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IMAGES OF DOMESTIC SUBURBIA IN GREEK FILMS OF THE 50's AND 60's

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Abstract

The paper is an attempt to approach the imaginary dimension of 'making a home' in the urban periphery; in sites that are still under construction, in places whose character is still undefined and fleeting. 'Making a home' is understood as the set of spatial, social and cultural practices that shape everyday domestic spaces, on a personal and collective level, and also as a field where psychological processes, imaginary identifications and ideological formulations meet.

The study discusses the depiction of suburban houses in Greek films produced during the 1950-1960's, a period during which the growth of post-war Greek cinema coincided with the development of the post-war Greek city. It traces the imagery of suburban houses in four Greek popular films from a time when the film production industry was only superseded by the building frenzy that completely transformed Greek urban (and suburban) space after WWII.

Starting from descriptions of the films' spatial iconography, the paper examines the activities associated with them and suggests a composite reading of the two –the representations of space and the actions connected to them- as a way to bring to the fore the social and cultural relationships that shape spatial structures and are in turn shaped by them. The building of the imaginary is 'read' in the films' imaginary buildings: in plans structured through scenography and montage, in spatial continuities and discontinuities shaped with movement and stasis, in personally and collectively private places bounded by words and moving pictures.

The paper is an attempt to approach the imaginary dimension of 'making a home' in the urban periphery; in sites that are still under construction, in places whose character is still undefined and fleeting. 'Making a home' is understood as the set of spatial, social and cultural practices that shape everyday domestic spaces, on a personal and collective level, and also as a field where psychological processes, imaginary identifications and ideological formulations meet. Considering cinema as a constructed reflection of widespread ideas and concepts about social, cultural and spatial relationships, the paper examines the spatial iconography of the upper-class residence in order to locate the spatial elements that shape it and discern the most constant threads within a variety of filmic textures.

The concept of the Imaginary order was used by J. Lacan (Miller, 1978) in order to describe the stage before the acquisition of language in the development of a person as a subject. The Imaginary is the space of images (visual and mental) and primary identifications that are based on images, and on notions of coherence rather than fragmentation. The Imaginary order is directly associated with the Mirror Stage, and the ways that an infant relates to its own and to others' reflections. The formation of the subject through images is then connected to a double contradiction: the body that the infant feels as fragmented is reflected as a coherent whole, and at the same time this coherent whole is an imperfect *I* next to an idealized *Other* (e.g. the body of the mother). Both contradictions establish a lack: the shortcomings of one's self compared to the perfections of others.

C. Castoriadis (Castoriadis, 1978) has set the imaginary at the foundation of human creativity and social differentiation, tracing all social constructions back to it: rules, institutions, ideas, and systems of values and objectives that are based on collectively accepted indisputable *truths*. The imaginary is where all forms of authority base their strength, either explicit (like political authority) or implicit (essentially, the power of the imaginary itself to set the rules, an *institutive* authority). It is what shapes the field of significations on which any society is based, and as such, it intersects with L. Althusser's concept of ideology (Althusser, 2007). Understood as the way in which people experience and comprehend their relationship to the conditions of their existence, Althusser's concept of ideology weaves together what is real and what is imaginary on a spider's web of representational systems. Beliefs and actions

stem from these systems that despite their power remain unspoken. Ideology helps to naturalize relationships and effortlessly legitimize social constructions, by confirming them over and over every day. As Y. Athanasatou notes, "*That which comes out, which is 'made' in ideology is the unity of real and imaginary relationships between people and the actual conditions of their existence.*" (Athanasatou, 1999, pp. 43-44).

For S. Heath "*ideology works over the symbolic on the subject for the imaginary*" (Heath, 1976, p. 255). When he discusses cinema, he observes that it "*is not simply and specifically ideological 'in itself' but it is developed in the context of concrete and specific ideological determinations which inform as well the 'technical' as the 'commercial' or 'artistic' sides of that development*." (Heath, 1981, p. 33). Cinema is thus chosen as a privileged space of encounter for the imaginary and the symbolic, the visual and the verbal, as a *signifying practice* which communicates with a great number and a wide range of recipients. Cinematic reality is constructed so as to reflect everyday 'reality', transcribing elements onto symbols and thus reproducing –and establishing- the imaginary content of those elements. The truth of cinema is not about facts, people and places, but about fears, dreams and desires.

In the beginning of the 50's, Greek cinema entered a period of experiments, in a quest for its own identity. The films of the *Athens School* grafted Italian neorealist ideas with romantic tendencies and used the city of Athens not as mere scenery but as a spatial complex with distinct social and cultural qualities (Mitropoulou, 2006, p. 201). As Greek economy shifted its weight from the country to the city, filmic representations of urban space began to reproduce the new financial, social and cultural relationships and to carry shots from postwar Greece's journey to modernization (Mylonaki, 2012). Influenced by these models, pictures of industrialization and unemployment, outmigration and immigration, poverty and consumption, traditional and modern lifestyles flooded the film screen, at the same time influencing, co-shaping and spreading them thanks to the immediacy of the cinematic codes. Greek audiences, in turn, responded warmly to familiar images and well-known characters and filled movie houses in order to forget their pressing problems, even momentarily, with the stories of others who could be them.

Every fiction film filters reality through the ideological position of its creator and goes on to transform it. The film, then, is not an exact mirror image of the real world, but its deliberate distortion, distilling aspects of reality onto images and symbols that affect the viewer deeper than words. In the majority of Greek films of that period there exist two opposingly different worlds that use correspondingly dissimilar spaces: the rich and the poor. The working class, where the films' positive characters originate from, is placed in central urban areas or the ports of Piraeus; the upper class characters, usually the bearers of negative attributes, are located in areas of the urban periphery around Athens. The idealized version of the spaces where the affluent and the privileged live and work is standardized, all whilst this dominant class is being exposed or ridiculed in order to highlight the lower classes' ethical superiority.

Thereby, although the upper-class lifestyle is constructed as an ideal and an objective accomplished through hard work, marriage, luck or trick, dignified poverty is presented as a condition of purity, honesty and humanity, in total opposition to the moral decline and heartlessness of idle riches. Synthesis is achieved through the juxtaposition of the two worlds, as they are essentially symmetrically reversed images. The film screen then does become a looking-glass, depicting, for its mostly working-class spectators, the space of poverty as a space of material dearth and emotional wealth, in order to bring it out through its darkest reflections, cleansed. Still a mirror, the film screen places the viewers both inside and opposite the spaces of wealth, rendering them distant yet accessible, ideal yet dangerous: the spaces of the *others* which are taken over by the viewers themselves. The two worlds of the Greek popular cinema become then *one* world of oppositions tightly woven together with the thread of dream.

***The Drunkard* (1949)**

For the first decade of postwar Greek popular cinema, *The Drunkard* is an artistic and commercial milestone: it is one of the most interesting films of the *Athens School* and soon after its release it became an unprecedented success (Valoukos, 2007, p. 575). Its narrative is quite predictable: *Annoula*, the poor daughter of a luckless alcoholic shoemaker captures the heart of *Alec*, her rich employer's prodigal son, and manages to steer him in a new direction. The film's true hero, however, is the drunkard *Charalambis*, Annoula's father, who sacrifices himself for his daughter's happiness in the film's bittersweet ending. Charalambis's suicide attempt and the young couple's reunion weave the film's manifold ideological threads together: the positive self-identification of the lower class, the indecisive battle between memory and modernization, and the horizon of class reconciliation, moral growth and social justice (Athanasatou, 1999, p. 165).

City spaces also hold a leading role in the film: the historic center of Athens, Charalambis's home (the *Lardis* residence) and microcosm, and the country suburb, where Alec's family lives (in the *Bakas* residence). The opposition between these two spaces, along with their corresponding work spaces, adds weight to the film's ideological position, and symbolizes the tensions that keep arising between the working class and the new bourgeois, between tradition and change, between collectivity and individualism, between public and private (Mylonaki, 2012, p. 52).

***The Four Stairs* (1951)**

The following year, a romantic comedy was met with similar enthusiasm. The story of *Rena*, a beautiful young orphan who lives as a maid with her rich uncle's family, borrows key elements from the Cinderella myth, to eventually pair Rena with her prince *Dimitris*, a charming industry owner who wants to build his house in the neighborhood. Ideologically, the film is grounded on a confirmation of the supremacy of the good and the true, the ultimate vindication of the just, and the domination of love over cruelty, hypocrisy and social constructions. Compared to *The Drunkard*, *The Four Stairs* is not based on the main binary rich/ poor, but positions the secondary binaries that were usually placed in the aforementioned pair (dominant/ subordinate, contemporary/ traditional, hard –hearted/ kind, immoral/ moral, etc.) within one pole: the upper class.

Starting with the film's title, it is evident that space occupies a central position in its field of signifiers. However, as the ideological emphasis is placed on the different values within the upper class, the film's spatial iconography concentrates on representing the corresponding spaces: houses in the urban fringe. The city center is richly represented, but only in order to depict the new inhospitable, indiscreet and aggressive environment that Rena has to live in after she is obliged to leave her uncle's house; in order to fit in, Rena has to sacrifice her identity and pretend to be a man. Her eventual marriage to Dimitris manages to extract her from the hostile city center and bring her back into the safety and serenity of the suburb. Her new home, with *the four stairs*, is in Rena's childhood neighborhood; her return to the security of the house is also a return to the same geographical space. We can thus see that Rena's passage from the city center was –thankfully- a short adventurous parenthesis that served to establish the superiority of family life in the urban periphery.

Three houses are portrayed: Rena's family residence (the *Asprokotsifas* residence), Dimitris's family residence (the *Grena* residence) and Rena and Dimitris's house. All three are located somewhere in the periphery of Athens, easily accessible from the city center. Although all three are markedly different, we can see the use of particular spatial symbols that signify their residents' economic and social status, as well as the use of the spaces themselves to draw the characters' fuller portraits in all three.

***Poor Bums* (1961)**

Ten years later, *Poor Bums*, based on a play, follows the hilarious efforts of *Fondas,* a successful fisherman and *Teo*, a penniless aristocrat, as they compete for the hand of *Millie,* a beautiful rich heiress, in order to achieve social and financial status respectively. As would be expected, love beats ulterior motives: Millie manages to marry the young clerk she loves and the two men, now good friends, return to the arms of their jilted but still loving ex-fiancées. The story is again woven on the field of oppositions between the elite and the lower class, but it suggests that each man's financial and social position is a matter of personal worth and hard work, and may therefore be changed. The film confirms that human accomplishment is not judged by money or social standing, but it is a matter of trusting relationships, keeping in touch with one's origins and maintaining one's authenticity: characteristics that pertain to the working classes. Of course, love is the supreme power that justifies any trick, forgives all mistakes and brings happiness, and honest friendship may bridge the gap between social extremes in the fast-changing environment of Greece under modernization.

During the 50's and 60's, the Attica basin emerged as a space where disparate social groups concentrated, and where opportunities for economic and cultural development loomed large. As advancement from one social group to the one above it became possible, so did the danger of losing one's identity and forgetting past history. The film's narrative traces a circle from Fondas's humble roots in Piraeus to his aristocratic aspirations, and returns, geographically and symbolically, to his point of departure. Action takes place in three distinct areas, which visualize the ideological vectors of the narrative: the port of Piraeus, the center of Athens (the Kypseli neighborhood), and the suburb of Psychiko. In all three regions, public spaces are fleetingly depicted, but the interior spaces of the houses are closely connected to their neighborhoods and tie them, visually and symbolically, to the characters and their activities. The locations are not simply chosen for their spatial features, but also for their economic, social and cultural coordinates, which, according to the film, inevitably define each person's true identity.

***Desk Heartbeats* (1963)**

Another romantic comedy enjoyed great commercial success at the time, thanks to the repetition of familiar patterns and the popularity of its starring couple. *Lisa*, an adorable high-school student conquers *Dimitris*, a dashing professor of medicine, and, after their wedding, secretly returns to school. Her lies threaten their relationship, but

Lisa's pregnancy, a deus ex machina, resolves the school-or-home dilemma and restores Dimitris's trust. The film's basis is not love across classes and its balancing function, but love across ages and its rejuvenating effect. Youth gives positive characteristics to a woman (beauty, innocence, playfulness- much like those of a child), and age adds welcome qualities to a man (maturity, seriousness, dignity, financial independence- much like those of an adult). Love becomes comparable to guarding and harnessing a mischievous child.

Since the narrative does not hinge on socio-cultural difference, the city, as the locus of such difference, has no place in the film's iconography. Action is transferred to the sites where successive generations co-exist and where their clashes can be presented more clearly and legibly; the young woman is placed in the home and the classroom, where a child would also be. Three houses are depicted: Lisa's family home (the *Petrovasili* residence), Lisa's and Dimitri's home (the *Papadopoulou* residence) and Lisa's classmate house (the *Ksanthopoulou* residence). All three are in the same area, again in the suburb of Psychiko, a typical signifier of a wealthy upper-class suburb for the films of that period.

Depicting the suburb

The *Bakas* residence (in *The Drunkard*) is located in one of the new suburbs of Athens, which remains anonymous in the film. It is a landscape with a few buildings, lush greenery and high walls. The plot is surrounded by a compact fence and the main stone building stands away from the road. The residence has a well-tended garden, a greenhouse, parking for two cars, a pool –at a time when indoor plumbing was for many still a luxury- and the staff required for their upkeep. The film scenes reveal the family's increased ability to consume, on the one hand, and their preference for a European lifestyle, even before the camera enters the interior of the house.

In *The Four Stairs*, the *Asprokotsifas* residence and Rena and Dimitris's house neighbor one another in an area with a declining agricultural character, as we can understand from the poultry kept in the Asprokotsifas estate. Behind the house there is a forest where Dimitris goes hunting, but the street that leads to the house is wide, bordered by a tall stone fence, a raised pavement and a row of trees. Dimitris meets Rena when he visits the area to enquire after some expensive land to build his house. He runs an industry, yet dreams of a country life and compares the area to heaven, framing the site as an imaginary place where the best elements of city- and country-life meet. When we last see the area towards the ending, a few years have passed, and the forest has been replaced by a sparsely built-up residential area with a network of tree-lined streets.

The upper-class *Dekrissi* family (Millie's parents, in *Poor Bums*) resides in a large villa in Psychiko, an Athens suburb modelled after the morphological principles of the English garden city, which appealed greatly to members of the Athens bourgeois elite (Kafkoula, 2007, p. 302-304). All houses in the neighborhood have large plots, low fences and abundant greenery. Psychiko is also the main location for *Desk Heartbeats*, and it is portrayed in a similar vein, with thinly spaced houses, beautiful gardens and neighbors paying visits to one another. Ten years after the *Drunkard* and *The Four Stairs*, the idyllic countryside that offers a home in the city away from the city has given way to a loosely defined neighborhood, without the spatial reference points or the strong collective character of an area in the urban center. It seems that the most prominent characteristics of the filmic upper-class suburb have already been shaped.

Spatial Signifiers: pianos and fireplaces, lions and owls, pools and vitrines

The schematic representation of the *Bakas* residence interior (in *The Drunkard*) is confined to the unified spaces of the living room, the dining room and the grand staircase, in scenes in which the family members receive guests. It is then evident that this space is connected to the representation of the family's public image, either during everyday activities or special occasions. In the frames of the Bakas interior we see the signifiers of elite wealth and culture in further detail: the sinuous hand rail, comfortable furniture, works of art, crystal tableware, porcelain, the maid. The most eloquent signifiers are located in the borders of the frame: the fireplace, an indisputable symbol of the hearth and a synonym (in Greek) of noble origins, and the piano, which imbues the space with cultured European elegance and reminds us that the house occupants, relieved of financial worries or house chores, can devote their time to artistic pursuits. The absence of any reference to the kitchen must also be noted: the idle lady of the house spends her time gardening, and the kitchen, a space for the servants, remains unseen and unspoken, clearly signifying the character of the residence as a place of respite and conspicuous consumption.

The *Asprokotsifas* and the *Grena* residences (in *The Four Stairs*) again showcase their owners' fortune: again, we see high walls that surround a lush garden with stone lions on banisters, and in the interiors we see heavy furniture, fireplaces, luxurious glassware and lighting fixtures, works of art, servants. The enfilade reception spaces in the Grena residence have a piano in one end, unfluted pillars in the corners of the middle space where the fireplace is, and a large library in the room at the other end, with a wooden owl perched on top of it. We don't see the interior spaces of Rena and Dimitris's house, but even its exterior space manages to signify affluence, conjugal love and family joy, without using extra objects. After all, the house was specifically designed for its user/ owner and his future family. The sunny veranda with its modern geometric furniture, the carefully tended plants in a clean swept surface and the presence of the loyal servants clearly show the time, energy and resources invested on the space. The presence of Dimitris himself, now a father, in leisurely moments with his family further stresses this "*superlux villa*" (as it had been advertised) as the bearer of family happiness, away from problems.

The *Poor Bums' Dekrissi* residence, on top of a hill, has an expansive front lawn, a small pool and a beautiful rear garden overlooking the area. Again, when it comes to the depiction of the interior, it is the living room and staircase that loom large: a well-proportioned space with high ceilings, modern furniture and careful decoration (curtains, plants, works of art, souvenirs and family heirlooms). The fireplace and the obedient maid are omnipresent. When the competing suitors first arrive at the house, their looks, full of curiosity and admiration confer on the spectators the image of an aesthetically and socially approved space.

In *Desk Heartbeats* we find an interesting exception to the convention of depicting only the collective areas of the wealthy house. The *Petrovasili* residence (Lisa's family home) is illustrated via its exterior and its residents' personal spaces. Even in these spaces, of course, we can see signs of privilege, which may be considered as stronger, as they pertain not to the formal representation of the family but to its members' private lives and everyday habits: the large bedroom spaces with wide openings and immediate access to the garden, Lisa's breakfast-in-bed morning routine, the doctor's house call. A second group of signifiers is literally embedded in the spaces' borders, in vitrines within the bedroom walls. In Lisa's room, the vitrine houses dolls, their retirement symbolizing the passing from childhood to womanhood (there is a nylon stocking lying right in front of the vitrine). In Lisa's parents' bedroom, the vitrine holds books, symbols of education. In the *Papadopoulos* residence (Lisa and Dimitris's house), yet another bedroom vitrine houses dolls, elegant statues and books, as symbols of the spouses' varying degrees of maturity. Beyond their symbolic function, the vitrines showcase the careful design and construction of the private spaces in a wealthy residence, an image complimented with decorative construction details, costly furniture and objects.

Spatial Layouts: dis/continuities

In the Bakas's interior multiple uses are integrated in space, subtly separated with architectural gestures (a few steps, differentiated heights, furniture arrangements). The layout of the collective spaces expresses the then contemporary ideas about free plan and flowing space. The personal spaces of its residents or the working spaces, however, are strongly separated from the collective and their location is only hinted at in the film. This stands in strong contrast to Charalambis's house, a working-class home in the center of Athens, where each of the three rooms (living room, bedroom and kitchen) receives multiple uses, collective and personal, yet not thanks to new architectural ideas but owing to the scarcity of space: spaces of representation and working spaces are not separated. The women of the house (Annoula and her grandmother) busy themselves with household tasks in all three rooms, while Charalambis spends most of his time in the street, his workshop, or the tavern, and complains when a rainy day confines him in the house.

Different relationships also develop between interior and exterior spaces in each case. In the suburban house, the big living room window is kept shut and covered with curtains, and outside space, although beautiful and well-kempt, is not visible. And vice-versa, interior space stays hidden, although the exterior space is so well protected from the public gaze. In the urban house, in contrast, the ladies of the house open the windows as soon as they wake up, to let the views and sounds of the city in. Suburban doors are carefully closed, preserving borders and concealing the privacy of each activity, yet Charalambis's door is left ajar towards the enclosed yard, a symbol of the continuity between interior and exterior in the typical old houses of Athens, and of the house's openness to the traditional collective urban lifestyle. All this makes the spatial reversals of the suburban house clearer: the continuity of its interior collective space is confined within this space, and stops at its walls. Beyond them, there is a series of discontinuities with personal spaces, with working spaces, with the house's exterior space, and with the space

outside the house. These spatial and perceptual discontinuities are further stressed when compared with the lower-class house's continuity between interior spaces, between interior and exterior spaces, and between residential and neighborhood space.

It is extremely difficult to detect such continuities in the houses of *The Four Stairs*. In Rena and Dimitris's house, for one, we only see two areas of the exterior, the front door and the back veranda, and we can see no connections to one another or to the interior; we never see what is there behind the front door or the glazed doors of the house. With reference to the interior, the *Asprokotsifas* residence appears composed of discrete enclosed rooms of varying sizes connected with corridors. Each space has a particular function. Even husband and wife have separate bedrooms that communicate through a common hall. With regard to the exterior, a series of spaces composes the formal garden (from the gate, through a trellis-covered path, via a roundabout with potted plants, up a set of steps to the front veranda and through a porch to the front door). There is also a backyard for vegetables and poultry, which remains hidden but connects the house perceptually to a past of countryside aristocracy. Again, it is the outside space that holds most of the action. In the *Grenas* residence, although we only see the collective spaces, we notice their enfilade layout and the large carefully elaborated openings that lead from one to the other. Separate functions are also assigned to each space (the piano room, the parlor, the office), but they cannot be sealed off from one another. The continuity of the rooms allows any gaze to cross all three and take all the symbols in at once: at one end lies the piano, a symbol of culture and elegance, the fireplace in the middle stands for family ties and tradition, and the owl at the other end, a signifier of wisdom. It seems that all three rooms work together in order to forge a complete image of the residents as prominent members of the dominant class.

The *Dekrissi* residence of *Poor Bums*, like *The Drunkard*'s *Bakas* residence has its entrance hall, living room and staircase as a sequence of distinctive spaces that loosely flow into one another. It is not a formal enfilade of rooms, like that of the *Grenas's*, but an arrangement of rectangles that lead from the front to the inside reception areas or through the hall and directly to the back garden. The rest of the spaces –the bedrooms, the kitchen, a work office- are implied but never shown, just like in the *Bakas* case. The free plan principles apply only to the main reception areas, which are strongly separated from all other working or personal spaces. Moreover, any movement towards these spaces is immediately visible from the living room, which lies slightly removed from the landing, the circulation heart of the house. The fact that the living room is not directly connected to through-movement but is only one step removed from it, without doors or other means of controlling how exposed it is, is the cause of many surprise meetings in the narrative. Again, this arrangement is very different from the other two houses depicted in the film, the modest house in Piraeus with its two small rooms and the apartment in Kypseli, where access to other parts of the house is directly through the living room.

In the *Papadopoulos* residence of *Desk Heartbeats* we are allowed into a variety of interior spaces: the couple's bedroom, the kitchen, and, of course, the large living room, which receives most of the action, be it a party, friends' and family visits, private conversations, arguments and reconciliations. The living room is immediately visible from the entrance space and is separated by it with a few steps and a low railing. It is a very large space with high ceilings and three distinct seating areas –armchairs by the fireplace, a sofa and chairs in the middle, and a table with chairs close to the verandah doors. Each area is articulated with the different relationships between the people using it. The fireplace area, with stone walls and works of art, is the space where gentlemen discuss business and family issues. The second sitting area, in the middle of the space and close to the entrance and the stairway, the "heart" of the house, is used by the wives and their own pettier problems. The third space, closer to the openness of the garden, is where Lisa talks with her classmate, and is therefore connected with Lisa's lighter girlish side.

What is common in the portrayal of the three residences in Psychico, in *Desk Heartbeats*, is the appearance of exterior space in all three: in the *Ksanthopoulou* residence we see only parts of its front lawn and the veranda, where Lisa meets her classmates for an impromptu party. In all three houses, the space outside the walls is used to communicate intense feelings, positive or negative. Lisa, the main female character, runs outside when she is filled with happiness or sadness, either in her parents' or her own house, stressing the continuity between exterior and interior. In the *Papadopoulos* residence this continuity is so strong that the wide glass doors that separate the living room from the garden are never closed; in fact, they fold onto the side walls and disappear, while the floor of the living room continues uninterrupted outside. It is clear that Lisa and Dimitris use it as an extension of the interior, aided by the high plants and the perimeter porch that protects them from the street. The continuity between interior and exterior is possible thanks to the discontinuity between this exterior and public space.

Spatial Movements: positions and transitions

The airy *Bakas* living/ dining room, although spacious, gives a stifling impression. The space is dark, the furniture is heavy and the curtains are constantly drawn. Residents and guests, dressed in formal clothes, hardly move from their places, and seldom demonstrate their true feelings. The *Bakas* living room seems to function as a space where the family is publicly represented as dignified, well-mannered, well-cultured and well-to-do. The pompous atmosphere of the space precludes personal expressions and strong reactions.

The staircase that connects the living/dining room with the undefined floor of bedrooms has multiple functions as a spatial tool: it allows greater height for the dining area and a sense of spaciousness, it signifies the existence of other more secluded spaces on a higher level, it distinguishes them perceptually from the collective areas and it highlights the living room as a circulation node. If we think how the bodies are situated in stasis whilst in the living room, we can imagine how the presence of the staircase within this space creates a situation of tension, in which the fixed body is controlled and controls the body in movement.

The *Asprokotsifas'* and *Grenas'* interiors are filled with chairs, armchairs, sofas and tables; furniture that speaks of stasis, rest, leisure, or concentration. Like the *Bakas* family, we often see members of these families seated, reading the newspaper, entertaining visitors, playing the piano or discussing business. Rena, on the other hand, is never seated in her uncle's house; she serves her uncle and his guests or works in the kitchen. It is only in the garden that we see her resting, discussing with Dimitris the architectural drawings of his new house. Once she is married, things change. As the lady of the house, we see her on the veranda, sitting on the arm of Dimitris's chaise longue, watching their children play.

For narrative purposes, the characters in *Poor Bums* are in constant movement between interior and exterior space (in the *Dekrissi* residence), through passages that give the impression of multiple connections between the two. Thus we get a sense of an interior tightly woven with the exterior, and we realize that the residents' everyday lives use the entirety of the space, in stark contrast to the airless interior of the urban apartment and much like the Piraeus' house with the borderless yard.

We can nevertheless detect movement not only within the spaces of the house, but also between the space in the house and the space outside it, i.e. the immediate scale of the neighborhood and the larger scale of the city. In *The Drunkard,* Annoula works inside the house with her grandmother and outside it as a secretary. Mrs. Bakas, however, does no work at all and is introduced as an idle spoilt member of the elite, who forgets her own humble origins. And yet Annoula is allowed to circulate in public space, whereas Mrs. Bakas, with all her fortunes, remains spatially and socially distant from it. It goes without saying that, for the film, the proper position of a woman is within the home; even Annoula, despite her skills, quits her job after her betrothal to Alec. This way, for the happily ever after, the woman's body is repositioned in the center of the house. The suburban house symbolizes this confinement which, in those times, seems to be desirable and sought-after.

Spatial Controls: personal and group privacy

A definition of privacy is hard to give, as the content of the term develops in time and acquires different hues for each culture. V. Tentokali (1988, pp. 134-161), discussing notions of privacy in the post-war era, arranges its various definitions into two larger groups: one group has to do with discontinuing one's relationships to others, and the other group concerns the control of these relationships through controlling the stimuli and the information that we exchange with our surroundings. When it comes to space, privacy entails the ability to "*create material limits that exclude others*" and to protect *"information about ourselves*".

in the suburb

Undoubtedly, the members of the *Bakas* family have the ability to control the material limits of their space in order to safeguard the information about themselves that they exchange with their surroundings. Small-scale bridges over the deep street gutter –a miniature moat- connect the street to the houses' front gates. The defensive connotations of the street borders corroborates the idea of security and visual and social isolation that suburban dwellers enjoy. The country suburb is the *other world*, the new remote enclosed space for resting, closer to the natural environment, as opposed to the male family members' working spaces in the city. And thus the urban

periphery emerges as the ideal space for living in the city, in spite of its distance from the urban center and exactly because of this distance.

Aphrodite, Rena's cousin and competitor in *The Four Stairs*, makes a comment that reinforces that idea, when she visits Dimitris's house, and names it "… the fortress of happiness…". Behind them, a worker tests the stability of a protective window railing, visually complementing their discussion. The house is built on a hill, with a low wall that protects the verandah and allows views out towards the other houses below; even its location supports its image as a citadel that grants control and safety. Aphrodite's comment reminds us of the immediate connection between this remote house and the protection of family life through the exclusion of the world outside. She goes on to add that the only thing missing from this fortress is the perfect bride. It is not clear if this bride is meant as the keeper of the stronghold or as the one kept within it, yet it is clear that she is placed as the keystone in a structure that has been built by her husband.

There are only a few scenes in *Poor Bums* set in outdoor public spaces. Only Piraeus is portrayed as a neighborhood, in the sense of a spatially and socially homogeneous area with relations of familiarity and solidarity among its residents. It is interesting how this house in Piraeus shares a similar location on a hilltop with Rena and Dimitris's house and with the *Dekrissi* residence in Psychiko. Once again, the house holds a position of visual control over its surroundings, whilst at the same time protecting its residents' activities from unwelcome onlookers. The wide open expanse of the front lawn, which is easily viewed from the outside, is only used as a space of representation, with its trimmed grass and neatly arranged swimming pool. Well protected from outside looks by the building itself, the rising of the ground and the lush vegetation, the back garden is the space of play and mischief. However, despite the fact that we do glimpse other people walking in the area, the relationships of the Dekrissi family with their neighborhood are not described.

In the Psychiko of *Desk Heartbeats*, visits between neighbors create a rudimentary neighborhood feeling, which is still far from the relationships of camaraderie that develop in the dense historic central urban neighborhoods. The ease with which the characters act in the exterior spaces of their houses (Lisa and her mother go out in their nightgowns, Lisa and her classmates sing and dance) and the personal nature of their actions underscore the private character of these spaces. The expression of the characters' feelings in the house exterior is not about sharing them with others, but about finding adequate space to contain them.

in the home

In all four films, the suburban living room plays a major part in the representation of the upper-class residence, and in most cases, it is the sole indoor space of the house that is depicted. After all, it is where the families' wealth and culture is most readily displayed: a space of representation for any house is even more representative when used in the set of filmic spatial representations. As expected, it is always a collective space, seldom offering any privacy to its users.

Yet, despite the living room's predominance in the representation of the suburban house, we do not immediately associate these residences with increasingly public characteristics. One reason for this, as already mentioned, is the depiction of the suburb itself as a secluded residential area that offers a high degree of privacy. Another reason may be this insistence on locating all the action in what are clearly collective spaces, whilst implying that the personal spaces of the residents are left untouched by the intrusion of the camera. When it comes to the houses of the lower class, this separation is not possible, since the spaces of the house are few and used for many different activities; the spaces of the Piraeus residence in *Poor Bums* exhibit the same multi-functionality that we saw in Charalambis's house in *The Drunkard*. Therefore although personal spaces in the villas of *The Drunkard*, *The Four Stairs* and *Poor Bums* are visually absent, their placement on an upper floor is yet further proof of the families' wealth and of the increased importance given to the protection of personal space and privacy. These spaces are so well guarded that not even the camera is allowed inside them.

It is however interesting that only a year after *The Drunkard*, in *The Four Stairs* more suburban home spaces make their appearance. While Rena is still the house maid, we watch her laboring in the kitchen and we see her verbally attacked by her cousin in her own bedroom- a maid's bedroom. Even though the camera only gets as far as the hallway to the Asprokotsifas' bedrooms, it may enter Rena's personal space along with her imposing relatives, watch her cry, or even go through her closet as she prepares her suitcase to leave. Rena's bedroom is a space where the suburban house is clearly shown as a space of control, as a field of dominant powers and subordinate elements. Her cousin firmly states that Rena is a guest in the house thanks to charity; we can therefore see that she has no rights

to space, and her privacy is checked, allowed or infringed upon at the house owners' will; there are, let's say, the controlling residents and the controlled ones.

Rena is not the only servant in the household. Similar issues of control emerge when we look at the kitchen. In the *Asprokotsifas* residence, the kitchen is a large light-filled space with long counters and new appliances, where Rena and the other female servant work. Her aunt and cousin, the controlling residents, enter the kitchen only to eavesdrop or give orders. Once all the servants -the controlled residents-, quit, the balance of power is upended and the controlling residents seem to lose control of the household, as we can see from the mess in the kitchen or the ensuing discordance between Mr. and Mrs. Asprokotsifas.

The working space of the kitchen is also included in the representation of the *Papadopoulos* residence. It appears to be located next to the living room, on the other side of the fireplace. Separated by the spaces of representation by a strong stone wall, it is another space where wealth is evident on the clean tidy glossy surfaces of the counter and cupboards. Again, it is not a space for Lisa, the lady of the house, but the domain of Tasia, the loyal servant and silent force of the household. Even so, it is a space used by the women of the house: Tasia hides Lisa's schoolbag in the fridge, so that Dimitris doesn't find it. Thanks to the absence of the male supervision, it is here that the two women keep their secrets safe. The kitchen is their lair, a space for inter-gender privacy.

Lisa may be the lady of the house, but she doesn't have her own working space, like she used to in her parents' house. In order to study she uses the secretaire at the entrance hall, which stands at the most exposed location in the house, right by the front door and under the staircase. We can thus trace the gradual reduction in Lisa's access to a place of her own: from her private bedroom at her parents' house to the shared bedroom and the exposed working space in her own house. Tasia may have her own domain, but Lisa doesn't.

Not often, in the films of the era, do we see as many different spaces depicted as in the *Papadopoulos* residence: apart from the kitchen, its representation includes outdoor and indoor spaces, collective and personal spaces. The reception area of the house is large, perceptually separated into three smaller spaces and flows into the garden. Its boundary towards the kitchen is however solid –a wall covered in stone- and stands in strong opposition to the other end of the area, the glass doors toward the garden, which almost disappear as onto the side walls as they are drawn open. Things change when we move towards the bedroom. A stairways and a series of other intermediate rooms separate the bedroom from the more collective spaces, and render the room of the marital bed many steps deep into the house.

The filmic gaze is now allowed past the collective spaces of a house and further inside it. The residents of the suburban villas are no longer the distant representatives of the social elite, but familiar characters with the same traits as the movie house audience. Since the characters are so accessible, there is no reason why the houses they live in may not be as reachable. The hope of social advancement doesn't have to remain a wild dream, but it seems to have already been realized as the audience participates in a story that takes place in the living rooms and bedrooms of the upper class.

In contrast to the living room, the space of representation, the space of pomp and circumstance, the garden and the pool area of the houses, although exterior spaces, allow their occupants' personal expression. This may be because they are so successfully tamed by man-made interventions and so well separated from the public space of the street. In *The* Drunkard, the most private exchanges take place outside the house walls; it seems that, surrounded by fences and plants, the characters feel more at home in the pool's openness rather than in the high-ceilinged living room. The exterior space of the house functions, then, as a private space and the borders of the residence include the garden not merely as the necessary symbol of prosperity but as an essential functional space for everyday living. In *The Drunkard*, the space of the pool offers the chance for a young man (Alec) to retire with a young woman in a place where they can be alone together, without causing the parents' anxiety for inappropriate behavior. The exterior space, *outside* the building yet *inside* the house, is located between the exposed publicity of the street and the internalized pretensions of the living room, and beyond the dangerous seclusion of the bedroom or the precarious inequality of a working space. We could here discover traces of a certain type of privacy, beyond that of the *family* or that among people of the *same gender*. It may tentatively be called privacy a*cross genders*, as it describes the ability for people of different genders to meet in a space where they can control information about themselves for as long as they occupy it.

Dimitris, in *The Four Stairs*, also manages to spend time alone with Rena in the *Asprokotsifas* garden. Again, this space between the privacy of the interior and the publicity of the street offers a neutral ground where people of

different gender and from different social positions may meet without supervision. In the *Grenas* residence, after a misunderstanding with Rena, Dimitris leads her cousin to the veranda in a scene that mirrors one from *The Drunkard* (incidentally, it is with the same actress in both films), where he proposes to her. Exterior space is where all personal scenes take place, where privacy a*cross genders* is once again possible.

In the *Poor Bums'* Kypseli apartment, it is the house office that offers a spot for private conversations behind closed doors; an intermediate space that doesn't have the public character of the living room or the private character of the bedroom, and therefore substitutes for the missing exterior space of the apartment when it comes to privacy a*cross genders*. In the Psychiko residence personal spaces are once again omitted, but exterior spaces absorb much of the action, be it personal or collective in nature. The front lawn and the pool area seem to be the exterior space of representation for the family, but the back garden functions as a private space for recollection, secret meetings, schemes and duels; it is the informal lived space of the house. It is here that we re-discover the exterior space that frees people from the restrictions of etiquette in order to express their most inner thoughts and feelings.

The suburban villa: a rough cut

By now, it seems that exterior space is the required convention to signify a house as upper-class and suburban. Although it is a necessary, it not a sufficient characteristic: for Fondas' and Despoina's Piraeus house exterior space is also its most important feature, judging from Despoina's complaints about the Kypseli apartment ("*Check out these ceilings! If you stand up too fast you'll hit your head!*"). After all, she is the one who used to spend most of her time in the yard with her housework. For her, moving into an apartment does not constitute an upgrade in her role, but a dislocation from outdoor communal living to and indoor individual lifestyle that, instead of protective, proves to be dangerously confining. The Psychiko villa has high ceilings and open-air spaces which allow Millie to hatch and execute her schemes, and it is this freedom that seems to be what is common in the places of the happily ever after. The limitless spaciousness of the Piraeus' yard and the protected openness of the suburban garden are opposed to the confined interior of the apartment. The formal characteristics of these two spaces stand in stark contrast: the yard is pictured as an informal working space and the garden as a carefully laid-out playground. Yet they compose equally forceful images: both are placed on a prominent site, with a low barrier that protects the body but allows commanding views of their surroundings.

The body that is protected -but not bounded- the body that commands the views and oversees the space is a female body. In the working neighborhood it is Despoina, doing laundry in the yard because she doesn't like pretensions, and Fanitsa, Fondas's girlfriend who comes for a visit, verifying the strong socio-spatial bonds of their class background. In the upper-class suburb it is Rena, watching her children play. It is Millie, gathering her thoughts and manipulating her suitors. It is Lisa singing and dancing about the wonders of love. It is women, of course, since the space of the house is considered *their* space, and they are in control of it much as they are in control of their stories.

To take this point a little further, let's go back to Rena and Dimitris in the *Asprokotsifas* garden. He shows her his house plans and she modestly yet appropriately comments on them: "*For a woman working in her house, four* [entrance] *stairs are enough, Mr. Grenas. Any more are too tiring. …A veranda to the west should not have steps… so the children can play without the danger of a fall.*" She does not comment on the exterior or representational aspects of the house, but on functional issues. The house where she places the woman is not an object seen from the outside, but a configuration of interior and exterior spaces seen from the inside. Furthermore, she doesn't locate this woman as a standing spectator, but as a working person that keeps moving within this configuration. Rena's words come from a clearly female position from within the house, a position that a man could never take, neither spatially or perceptually (which Dimitris frankly admits). Later, Aphrodite, Rena's rival, criticizes the low entrance stairway, proving to the audience and to Dimitris how inadequate a wife she would make, since she only cares about how the house would impress others, and she clearly places herself in a position outside the house. These *Four Stairs* then become a symbol of this house and a litmus test for choosing Rena as the lady of the household, the manager of its space, the foundation of the family and the guarantor of its happiness.

This, more or less, is how all four films conclude. *The Drunkard*'s end situates Annoula as the new member of the Bakas' household and in her rightful place as lady of a beautiful suburban home. Rena, touched by her father's magic wand, buys the house with *The Four Stairs* and gives Dimitris the keys to their happiness. Cunning Millie manages to marry the man she loves and sends the *Poor Bums* back to their modest origins. Lisa's pregnancy stops her *Desk*

Heartbeats, thereby validating the assumption that a woman's place is in the home, where she is kept safe and well provided for by a man.

For a wife, the space of the house is articulated with a series of spaces that compose the 'natural' habitat of a married woman and organize her time. It seems that, within a decade, from *The Drunkard* and *The Four Stairs* to *Poor Bums* and *Desk Heartbeats,* there evolved in the urban periphery a complex of places with a public character (the market place, the hairdresser, the café), but the main space of social exchange is still the house, connected to social obligations and idle activities. When a friend's wife describes her everyday routine to Lisa, the husband is conspicuously absent from her daily life and from the house. Yet despite the fact that, according to the ideological framework of the film, every woman belongs in the interior of the home, there is no space there that belongs only to her, no space that can provide her with the privacy and the freedom of expression that a girl enjoys, no "*room of her own*" as V. Woolf (1929) required. It seems that this place could be found in the exterior, however. Lisa runs outside every time she feels happy or lonely, Millie escapes her suitors in the rear garden, and Rena reads a woman's routine in the planned verandahs of the house. If we look at the two coarsely formed binaries 'man/ woman' and 'interior/ exterior', a correspondence grows between the woman and the exterior space of the house. Seen as the flipside of the interior, exterior space emerges as a prerequisite for the depiction of a suburban home in that it re-balances the relations of privacy and control between the house and the space outside it and between the residents of the house.

The suburban house within the cinematic universe of these four films, when compared with the spaces of the lower classes, is the protected well-groomed comfortable space of leisure, full of beautiful and expensive objects, the space for the lucky few. It is a space away from the dense urban center and deep into nature, a space away from the fuss of the city and into the serenity of the countryside, a space away from small neighborhood dramas and within the decorum of civility. This *other* space is in turn composed by a series of binaries: the revealed collective space and the concealed private spaces, the exposed leisure spaces and the suppressed workspaces, the dark interior space of self-control and the sunny exterior space of confessions and schemes. This series of *others* within this primary *other* is represented on screen by the residence's exterior space. It becomes the symbol of the suburban house as an essentially private space, on many levels: on that of the private spaces that are kept away from anyone's gaze and on that of private thoughts and feelings that remain under control in the interior to find their place of expression outdoors.

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