitalized on the 1990s ideological climate, when expectations for an easy life were high and visuals of such a lifestyle appealed to wide audiences.¹⁹ Such 'relaxed'

14 'Θεάματα', *Ελευθεροτυπία* (20 January 1995).

15 N. Fenek Mikelidis, 'Παλιές και νέες εποχές', *Ελευθεροτυπία* (20 January 1995).

16 The film foreshadowed the trend for marketed nostalgia which characterises current mediascapes: see K. Niemeyer, 'Introduction: media and nostalgia', in K. Niemeyer (ed.), *Media and Nostalgia. Yearning for the past, present and future* (Houndmills 2014) 1–23.

17 See e.g. O. Dafermos, *Το αντιδικτατορικό φοιτητικό κίνημα 1972–73* (Athens 1992) and Tsakas, '21^η Απριλίου'.

18 C. Mitsis, 'Τέλος εποχής του Αντόνη Κόκκινου', *Εθνος* (20 January 1995).

19 For these expectations of easy life see P. Panagiotopoulos, 'Από την προστατευόμενη στην ανασφαλή δημοκρατία. Κοινωνιολογία της Μεταπολίτευσης υπό το φως της κρίσης', in M. Avgeridis, E. Gazi and K. Kornetis (eds), *Μεταπολίτευση. Η Ελλάδα στο μεταίχμιο δυο αιώνων* (Athens 2015) 335–66 (esp. 344–54).

representations are pivotal in how the film identifies modernity with cultural contact with the West by means of consumption.

The film industry prospered in Greece between the late 1950s and the early 1970s. Television had arrived in the late 1960s, but only became popular after 1970, and cinema remained the most influential mass medium until the early 1970s: domestic producers created 117 films in the 1967–8 season, selling 137,074,815 tickets.²⁰ After 1967, the military regime tightened censorship, promoted military films of dubious aesthetics, and tried to discredit earlier productions.²¹ The regime employed television for propaganda, yet consumers embraced the new medium: by 1971–2 cinemas were closing down.²² By 1974, 69.2% of urban households had a TV set.²³ The years following the restoration of democracy in 1974 were infertile for commercial cinema. Around 1980, there was an attempt by some producers to revive cinema, with piecemeal success before the industry entered a deeper crisis after 1984.²⁴ The popularity of films produced exclusively for the VCR market made conditions even tougher after the year 1985.²⁵ In 1989 (perhaps the worst year since the 1940s) just ten films were produced, and most failed to find distributors. After 1990, the Greek Film Centre gradually began to encourage filmmakers to challenge the dominant trend of the 1980s and to start producing films which did not carry explicit political messages. This policy led to the emergence of new directors such as Layia Yiourgou and Periklis Choursoglou who instigated a shift back to the successful formula of the 1960s. This included a renewed trust in linear narrative, editing which created continuity, the use of the camera as invisible spectator, frames emphasising the characters, the sovereignty of dialogue, placing the object of interest in the centre of the frame, the use of light to designate human figures as carriers of action, audio-to-video synchronization, use of music to invoke emotions in the viewer, construction of a clear cinematic space, use of a linear, chronological structure and continuity between frames so that viewers can easily follow the plot. What such filmmakers sought was to enrich the successful 1960s formula through combining it with subject matter of particular interest to the 1990s, including, significantly,

20 A. Kokkali, 'Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος και αντιδικτατορικό φοιτητικό κίνημα', *Επιθεώρηση Κοινωνικών Ερευνών* 92–93 (1997) 127–50 (esp. 128–9).

21 M. Komninou, 'Τηλεόραση και κινηματογράφος: η διαμάχη για την ηγεμονία στην περίοδο της δικτατορίας', in Y. Athanasatou et al. (eds), *Η δικτατορία 1967–1974. Πολιτικές πρακτικές, ιδεολογικός λόγος, αντίσταση* (Athens 1999) 174–83 (esp. 181).

22 Kokkali, 'Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος', 141. For television in the years of the dictatorship, see G. Paschalidis, 'Entertaining the colonels: Propaganda, social change and entertainment in Greek television fiction, 1967–1974', in P. Goddard (ed.), *Popular Television in Authoritarian Europe* (Manchester 2013) 53–70.

23 V. Karapostolis, *Η καταναλωτική συμπεριφορά στην ελληνική κοινωνία, 1960–75* (Athens 1984) 186–7.

24 P. Alexiou, 'Greek cinema: another tragedy?', *Filmnews* (December 1990–January 1991) 11–12.

25 For this phenomenon, see O. E. Kassaveti, *Η ελληνική βιντεοταινία 1985–1990. Ειδολογικές, κοινωνικές και πολιτισμικές διαστάσεις* (Athens 2014), esp. 163–89.

nostalgia for the past.²⁶ Such elements are evident in *End of an Era*, the first black and white film produced in Greece in decades. Colour TV sets had become commonplace by the early 1980s²⁷ but viewers remained familiar with black and white aesthetics: TV channels regularly screened 1950s and 1960s films.²⁸

The crisis in the film industry persisted into the late 1990s, when commercial TV stations began to claim an active role in film production, using actors who had gained popularity starring in early 1990s successful private television series. Films like *Safe Sex* by Michalis Reppas and Thanassis Papathanassiou (1999) and *Πολιτική Κουζίνα* (*A Touch of Spice*) by Tasos Boulmetis (2003), sold over one million tickets, breaking records that had stood since the 1970s.²⁹ *End of an Era* marked this revival in the mid-1990s as the first Greek film for almost a decade to sell some 200,000 tickets.³⁰ Shortly afterwards, films such as *Ο οργασμός της αγελάδας* (*The Cow's Orgasm*) by Olga Malea (1997) and *Βαλκανιζατέρ* (*Valkanizater*) by Sotiris Gkoritsas (1997), reached similar levels of popularity and were seen by some as a regeneration of Greek cinema.³¹ Further, *End of an Era* featured actors (Dimosthenis Papadopoulos, Peggy Trikalioti and others) who were subsequently cast in other films and television series. Indeed, *End of an Era* inaugurated a wave of films, including *Peppermint* (1999) and *Uranya* (2006), both by Kostas Kapakas, and *Πίσω πόρτα* (*Back Door*) by Yiorgos Tsemperopoulos (2000), which focused on everyday life under the dictatorship, touching upon themes that had remained marginal in earlier works such as *Πέτρινα χρόνια* (*Years of Stone*) by Pantelis Voulgaris (1985) or *Loafing and Camouflage*.³² These themes centred around rites of passage from childhood to adolescence and from adolescence to adult life, sexuality, and inter-generational tensions often provoked by very different reactions toward 'novel' cultural products.

End of an Era's innovation lay in its engagement with the shifting attitudes toward political life in the 1990s: what appears on the big screen may be fictional but it retains

26 Y. Skopeteas, 'Η εγκαθίδρυση της μεταμοντέρνας πρακτικής', *Οπτικοακουστική Κουλτούρα* 1 (2002) 50–66 (esp. 56–8).

27 M. Chairetakis, 'Μια άλλη άποψη για τις συσκευές τηλεόρασης στην Ελλάδα 1966–1982', *Διαφημιστική Εβδομάδα* (20 January 1986) 9–13.

28 According to Yiannis Skopeteas, films such as *Προστάτης οικογένειας* by N. Perakis (1997), *Η διακριτική γοητεία των αρσενικών* by O. Malea (1999) and *Ο καλύτερος μου φίλος* by L. Lazopoulos and Y. Lanthimos (2001) and others were influenced by *End of an Era*: Skopeteas, 'Η εγκαθίδρυση', 52.

29 For this regeneration see M. Kokkonis, 'Is there such a thing as a Greek blockbuster? The revival of contemporary Greek cinema', in L. Papadimitriou and Y. Tzioumakis (eds), *Greek Cinema. Texts, histories, identities* (Bristol 2012) 37–54.

30 Early 1980s blockbusters such as *Τα Τσακάλια* by Y. Dalianidis (1981) achieved similar performances.

31 By comparison, successful early 1990s films sold around 60,000 tickets: see D. Bouras, 'Ταινίες με ουρά', *Μετρό* (February 1998) 120–3.

32 K. Kornetis, 'From politics to nostalgia – and back to politics: Tracing the shifts in the filmic depiction of the Greek "Long 1960s" over time', *Historiein* 14:2 (2014) 89–102.

codes which the mass audience is capable of interpreting.³³ *End of an Era* tuned in to the existing atmosphere of reduced interest in politics. The post-1974 public sphere had been intensely politicized, especially for the young.³⁴ PASOK, a mass political party with a radical profile established in 1974, had a record of 50,000 and 110,000 registered members in 1977 and 1981 respectively (and around 1000 local branches).³⁵ As left-wing politicization began to influence culture, film narratives about the military regime were constructed through motifs of the martyr Left.³⁶ In the 1980s, political engagement began to decrease.³⁷ In cinema, positive representations of individualism by both emerging and established filmmakers, such as Nikos Vergitsis and Pantelis Voulgaris, gained traction.³⁸ This political apathy grew after the October 1993 national elections, with interest in party politics declining further and political identities attenuating.³⁹ Directors of the 1990s now approached the dictatorship with a focus on popular culture.

Historicizing the script

End of an Era narrates the adventures of a group of high school seniors in Plaka, in the school year 1969–70. Plaka had evolved into a tourist area with a vibrant nightlife in the 1960s and maintained this character until the early 1980s, when a regeneration project transformed it into a more respectable hospitality district. As a listed area, Plaka had escaped the postwar building craze, maintaining its neoclassical houses and thus remaining suitable for the shooting of scenes set in the 1960s. In one of the first scenes, Periklis drives his jeep through Athens' busy centre to the funeral of his friend Christos (Dimosthenis Papadopoulos), all the while remembering their last year in school together. Throughout, the film switches between the 1960s and the 1990s.

33 Sorlin, 'Historical films', 2; A. Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity and Gender in Greek Cinema: 1949–1967* (London 2013) 6.

34 For left-wing politicization see N. Papadogiannis, *Militant around the Clock? Left-wing youth politics, leisure and sexuality in post-Dictatorship Greece, 1974–1981* (Oxford 2015), and D. Glystras, *Η 'άλλη' αριστερά. Μεταπολίτευση και αμφισβήτηση, 1974–1981* (Athens 2020). Greek historiography lacks similar studies on right-wing youngsters.

35 M. Spourdalakis, *ΠΑΣΟΚ. Δομή, εσωκομματικές κρίσεις και συγκέντρωση εξουσίας* (Athens 1988) 254–7.

36 Kornetis, 'From Politics', 90.

37 See P. Zestanakis, "'Η απολιτική αντίδραση": καινοφανείς συλλογικότητες και νέες εννοιολογήσεις της πολιτικής δράσης στην Αθήνα της δεκαετίας του 1980', in Avgeridis et al. (eds), *Μεταπολίτευση* 169–94 (esp. 185).

38 See G. Mademli, 'Film as revanche: Dissecting the dispositif in new Greek cinema', *FILMICON: Journal of Greek Film Studies* 5 (2018) 1–19 (esp. 2); P. Panagiotopoulos, 'Ατομική επιτυχία και κρίση των πολιτικών ταυτοτήτων. Όψεις των δεκαετιών του '60 και του '80 στο "Ακροπόλ" και στη "Φανέλα με το εννιά" του Παντελή Βούλγαρη', in F. Tomai (ed.), *Ιστορία και πολιτική στο έργο του Παντελή Βούλγαρη* (Athens 2007) 193–225 (esp. 209–25).

39 31.9% and 27 per % respectively declared little or no interest in politics in a survey: P. Kafetzis, 'Πολιτική επικοινωνία, πολιτική συμμετοχή και κρίση της πολιτικής. Η συνεισφορά μιας εμπειρικής έρευνας δόο φάσεων', *Ελληνική Επιθεώρηση Πολιτικής Επιστήμης* 9 (1997) 168–78.

Christos arrives in Athens with his family in 1969, having moved from Patras in preparation for entrance exams to the Athens Medical School. Families from the provinces saw higher education as a path of upward social mobility in the cities.⁴⁰ In the film, Christos joins a group of middle and upper-middle class students who have been raised in more liberal families. The youngsters come to accept Christos when he proves his knowledge of rock music in a quiz and by implication his interest in the global scene of protest, or least of sexual liberation.⁴¹ *End of an Era's* characters display a keen interest in music, and their friendship revolves around rock. They also appear to be interested in theatre and cinema. We will explore both these topics later.

The story revolves around the students' efforts to show resistance to the Dictatorship by staging a play (by school custom, it was the grand-aunts who organized these events), a cultural genre then infused with anti-establishment sentiments. The students decide to stage Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* instead of one by a Greek author that would have been a more conventional choice. They convince the school's principal (Yiannis Rozakis) to accept their proposal and allow them to cast girls from the neighbouring high school in the female roles. This – for mixed schools were introduced only in the late 1970s – was itself an act of resistance. (Though Yiannis, a communist student played by Tassos Yiannopoulos, views it as pointless.) The female characters [particularly Stella (Peggy Trikalioti), who is in a relationship with Yiorgos (Kostas Kazanas)] allow Kokkinos to comment on shifting attitudes towards sexuality. The film has few sex scenes (mild by 1990s standards) but systematically comments on the sexual life of adolescents and premarital sex. In the last section of this article, I argue that such comments on sexuality expressed more the unease of the HIV/AIDS era of the 1990s and less the sexual opening of the 1960s.

The dialogues convey an enthusiasm for modern consumer goods such as cars and TV sets, symbols of the postwar prosperity which the dictatorship did not halt. Real GDP grew by 6.2% per year in the period between 1950–73, more than in advanced economies such as Germany and France (5% and 4% respectively) or the peripheral economies under authoritarian regimes, Spain and Portugal (5.8% and 5.7%).⁴² Indeed, between 1968–73 (the period the film focuses on) GDP rose by an annual 9%.⁴³ This new prosperity facilitated the popularity of novel products, especially within the field of communication: TV sets, cars and travel are an integral part of the *End of an Era's* landscape.⁴⁴

40 E. Friedl, 'Lagging emulation in post-peasant society', *American Anthropologist* 66:3 (1964) 569–586 (esp. 572–4).

41 K. Katsapis, *Ηχοι και απόηχοι. Κοινωνική ιστορία του ροκ εν ρολ φαινομένου στην Ελλάδα (1956–67)* (Athens 2007) 90, 99, 197. Such attitudes were satirized as a superficial form of contestation at that time by the poet M. Anagnostakis, 'Νέοι της Σιδώνος, 1970', *Τὰ Ποιήματα* (Athens 1992), 167.

42 B. Eichengreen, *The European Economy Since 1945. Coordinated capitalism and beyond* (Princeton 2007) 17.

43 Tsakas, '21^η Απριλίου', 127.

44 There were 144,437 vehicles in 1967, 380,234 in 1974. The number of Greek citizens leaving the country rose from 467,441 in 1968 to 870,320 in 1974: O. Tsakirides, 'Daily mobility' and E. Alisson, E. Manologlou

In *End of an Era* cars are the means by which the characters get to have new experiences, such as driving while listening to music. These experiences help shape their masculinities and feed many of the film's scenes. Yiorgos, who enjoys access to his father's car, constructs his masculinity around the privilege of 'auto-mobility'. He finds life in Athens fascinating despite the fact that the city is under military rule. Christos' identity, by contrast is constructed around a desire for escape and a fascination with British culture: 'Real life is in London.'⁴⁵ This desire to escape irritates his repressive father (Vangelis Kazan), an inconspicuous junta supporter who manipulates Christos' life, reproaches his interest in foreign culture and criticizes the lifestyle of his son's new friends.

The 1990s: modernization through consumption?

End of an Era opened fourteen years after Greece joined the European Economic Community in 1981. The decision to join the EEC, made by the New Democracy government, enjoyed limited political support. There was marked ambivalence in 1980s Greece, with an animated (though subsiding) anti-Americanism on the one side and significant interest in Western popular culture on the other, attested by, among other things, the popularity of American TV series.⁴⁶ Greece soon adapted to an international climate marked by a passion for consumption and individualism, and reservations toward Western culture subsided.⁴⁷ In the 1990s, living standards improved further, and consumer desires became largely identified with Europeanization. Pro-European sentiments strengthened when PASOK won the October 1993 elections and, abandoning its earlier Euroscepticism, aligned itself with the 1990s pro-globalization euphoria, including participation in the European Monetary Union (EMU) project. Optimism was reflected in surveys conducted at the time and indeed in the way in which the 1980s have been remembered.⁴⁸ Greek society saw the EU as the ideal vehicle for cultural and political modernization.⁴⁹ The Greek 1990s enjoyed apparent stability in policy direction, and a gradual build-up of

and P. Tsartas, 'Vacation patterns', in D. Charalambis, L. Maratou-Alipranti and A. Hadjiyanni (eds), *Recent Social Trends in Greece, 1960–2000* (Montreal 2004) 515–24 (esp. 520) and 550–6 (esp. 556) respectively.

45 This desire also appears in Lena (Despina Kourti) who yearns to study dance in Switzerland. For such aspirations, see the rock singer Dimitris Poulidakos' interview with M. Kokkini, 'Έλα στο θείο', *Lifo* (20 November 2008), <https://www.lifo.gr/mag/features/1038> (accessed 14 August 2020).

46 O. E. Kassaveti, 'Ο σοσιαλιστικός εξαμερικανισμός της ελληνικής κρατικής τηλεόρασης κατά την περίοδο της αλλαγής' in V. Vamvakas and A. Gazi (eds) *Αμερικανικές σειρές στην ελληνική τηλεόραση. Δημοφιλής κουλτούρα και ψυχοκοινωνική δυναμική* (Athens 2017) 141–80.

47 Voulgaris, *Η Ελλάδα της Μεταπολίτευσης*, 389.

48 P. Zestanakis, 'Revisiting the Greek 1980s through the prism of crisis', in K. Kornetis, E. Kotsovoli and N. Papadogiannis (eds), *Consumption and Gender in Southern Europe Since the Long 1960s* (London 2016) 257–74.

49 V. Calotychos, *The Balkan Prospect. Identity, culture and politics in Greece after 1989* (Houndmills 2013) 5. Similar feelings marked Spain and Portugal: see I. Balampanidis, 'The abduction of Europa:

economic success.⁵⁰ Participation in the EMU was heralded as a beacon of future prosperity, stirring the expectations of the market, the middle classes and labour unions alike.⁵¹ Greece secured a strong role in the European Union project, and the country's average income gradually approached that of richer Western European countries. Consensus on Europe also helped mitigate polarization. The 1996 'sofa' elections saw reduced enthusiasm for electoral campaigns and party gatherings.⁵² The notion that Greece was an underdeveloped country faded.⁵³ This spirit was captured in a mid-1990s survey, which showed that while 31.8% of Greeks viewed their economic situation as bad or very bad, 62.8% rated theirs as moderate, good or excellent.⁵⁴ It was also reflected in the media, with magazines and television programmes promoting conspicuous consumption.⁵⁵ We now know that the 1990s prosperity was fragile and largely financed by easy credit. But this hardly concerned consumers at the time, least of all the young.⁵⁶

Greece appeared to be a continuously modernizing, post-industrial society, with a service sector that absorbed about 60% of its workforce and produced about 70% of its GDP.⁵⁷ This 'modernization' focused on consumption, while social attitudes pertaining to other matters such as sexuality remained conservative. The majority of Greeks (77% in 1994 as opposed to a mere 58% in 1985) saw the Orthodox religion as important.⁵⁸ In the 1990s the discourse of the Orthodox Church gained ground in the media, especially in the last years of this decade, when the Greek Church was headed by the charismatic Archbishop Christodoulos Paraskevaïdis.⁵⁹ Greek society,

Europeanism and euroscepticism in Greece, 1974–2015', in K. Kornetis and M. E. Cavallaro (eds), *Rethinking Democratisation in Spain, Greece and Portugal* (Cham 2019) 91–121 (esp. 92).

50 G. Pagoulatos, *Greece's New Political Economy. State, finance and growth from Postwar to EMU* (Houndmills 2003) 128.

51 Y. Voulgaris, *Η Ελλάδα από τη Μεταπολίτευση στη Παγκοσμιοποίηση* (Athens 2008) 129.

52 D. Dodos, P. Kafetzis and I. Nikolakopoulos, 'Εκλογές 1996: διαστάσεις πολιτικής συμπεριφοράς και πολιτικής κουλτούρας', *Επιθεώρηση Κοινωνικών Ερευνών* 92–3 (1997) 241–266 (esp. 247–9, 256–8).

53 Y. Voulgaris, *Ελλάδα: μια χώρα παραδόξως νεότερη* (Athens 2019) 132–3. For the earlier debate, see N. Mouzelis, *Modern Greece. Facets of underdevelopment* (London 1978) and more recently the same author's 'Η Ελλάδα στο κατώφλι του 21^{ου} αιώνα: θεσμοί και πολιτική κουλτούρα', *Το Βήμα της Κυριακής* (23 August 1992).

54 Dodos et al, 'Εκλογές 1996', 251. However, in rural Greece locals often viewed modernization as 'contamination'. See M. Herzfeld, 'Seeing like a village: Contesting hegemonic modernity in Greece', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 38:1 (2020) 43–58.

55 For this shift see P. Zestanakis, 'From media idiom to political argument: uses of "lifestyle" in the early years of the Greek crisis, 2009–2015', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 38:1 (2020) 209–38 (esp. 216–7).

56 Older people tended to be more cautious and occasionally helped their children repay accumulated debts: A. J. Placas, 'The Emergence of Consumer Credit in Greece: An Ethnography of Indebtedness'. Unpublished PhD dissertation, Rice University (Houston, 2008) 5–6.

57 S. Kalyvas, *Καταστροφές και θρίαμβοι*, trans. N. Roussos (Athens 2015) 224.

58 D. Close, *Ελλάδα 1945–2004. Πολιτική, κοινωνία, οικονομία*, trans. Y. Mertikas (Thessaloniki 2006) 333.

59 About 80% of respondents evaluated Archbishop Christodoulos positively in 1999. See T. Anastasiadis, 'Το "αμοιβαίο κεφάλαιο" Χριστόδουλος', *Το Βήμα της Κυριακής* (6 May 1999). For the use of the media by the

to a degree, embraced modern gender roles (female employment, gender equality) but remained sceptical towards demands such as gay rights.⁶⁰ *End of an Era's* representations fitted into this framework, which combined the desire for consumer-based modernization and cultural pluralism with the persistence of older attitudes.

The Dictatorship (1967–74): ineffective restrictions

End of an Era portrays the dictatorship as incapable of consolidating its cultural politics. The coup was the expression of the most reactionary element of the post civil-war armed forces. The Colonels feared an election victory for the Centre Union, a coalition of centre parties, which had won the 1963 and 1964 elections (the latter with an impressive 52.72% of the vote) and overturned the long political hegemony of the Right. The Centre Union adopted a modernizing agenda with emphasis on education: the development of technical and professional education, language reform, and the extension of compulsory education from six years to nine.⁶¹ It also implemented a policy of economic expansion.⁶² These initiatives appealed to large portion of society, especially the progressive young. The dictatorship overturned the trend toward reform. It reversed the educational reforms and introduced a reactionary cultural agenda which promoted tradition (including folk culture), religion, and the ancient past. With regard to cinema, it funded war films and films of a nationalist character, while tightening censorship for all film genres, even comedy.⁶³ The dictatorship also encouraged interest in television and sport, seen as harmless entertainment.⁶⁴ Greece hosted the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup finals in 1971 and 1973, in Athens and Thessaloniki respectively. Though in theory the military regime condemned Western cultural influences, in practice it saw tourism as a valuable source of income. It tolerated social deviance by tourists even when this upset local communities; the Cretan village of Matala, which saw hippies from around the world flock to its shores,

Greek church, see N. Demertzis, 'Η εθνο-θρησκευτική και επικοινωνιακή εκκοσμίκευση της ορθοδοξίας', *Επιστήμη και Κοινωνία. Επιθεώρηση Πολιτικής και Ηθικής Θεωρίας* 5–6 (2001) 83–101.

60 J. Georgas, 'Changing family values in Greece: From collectivist to individualist', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 20:1 (1989) 80–91; Close, *Ελλάδα 1945–2004*, 332–6.

61 For the philosophy of the reform, see E. Papanoutsos, *Αγώνες και αγωνία για την παιδεία* (Athens 1965).

62 Tsakas, '21^η Απριλίου', 121–2.

63 Y. Andritsos, 'Η λογοκρισία στον ελληνικό κινηματογράφο (1945–1974)', in P. Petsini and D. Christopoulos (eds), *Η λογοκρισία στην Ελλάδα* (Athens 2016) 35–42 (esp. 38–9). See, for instance, the films *Παπαφλέσσας* by E. Andreou (1970) and *Οι γενναίοι του βορρά* by K. Karayiannis (1971).

64 D. Papanikolaou, *Singing Poets. Literature and Popular Music in France and Greece* (Oxford 2007) 94; K. Kornetis, *Children of the Dictatorship. Student resistance, cultural politics and the 'long sixties' in Greece* (Oxford 2013) 189. For sports as a propaganda medium during the dictatorship see G. Van Steen, 'Rallying the nation: Sport and spectacle serving the Greek dictatorships', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 27:12 (2010): 2121–54.

is a prime example.⁶⁵ Likewise, the regime tolerated Plaka's unrestrained touristic development, with some transparently gay-friendly spots.⁶⁶ Undoubtedly, the dictatorship kept a lid on the influence of the 1968 *événements* in Greece; yet young people sought to maintain communications with the West, seeing such contact as a means of resistance. While, for example, foreign music groups stopped performing in Athens after the establishment of the dictatorship (the last one to do so were the Rolling Stones, on 17 April 1967), youngsters continued to frequent rock clubs to see local groups play.⁶⁷ Such efforts by youngsters to maintain cultural contacts with the West play a crucial role in *End of an Era* and would have been positively received by viewers in the pro-Europeanization climate of the 1990s.

Linking two modernities

End of an Era narrates the efforts of a group of middle-class youngsters to participate in Western modernity through consumption, variously understood. Periklis, for example, runs a pirate radio station, along the lines of a tradition that originated in the United States and other Western countries in the 1960s, which saw many young people communicate their music tastes to the world.⁶⁸ In the film, Kokkinos depicts music as a field upon which tradition and modernity collide. Rock music round the world had acquired anti-establishment connotations, contesting state and parental authority.⁶⁹ For some adults, rock music had become the emblem of the aspirations of an emergent middle class, yet established patriarchal authorities saw the need to control the mass media.⁷⁰ Tensions of this kind can be seen in *End of an Era*, especially in the relationship between Christos and his father. Christos often argues with his father over rock: his father believes it could affect Christos' school performance. The father also rejects his son's interest in the cosmopolitan middle-class values that rock represents, viewing them as hostile to tradition.

Such disputes between Christos' and his father's over musical tastes highlight music's political valence. Christos' father encourages his son to listen to Yiorgos Economidis, a radio producer of the Radio of the Armed Forces (YENEΑ), a junta sympathizer, and

65 T. X. Theodorou, 'Αερός τουρισμός: ηθικός πανικός και η αντικουλτούρα των χίπις στα Μάταλα', in V. Karamanolakis, E. Olympitou and I. Papathanasiou (eds), *Η ελληνική νεολαία στον 20^ο αιώνα. Πολιτικές διαδρομές, κοινωνικές πρακτικές και πολιτιστικές εκφράσεις* (Athens 2010) 293–317.

66 D. Papanikolaou, 'Mapping/ unmapping: The making of queer Athens', in J. Evans and M. Cook (eds), *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures. Europe since 1945* (London 2014) 151–70 (esp. 155).

67 E. Kallimopoulou and K. Kornetis, 'Magical liturgy: A history of sound at the Kyttao music club, 1970–1974', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 35:2 (2017) 481–511.

68 L. Kallivretakis, 'Προβλήματα ιστορικοποίησης του ροκ φαινομένου', *Τα ιστορικά* 20 (1994) 157–74 (esp. 160).

69 For instance: U. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock and Rebels. Cold War politics and American culture in a divided Germany* (Berkeley 2000); V. Manzano, "'Rock national" and revolutionary politics: The making of a youth culture of contestation in Argentina, 1966–1976', *The Americas* 70:3 (2014) 393–427.

70 E. Zolov, *Refried Elvis. The rise of Mexican counterculture* (Berkeley 1999) 17.

the writer of the lyrics of its anthem. Unlike Christos, Periklis, who lives with his divorced mother (Despina Tomazani), enjoys high levels of personal autonomy, and is allowed to decorate his room according to his rock aesthetics. Yet if rock had, in the 1960s, acquired connotations of contestation towards the establishment, its revolutionary overtones weakened after 1974, when Greek political songs gained in appeal.⁷¹ Rock was still played at parties, but in general Greek political songs predominated.⁷² This changed once again in the early 1980s, when punk rock and heavy metal were anti-establishment statements.⁷³ A new generation of those born in the early 1960s not only didn't respond to the political discourses of the initial post-dictatorship period but became increasingly disillusioned with the PASOK government after 1981 and the continuation of such practices as police violence. This culture of contestation was largely space-specific, concentrating around central Athens, especially in the 'anarchist' district of Exarchia. These youngsters were not interested in Greek political songs performed by artists in festivals organized by the youth wings of political parties (these had lost most of their appeal by the 1980s), which were for them associated with the establishment, preferring foreign music genres.⁷⁴

In *End of an Era* Kokkinos is careful in his representation of adults, avoiding depicting them as inflexibly conservative. Take Yiorgos' father, Vyronas (Alexis Gkolfis). Living affluently with his son, he seems to be lured into the pleasures of modern commodities such as cars and TV sets. Associating masculinity and bachelorhood with interest in consumption, *End of an Era* challenged the 'Mrs Consumer model' that suggested women, more than men, were eager to embrace modern consumer trends.⁷⁵ From the viewpoint of the 1990s, this representation engaged with then recent transformations in relations between masculinity and consumption: following other European countries such as the UK, Greece witnessed the proliferation of lifestyle magazines targeting young urban men in the 1980s.⁷⁶ Such discourses blossomed further in the 1990s, when lifestyle discourses also proliferated on commercial radio and television.⁷⁷

71 This enthusiasm is reflected in films like *Ta τραγούδια της φωτιάς* by N. Koundouros (1975).

72 Glystras, *H 'άλλη' αριστερά*, 198–200.

73 See Y. N. Kolovos, "Κοινωνικά απόβλητα;" *Η ιστορία της πανκ σκηνής στην Αθήνα, 1979–2015* (Athens 2015), esp. 147–90.

74 For how rock music influenced youth lifestyles in 1980s Athens, see the work of photographer Y. Nikolaidis, *Είμαστε τρελοί κι εντυχιμένοι. Φωτογραφίζοντας την άγρια πλευρά της δεκαετίας του 1980* (Athens 2017). On the decline of the political music festival, see N. Papadogiannis, 'Φεστιβάλ νεολαίας: το τέλος του κύκλου της μεταπολιτευτικής πολιτικής ένταξης' in V. Vamvakas and P. Panagiotopoulos (eds), *Η Ελλάδα στη δεκαετία του 1980. Κοινωνικό, πολιτικό και πολιτισμικό λεξικό* (Athens 2010) 626–9.

75 V. de Grazia, "Introduction", in V. de Grazia and E. Furlough (eds), *The Sex of Things: Gender and consumption in historical perspective* (Berkeley 1996) 1–24.

76 P. Zestanakis, 'Gender and sexuality in three late-1980s Greek lifestyle magazines: Playboy, Status and Click', *Journal of Greek Media and Culture* 3:1 (2017) 95–115.

77 Zestanakis, 'From media idiom', 216–7.

In *End of an Era*, Vyronas maintains a good relationship with Yiorgos (the latter describes his father as a ‘nice guy’) founded on parental leniency. This relationship is expressed primarily through the offering of material goods: he gives Yiorgos his car (although his son has no driving license) and money for entertainment, and allows him to smoke and have sex with Stella in the family home. Yiorgos exhibits a macho masculinity that is dependent on his fortunate financial position. Vyronas provides these amenities without asking Yiorgos to adapt to his own moral priorities. Yiorgos’ machismo includes indifference towards his girlfriend and even her pregnancy. His character is reminiscent of earlier roles such as that of Kostas (Nikos Kourkoulos) in the 1961 blockbuster *Κατήφορος* (*Downhill*) by Yiannis Dalianidis. Following on the transnational panic over youth in the 1960s, this film had linked juvenile deviance with imported attitudes and habits such as drinking, smoking, rock and roll and casual sex.⁷⁸ The film gave several young and talented actors debut roles and its fresh topic and commercial success (161,331 tickets in the 1961–62 season, ranking first among sixty-eight movies) ensured it became a key reference in 1960s Greek cinema. However, similarities between representations of masculinity in the two films only extend so far. *Downhill* expresses the 1960s, when anxiety over youth was high in the West and beyond and deviant masculinities were depicted as requiring parental discipline and state intervention. In the retrospect of *End of an Era*, Yiorgos is not portrayed as dangerous to society (in the last scenes he appears to be an ordinary family man), merely as annoying to his circle. Even Yiorgos’ indifference towards Stella’s pregnancy was, most likely, not that offensive to a society accustomed to seeing abortion as an acceptable means of contraception.⁷⁹

End of an Era blended 1960s liberalizing sexuality with a dose of scepticism not unrelated to developments at the time of its production in the early 1990s, when concerns over HIV/AIDS led young and middle-aged Greeks to turn away from casual sex.⁸⁰ Even the Greek edition of *Playboy* approved of the latter.⁸¹ Successful series of the early 1990s such as *Οι τρεις χάριτες* (*The Three Graces*) by Michalis Reppas and Thanassis Panathanassiou (Mega Channel: 1990–92) related the tribulations of dating and depicted singlehood and long-term abstinence from sex as an acceptable condition for middle-aged women.⁸² Likewise, female characters appear restrained in *End of an Era*: Stella experiences premarital sex but only within a monogamous (on her part)

78 Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 201. For the 1960s panic about youth in Greece see E. Avdela, “Corrupting and uncontrollable activities”: Moral panic about youth in post-civil-war Greece’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 43:1 (2008) 25–44.

79 For abortion in 1990s Greece see: A. Halkias, *The Empty Cradle of Democracy. Sex, abortion and nationalism in Modern Greece* (Durham NC 2004).

80 C. Ntaountaki, ‘Οι 30 προτιμούν τη μόνιμη σχέση’, *Τα Νέα* (6 October 1990).

81 See, for instance: ‘Cocooning’, *Playboy* (April 1990) 15.

82 B. Kaklamanidou, ‘Introduction to the Greek sitcom: The case of *I tris charites*/ *The three Graces*’, *FILMICON: Journal of Greek Film Studies* 4 (2017) 138–54.

relationship, which is a far cry from the ‘provocative’ femininity of 1960s films.⁸³ Her willingness to engage in premarital sex appears morally justified by her deep love for her first boyfriend. Stella’s decision is, in retrospect, vindicated: the film’s final scene reveals that she marries Yiorgos after high school.

The West had seen a sexual revolution in the 1960s. In postwar France, premarital sex was commonplace.⁸⁴ Germany followed a similar path.⁸⁵ This liberal climate even reached late-Francoist Spain.⁸⁶ The ways that this sexual revolution influenced Greece are not obvious. The rise in abortions (about 150,000 per year in the late 1960s, according to one estimate) shows that pre-marital and extra-marital sex were common.⁸⁷ 1960s films portrayed premarital sex as common in cities but condemned by the older generation and the state as evidence of moral decline. Condemnation of premarital sex (particularly for females) lasted until the 1970s and later, especially among working-class families.⁸⁸ In the cities, even young leftists (who would theoretically be less likely to adopt the norm of the nuclear family, upheld by the post-civil-war state as part of a broader nationalist ideology) often preferred stable relations and marriage to casual dating.⁸⁹ As for rural areas, where premarital relations existed, they remained largely concealed.⁹⁰ Surveys show that, even in the 1980s, about one third of students of the University of Athens responded yes to having sex before adulthood in 1991, compared to 17% in 1978.⁹¹ Such data corroborate the rise of adolescent sexual activity in the 1980s and show that Greece was not swept into the international backlash against sexual activity prompted by the fear of HIV/AIDS epidemic.⁹² Instead, this development was regulated through a combination of the internal political climate of the 1980s and the protective nature of the Greek

83 A. Kosyfologou, “Οι νέες κάνουν σεξ”: “Απειθαρχες” σεξουαλικότητες στο δημοφιλή ελληνικό κινηματογράφο της δεκαετίας του ‘60. Η περίπτωση του φιλμ Κατήφορος’, in K. Katsapis (ed.), *Οι απειθαρχοί. Κείμενα για την αναידή νεολαία τη μεταπολεμική περίοδο* (Athens 2018) 233–48 (esp. 242–7).

84 S. Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution. Gender and family life in postwar France* (Oxford 2017) 166; H. Mendras, *La Seconde Révolution Française, 1965–84* (Paris 1994) 302–7.

85 D. Herzog, ‘Between coitus and commodification: young west German women and the impact of the pill’, in A. Schildt and D. Siegfried (eds), *Between Marx and Cola-Cola. Youth cultures in changing European societies, 1960–1980* (New York 2006) 261–86.

86 K. Kornetis, “Let’s get laid because it is the end of the world!”: Sexuality, gender and the Spanish Left in Late Francoism and the *Transición*’, *European Review of History* 22:1 (2015) 176–98.

87 V. G. Valaoras et al, ‘Greece: postwar abortion experience’, *Studies in Family Planning* 46:1 (1969) 10–16. High abortion rates continued in the 1980s and the 1990s: Halkias, *The Empty Cradle*.

88 P. Vrontaki, ‘Οικογένεια και εφηβεία στην Ελλάδα και τις ΗΠΑ: μια διαπολιτισμική σύγκριση’, *Επιθεώρηση Κοινωνικών Ερευνών* 39–40 (1980) 267–82 (esp. 271); R. Hirschon, *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: the social life of Asia Minor refugees in Piraeus* (Oxford 1998) 106–33.

89 N. Papadogiannis, ‘Confronting “imperialism” and “loneliness”: Sexual and gender relations among young communists in Greece, 1974–1981’, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 29:2 (2011) 219–50 (esp. 233).

90 M. Herzfeld, ‘Semantic slippage and moral fall: The rhetoric of chastity in rural Greek society’, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 1:1 (1983) 161–72.

91 Close, *Ελλάδα*, 335–6.

92 G. Hawkes, *Sex and Pleasure in Western Culture* (London 2004) 144–8.

family. The PASOK government encouraged a more liberal approach to sexuality.⁹³ Concern over HIV/AIDS remained relatively moderate: the number of carriers in Greece was limited and the protective structure of the Greek family cultivated an illusion of immunity, at least among heterosexuals.⁹⁴ Greece continued its slow process of liberalization, especially in relation to premarital sex. By the 1990s, condoms were easily available in Athens.⁹⁵ This did not extend to tolerance towards divorce, which continued to be perceived as a ‘social threat’ (even by some sociologists⁹⁶), like single-parent families.

End of an Era mirrors this gradual social process. Consensual sex appears possible between Yiorgos and Stella, but out of bounds for the ‘platonic’ love between Christos and Lena, and generally uncommon: most characters are single. Premarital relations are no easy affair (highlighted here in Lena’s reluctance to date Christos) and young males satisfy their needs by visiting prostitutes. The concept of casual sex between youngsters and mature people is addressed in Christos’ affair with Periklis’ mother. It is a relationship defined by guilt; ‘You don’t have to say anything’, says Periklis’ mother to Christos as he leaves her bedroom. It seems that *End of an Era*’s heroes are participating in the sexual liberalization of the 1960s only reluctantly.

Throughout the film, expectations of modernity revolve around enthusiasm for visual culture. Yiorgos is fascinated when Vyronas brings a TV to watch the 1970 World Cup finals, the first to be broadcast in Greece. When the signal is received on the TV, Yiorgos and Stella are thrilled with the commercials: the scene captures the transition of the transmission of consumer messages from print to electronic media that technologically more advanced societies such as Italy had experienced ten years earlier.⁹⁷ It is a moment which expresses the enthusiasm of the youth for the opportunities for communication that television offered, even under the dictatorship. Not coincidentally, marketing and advertising were established as professional careers in Greece in this same period.⁹⁸ This excitement for visual culture resonated with the late 1980s and early 1990s enthusiasm for novel televisual products, which *End of an*

93 E. Papataxiarchis, ‘Reconfiguring Greek ethnography in a changing world’, *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 18:2 (2010) 419–30 (esp. 419).

94 F. Tsalicoglou, ‘A new disease in Greek society: AIDS and the representation of otherness’, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 13:1 (1995) 83–97.

95 H. Paxson, ‘Rationalizing sex: Family planning and the making of modern lovers in urban Greece’, *American Ethnologist* 29:2 (2002) 307–34 (esp. 311).

96 L. Mousourou, ‘Κρίση της οικογένειας και κρίση αξιών’, *Επιθεώρηση Κοινωνικών Ερευνών* 98–9 (1999) 5–19 (esp. 9); L. Maratou Alipranti ‘Διαγενεακές σχέσεις στη σύγχρονη εποχή: θεωρήσεις, τάσεις, πρακτικές’, *Επιθεώρηση Κοινωνικών Ερευνών* 98–9 (1999) 49–76 (esp. 50).

97 E. Scarpelini, ‘Americanization and authenticity: Italian food products and practices in the 1950s and 1960s’, in P. Lundin and T. Kaiserfeld (eds), *The Making of European Consumption. Facing the American challenge* (Houndmills 2015) 111–33 (esp. 119).

98 The Union of Greek Advertising Companies (Ενωση Διαφημιστικών Εταιριών Ελλάδας) was established in 1968: ‘Ιστορία’, <https://www.edee.gr/istoria/> (accessed 25 August 2020).

Era's viewers had relatively recently experienced: commercial and satellite television arrived in Greece in the late 1980s following eager anticipation.⁹⁹

Kokkinos captures this young passion for international culture under the dictatorship. Cinema, literature, theatre acquired political significance, creating a cultural terrain that contrasted with the military regime's priorities. Censorship was less severe between 1970 and 1973.¹⁰⁰ The years 1970 and 1971 saw the establishment of some 150 publishing houses and the circulation of some 2000 new titles, including Brecht and Gramsci.¹⁰¹ The New Greek Theatre emerged as part of the international political networks of the New Left, a political movement campaigning for civil, political and other rights. Actors of political plays established ties with their audiences, encouraging their followers to view themselves as part of a group of global dissidents.¹⁰² In choosing the staging of a play as an act of contestation, Kokkinos acknowledges theatre's subversive dynamics. Cinema too was significant in terms of its form, symbolism and reception.¹⁰³ Yet this is contested in *End of an Era*, in which the characters treat cinemas only as a place for entertainment and watch soft porn. Cinema is mostly discussed as a form of contact with modernity. As only affluent consumers could afford to travel abroad with any regularity, cinema became a vehicle of fantasy, enabling those who could not travel to gain an insight into life abroad. In *End of an Era*, this point is explicitly made when Christos and Yiorgos discuss the British film *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* by Karel Reisz (1960).

Music played a similar role. According to the historian Leonidas Kallivretakis, a student at the time, youngsters were mostly rock and roll enthusiasts and typically not so interested in Greek political songs.¹⁰⁴ Rock music had limited political valence in Greece in the years around 1970, in contrast to other countries, such as France for example, where rock (especially then novel sub-genres such as psychedelic rock) expressed the spirit of the May 1968 uprising.¹⁰⁵ *End of An Era's* characters align themselves with this apolitical stance: the group of youngsters accept Christos because of his familiarity with rock music. The characters are seen singing English songs or debating whether specific songs (for example, 'Esso Besso' by Rosemarie Squires) can be considered as belonging to the genre of rock. Periklis' station plays foreign music, much to the irritation of the communist Yiannis, the only one among the youngsters

99 T. Zacharopoulos and M. Paraschos, *Mass Media in Greece. Power, politics and privatization* (Westport CT, 1993), 61–6.

100 Kornetis, *Children*, 158.

101 *Id*, 161; See also D. Papanikolaou, 'Ο πολιτισμός στη χούντα', *Ta Néa* (17 April 2010).

102 G. Van Steen, *Stage of Emergency. Theatre and public performance under the Greek military dictatorship of 1967–1974* (Oxford 2015) 294.

103 Kornetis, *Children*, 170.

104 Kallivretakis, 'Προβλήματα', 170.

105 J. Briggs, 'A red noise: pop and politics in post-1968 France', in T. S. Brown and A. Lison (eds), *The Global Sixties in Sound and Vision. Media, counterculture, revolt* (Houndmills 2014) 15–28 (esp. 16–17).

interested in Greek music. Through Yiannis' character, Kokkinos captures a cultural tension: Greek political songs dominated post-1974 culture, but around 1970, the situation was quite different. This was a time in which youngsters were out buying albums by bands to which they had been introduced through radio or film, transcribing the lyrics and translating them into Greek to decipher their meaning.¹⁰⁶ Kostis Kornetis distinguishes youngsters into two distinct categories according to their music preferences: the 'yeyedes' (deriving from the repetition of the word 'yeah' which featured in many of their songs) and politicized students.¹⁰⁷ In the film, Kokkinos relativizes this distinction: its characters politicize culture through theatre, yet their musical tastes are close to those of the 'yeyedes'. This loose form of politicization is expressed in dialogues prioritizing pleasure and individuality over collective values: when Lena asks Christos how interested he is in the play, he replies, 'This is not the first thing in my life'.

In *End of an Era* politicization influences juvenile lifestyles even though politics was not at the top of their list of priorities. This is evident in the atmosphere prevailing during rehearsals, with the students chatting and joking, and not taking the rebellious aspect of their project that seriously. This is eloquently presented in the scene in which the students convince the school principal to stage a play by a foreign playwright. By contrast with 1960s films, which depicted school environments as extremely strict—the 1962 film *Νόμος 4000* (*Law 4000*) by Yiannis Dalianidis is a well-known example—the school principal is open and willing to discuss the students' demands. This reflects the relaxation of school discipline, which had been happening throughout the 1970s and was accelerated by the establishment of mixed schools in the early 1980s.¹⁰⁸ Here, in Kokkinos' film, the overbearing character of the educational system during the dictatorship is rather underplayed.

A low degree of politicization and relaxed representations of authoritarianism in *End of an Era* expressed a historical juncture, when expectations of stability and an easy life were at their peak. Since the 1980s, and more systematically in the 1990s and the 2000s, Greeks had been claiming their place in the international economies of pleasure. Film and other artistic representations which glossed over the recent conflicted past, choosing to highlight continuities between the authoritarian and post-authoritarian society in their consumerist attitudes, were likely to gain in popularity.

Epilogue: what brought Greeks back to the cinema?

End of an Era brought the domestic film industry back into play. It introduced new features, inspiring other filmmakers of the late 1990s and beyond, and contributed to a revival of the Greek film industry that lasted up until the economic crisis of the

106 Kallivretakis, 'Προβλήματα', 170–1.

107 Kornetis, *Children*, 195.

108 This climate is evident in early 1980s school comedies such as *Ρόδα, τσάντα και κοπάνα* by O. Efstratiadis (1982).

2010s. Reading the film as a form of public history, I have sought to analyse the ways in which *End of an Era* offered an appealing narrative about the ‘rebellious’ 1960s through the ‘prosperous’ 1990s. Looking back at the dictatorship through the 1990s consumer-oriented frame of values, the film downplays authoritarianism, depicting resistance as achievable through the adoption of consumer and cultural attitudes that carry anti-establishment connotations. Kokkinos depicts the dictatorship as a period when a youthful desire for modernity undermines the cultural framework of authoritarianism. He offers a sort of historical alibi to the consumer-oriented modernization of the 1990s, representing it as a process going back to the first postwar decades. Audiences embraced this narrative, and *End of an Era* attracted almost 200,000 viewers at a time when going to the cinema to watch a Greek film was uncommon. This wide appeal made *End of an Era* a landmark.

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