

Konstantinos (Kaisarios) Dapontes is perhaps a surprising choice. T.'s compact and knowledgeable introduction to his colourful world and her enjoyable translation of even just a small sample of his texts in this well produced bilingual hardback in elegant type will, one hopes, attract readers to an author who still remains unknown outside the Greek speaking world — and even among Greek readers. It would be a pity, for example, for anyone to miss out on such verses as these from the *Canon of Hymns Containing Many Exceptional Things* (p.71): 'Little tunny of Chios, bluefin tuna of Euboea, Venetian cuttlefish and Smyrna's prawns; the crayfish of Moldavia and Wallachia, eels of Ioannina and mackerel from the Sea of Marmara are all magnificent things.'

References

Chariton Karanasios, 'Τὸ ἀγνωστο ἔργο τοῦ Kaisariou Δαπόντε Βρύσις Λογική (1778): Ἐπιστολαί ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς καὶ κατὰ τῶν Κολυβάδων, *Μεσαιωνικά καὶ Νέα Ἑλληνικά* 12 (2016) 255–387.

Symeon A. Paschalidis (ed.), *Ἡ ἀπόγραφή νεομαρτυρολογικῆ συλλογῆ τοῦ μοναχοῦ Kaisariou Δαπόντε (1713–1784)* (Thessaloniki 2012)

Maria A. Stassinopoulou
University of Vienna

Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Greek Weird Wave: a cinema of biopolitics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021. Pp. xiv, 268

Marios Psarras, *The Queer Greek Weird Wave: ethics, politics and the crisis of meaning*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Pp. 232.
DOI:10.1017/byz.2023.7

In 2009 an economic crisis struck Greece, overturning a climate of economic development and relative optimism. The country experienced austerity, rampant unemployment, widening social inequalities, and political polarization. This climate also left its mark on the arts.¹ These two books, by a cultural studies practitioner (D.P.) and a film studies scholar (M.P.) respectively, examine how the crisis affected cinema, and in particular how the harsh socioeconomic environment was conveyed in film. The analysis also includes earlier films, researching the genealogy of this subversive brand of cinema, which has explored sociopolitical issues in unsettling ways since 2000. M.P. interprets strangeness, examining how *Hardcore* by Dennis Iliadis (2004), *Dogtooth* and *Alps* by Yorgos Lanthimos (2009; 2011), *Strella* by Panos

1 For the impact of austerity in cinema specifically see: T. Lee, *The Public Life of Cinema: conflict and collectivity in austerity Greece* (Oakland, 2020).

H. Koutras (2009), *Attenberg* by Athina Rachel Tsangari (2010), and *Boy Eating the Bird's Food* by Ektoras Lygizos (2012) produce 'disturbing' narratives. M.P. favours the term 'queer wave' (over the rather more common 'weird wave') to describe these films, a metonymic gesture that illuminates the underlying rhetoric of this contemporary trend as an acerbic critique in response to the crisis.² M.P. employs multiple theoretical approaches ranging from post-Lacanian psychoanalysis to dispossession. D.P. prioritizes biopolitics: for him, the Greek public sphere of the crisis became saturated with narratives of a state of emergency, national salvation, survival and disciplining, and politics became intertwined with life. Biopolitics, then, is seen as alerting us to how a certain politics establishes and maintains which lives are livable and how. The films of the crisis express a 'weird wave' and suggest that weirdness is necessary to the attempt to interact with the biopolitical present of the crisis. D.P. draws on much-discussed films such as *Miss Violence* by Alexandros Avranas (2013), *Lobster* by Yorgos Lanthimos (2015), *Suntan* by Argyris Papadimitropoulos (2016), *Pity* by Babis Makridis (2018), and several others, largely approaching them as responses to an emergent biopolitical regime.

From the vantage-point of a cultural historian interested in film as historical evidence, I found much to enjoy in both books. The analyses are well theorized and historically sensitive, approaching the crisis in relation to the previous culture of overspending, but also as a period whose cultural politics should be understood alongside even older historical developments. For instance, I found appealing M.P.'s comparisons between Michalis Cacoyannis emblematic *Stella* (1955) and *Strella*, a film screened 54 years later. This sensitivity is also clear in how D.P. discusses the weird wave and how it interacted with key moments of the crisis such as the murder of the queer activist Zak Kostopoulos in 2018, putting these moments in dialogue with earlier historical developments, or in the way he reads Syllas Tzoumerkas' *Homeland* (2010) as a productive example of how to understand the archival within the larger preoccupations of Greek cinema. I found the exploration of how the Greek family is depicted in film, and how its pathologies are framed, intriguing: this is crucial, as many of these films depict society as a sort of family.


Another interesting aspect of the two books is their analysis of the films' spatial politics. This aim is not stated in the introductions, but the analyses seem clearly influenced by the 'spatial turn', the idea that where something happens is key to understanding why it happens.³ Filmic space is approached as generative of possibilities and is productively deconstructed: both D.P. and M.P. energetically interpret and contextualize directors' spatial choices. These choices are discussed in the context of debates about the crisis such as the appeal of nationalistic discourses or neoliberal capitalism's pathologies. Stills

2 For a brief presentation of more films of this wave see: S. D. Bose, "The 10 essential films from the "Greek Weird Wave"", n.d., <https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/greek-weird-wave-10-best-films/> (accessed 1 March 2023).

3 See, e.g., B. Warf and S. Arias (eds), *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (Abingdon, 2009).

from the films remind readers who watched them years ago and permit readers who have not seen the films to follow the argument.

Both authors could have devoted more energy to the comparative interpretation of the Greek crisis, and to audience politics. The Greek crisis is part of a wave of crises which affected countries in Europe (Spain, Portugal, Ireland) and beyond (notably Argentina, which has experienced multiple crises since 1998). This dimension is only sporadically mentioned, and such points (perhaps especially comparing Greek with Argentinian cinema) deserved more space and attention: they can lead to a fuller examination of the Greek case, one more appealing to non-Greek audiences. I was left with questions about the impact and reception of these films. Some information on box-office sales and where the films were screened would have been useful. It is unclear how the authors understand how diverse audiences perceived the films; I felt that personal gaze is occasionally generalized and that there was over-reliance on film reviews as a source for reception politics. Digital ethnographic methods (such as invisible observation in social media) permit a more nuanced understanding of reception politics, and the authors could have used such methods to enrich their evidence. Both studies could have employed some quantitative data, especially from surveys. A telling omission from the discussion was how trust in the Greek family has largely survived the crisis (as relevant surveys show) and how this can be examined in interaction with the films' critique of the pathogenies of family. Finally, the findings might with profit have been put in dialogue with another trend of the crisis, namely the piecemeal survival of the aesthetics of the earlier blockbuster culture.⁴ Even so, these reflections should not deter readers. Both books contain thought-provoking arguments, contribute to the literature on Greek film studies and cultural studies, and deserve the attention of readers interested in these two areas, and of scholars working on the cultural politics of crises in general, for which Greece offers a valuable and much discussed comparative reference point.

Panagiotis Zestanakis 
University of Hamburg

4 Indicatively, the crisis' biggest blockbuster, *Worlds Apart* by Christopher Papakaliatis (2015), touches on topics questioned by films of the weird wave, such as family, but still using the flashy aesthetics and emotional narrative which made Papakaliatis famous in the 2000s. See P. Zestanakis, "The storyteller who survived": the Greek crisis through its biggest blockbuster film *Worlds Apart* by Christopher Papakaliatis (2015)', *Studies in European Cinema* 19.4 (2022) 268–86.