

Film Distribution in the Diaspora

Temporality, Community and National Cinema

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Every conception of history is invariably accompanied by a certain experience of time which is implicit in it, conditions it, and thereby has to be elucidated. Similarly every culture is first and foremost a particular experience of time, and no new culture is possible without an alteration in this experience.

Giorgio Agamben (1993, p. 91)

Time, much like language, is a carrier of significance, a form through which we define the content of relations between the Self and the Other.

Johannes Fabian (2002, p. xxxix)

Introduction

Films are manufactured in order to be distributed through space and time to audiences. Many recent research initiatives have begun to explore in detail the spatial dimensions of film distribution.¹ But the diffusion of films also occurs through time. In an era tantalised by the thought of ‘day and date’ releasing it is important to remember that the careful orchestration of film distribution across defined time periods (‘windows’) has been a long-standing feature of film industry business practice.² By granting exclusivity to different exhibition and distribution companies at every stage of a film’s release, ‘windows’ allow film producers to coordinate multiple restricted dealings for the commercial exploitation of a title. This system of distribution relies on a continuous supply of new titles and the ready obsolescence of films at the conclusion of their sequence.

Although digital distribution technologies have raised the prospect (if not yet the full reality) of ‘simultaneous’ global film releasing, geographies and economies of scale have until recently precluded the idea of instantaneous, non-exclusive release.³ The expense involved in striking prints for all cinemas and the further cost of

Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies, First Edition.

Edited by Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers.

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physically delivering films over vast distances to the theatre door have been given as prime factors for the staggered dispersal of cinema. The division of the world into spatially defined release territories has also had the effect of segmenting them temporally, naturalising a relation between the space and time of film distribution. In these depictions time, understood as a temporal disjuncture or interval in the diffusion of films, is the direct correlate of the spatial distance between global markets. The greater the distance from a film's domestic market, the longer the delay in its arrival. This line of reasoning also seems to apply to the distribution of films within markets.

At different times in the history of cinema, different release stages *within* distribution territories have also applied. For most of the last century, Hollywood movie distribution-exhibition was organised into a progression of 'runs'. Whereas most major film titles today are released on as many screens as possible ('general release') for maximum exposure and a prompt return on investment, prior to the mid-1970s this was not usually the case. In the early years of the twentieth century a 'zone-run-clearance' system was implemented, in which markets (usually cities but sometimes entire states) were classified as zones and the venues within them identified as either first-, second- or third-run theatres (although in some larger markets there may have been as many as five or six runs). The attribution of 'run' status was based on several factors including a theatre's location, size and perceived quality. First-run theatres were usually found within a confined downtown radius and were granted exclusive rights to screen a new title. After this the film would be temporarily removed from circulation for a short period of 'clearance' before reopening on second-run theatres in the inner suburbs. This strategy of sequential 'runs' would continue as the film moved further and further away from the centre of town. In the postwar period, which particularly concerns this chapter, alternative distribution strategies such as 'showcase' and 'roadshow' releasing were also practised.⁴ Despite these innovations, the vast majority of Hollywood film titles were distributed according to the zone-run-clearance system into the 1970s.

It is easy to see how the spatial contours of this form of film distribution are arranged as a concentric expansion around the centrifugal locus of the downtown theatre district within spatially defined territories that also fan out from the point of a film's domestic origin. Describing the postwar distribution of films in the city of Melbourne, for example, film exhibitor Brian Miller noted:

Distributing films across the city and its suburbs was like turning on a garden sprinkler. First turn of the tap covered the city theatres, another turn covered the inner suburbs and each subsequent turn reached further out until suburban Melbourne was saturated. (Miller, 2006, p. 24)

For Miller, the spatial expansion of cinema across the suburbs is also implicitly temporal, operating as a clearly defined sequence of 'turns'.⁵ Windows, clearances and defined runs act as interruptions or stops in a linear temporal sequence. Each twist of the faucet identifies which specific market is entitled to view a film at which time, identifying whose 'turn' it is (and who should wait for, or even perhaps

miss, a turn). The timing of film diffusion is not simply a transparent consequence of the spatial distribution of markets but is also a ranking of markets.

In accounts such as Miller's, film distribution rests on a conception of time that is thoroughly spatialised, in which temporal differences are also distances. The temporal character of this spatial movement is, however, fitful and contingent, subject to both uneven variation and interruption, fundamentally challenging the idea that global media flows are smooth in their transnationality or unimpeded in their localisation. The business of film distribution is founded on the establishment of temporal hierarchies, and its specific practices at once *promote* and *demote* markets through temporal relegation. The relative velocity of film distribution is not simply a matter of industrial, technological or economic organisation. It matters culturally and politically.

This chapter is particularly concerned to understand better the 'politics' of temporality entailed in the detailed analysis of film distribution as a practice of temporal ranking. Exploring the time experience of cinema spectatorship as it occurs in Australia for Greek diasporic audiences who are themselves the subjects of a spatial and temporal dislocation, it emphasises that neither the quantitative nor qualitative aspects of time have been sufficiently theorised in relation to the historical practice of film distribution and exhibition.

Thinking Time: Theorising the Temporality of Film Distribution and Exhibition

Ithaca is an idea: to get there one day. Stathis Raftopoulos, Greek and foreign language film distributor and exhibitor⁶

In the course of a film's theatrical distribution in a zone-run-clearance system, films 'descend' through social hierarchies, eventually arriving at those least privileged audiences who receive the last access to a once-new release. As they proceed through their chain of runs, films lose value, and both rental and ticket prices are reduced as a film's prints age and deteriorate through use. The uneasy splices, the perceptible hiss or mismatched dialogue of a damaged soundtrack, the palimpsest of green, yellow and white lines that run amok over the drama, reveal the layers of a film's meaning for those in the cinema. They are a film's defining marks, serving to both position and address its audiences, alerting them to their status at the end of the line.

Examining circuits of film consumption in Bolivia, media anthropologist Jeffrey Himpele has described how the movement of films around the city of La Paz 'marks, separates, connects, and ranks human differences' (Himpele, 1996, 48). Himpele's study is centrally concerned with the ways in which the circulation of film itself distributes difference by dispersing audiences. For Himpele:

Distribution is not a passive conduit merely linking the sites of production and consumption of film. It separates and connects differences among viewers in the social field. (Himpele, 1996, 59)

Similarly, Sean Cubitt observes the constitutive role that media distribution has in relation to consumers, noting how ‘restrictions of media flows to specific audiences at specific times indicate a key task of distribution: participation in the construction of audiences’ (Cubitt, 2005, p. 205). For Cubitt and Himpele film distribution wields time as an instrument for differentiating the spaces of consumption and the consumers who frequent those spaces by delaying or accelerating delivery. Charles Acland’s work on the rise of the multiplex cinema in the late twentieth century also acknowledges the key role that the global circulation of cinema plays in the creation of lines of spatial and temporal difference in public life (Acland, 2003, p. 245). For Acland the industrial orchestration of commodities and markets unevenly circulates forms and establishes zones of consumption, distinguished by the velocity with which cultural forms arrive and depart from their audiences’ attention (Acland, 2003, p. 244). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the organisation of the cinema. Acland is one of several film theorists to argue that recent innovations in communication, information and transportation technologies have created a sense of global synchronicity, which he alternatively calls ‘popular cosmopolitanism’ or ‘felt internationalism’.⁷ For Acland, popular cosmopolitanism is a ‘structure of feeling about senses of allegiance and affiliation – about being in step – with imagined distant and synchronized populations’ (Acland, 2003, p. 237). Acland charts an emerging international simultaneity in contemporary cinema, and a resultant revaluation of the space and time of new film events.⁸

In suggesting that this cultural simultaneity has produced new transnational communities that reside in people’s imaginations but also bear material consequences for the organisation of social life, Acland extends to a global scale Benedict Anderson’s conceptualisation of nations as communities imagined in the same time. For Anderson, national identity is embedded in temporality:

An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000,000-odd fellow-Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity. (Anderson, 1991, p. 26)

Anderson suggests that imagined communities or nations emerge from this calendrical coincidence, which is practised through the simultaneous consumption of media, such as the reading of daily newspapers. For Acland, the rise of coordinated opening weekends across the globe gives the impression of connecting people ‘to geographically distant and temporally synchronised communities’ (Acland, 2003, p. 239). But following Anderson, Acland goes further, stressing that it is not just the coincidence of a film’s consumption but the wider expectation of a globally shared experience of cinemagoing, in terms of tempo, timing, duration, sequence and rhythm, that overrides geographical distinctiveness or the ‘temporal particularity’ of different time zones and which fashions the cosmopolitan audience (Acland, 2003, p. 240).

Both Anderson and Acland share an operative assumption that communities are by definition co-temporal, but Acland's admission of temporal particularities suggests that it is possible to imagine the global diffusion of cinema in such a way that temporal differences (no matter how particular or abbreviated) are acknowledged rather than disregarded. This in turn would suggest there are possibilities for developing and sustaining a sense of community in circumstances that may incorporate multiple permutations and combinations of the temporally discontinuous, geographically distant, temporally coincident and/or geographically near. Instead of the 'before and after' of temporal sequence (with its attention on cultural lag, queuing, waiting) perhaps we might imagine a role for temporal differentiation in experiences of coexistence or community.

One key task for the study of film distribution would be to imagine how the various practices that constitute the cinema might operate *at* the same time but not necessarily *in* the same time. Another is to conceptualise these different temporalities without bringing them into a hierarchical or sequential ordering. The history of Greek cinema in Australia provides an empirical example of how alternative temporal orientations in different social systems and settings can coexist and produce synergies. For the diasporic communities in this study, cinemagoing was in fact an activity constituted by and through diverse temporalities and locations, particularly in terms of the qualitatively different times of cinema consumption in various locations in Greece and Australia. The analysis of these diasporic film circuits reveals a wide range of temporal differences in the various cultural settings of cinema attendance: distinctions that were negotiated, exploited and affirmed by the specialised distributor/exhibitors working the circuit. Diasporic film distributors and exhibitors were adept at practices of de- and re-temporalisation, continually accommodating, altering, adjusting and applying different film itineraries and cinema schedules. Rather than proposing that cultural alacrity and coincidence are the key criteria through which transnational or cosmopolitan identity is measured, the study of diasporic film circuits suggests that there is a place for examining the role of global media circulation in enabling the coexistence of people and communities living in overlapping, intersecting, disparate, parallel, hybrid and contradictory temporalities.

Much theorisation of diaspora has focused on spatial flexion in transnational experience, in which 'diasporic space' is understood as both general and particular, global and local, individual and collective, and is understood as being based on contiguous or 'encountered' relationships as well as imagined and remembered ones.⁹ This chapter adds to the reconceptualisation of the complex spaces of the diaspora a similar rethinking of its temporality through the vantage of cinemagoing; a discussion that bears on the commercial organisation of film viewing, on the articulation of specific audience preferences, on remembered cinema experiences, and extends to an acknowledgement of the oral history methodology that partially informs the research itself.¹⁰ Through this analysis of the temporality of cinemagoing, the Australian Greek diaspora appears in fact to be less marginal, less homogenising and less historically discrete than we might imagine (or choose to remember).

Territories and Circuits of Time: The Specifics of Film Distribution in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s

Distance is as characteristic of Australia as mountains are of Switzerland ... The distance of one part of the Australian coast from another, or the distance of the dry interior from the coast was a problem as obstinate as Australia's isolation from Europe. (Geoffrey Blainey, 2001, p. ix)

The movement of films to and within Australia in the postwar period has not yet been the subject of detailed scholarly analysis. Speaking generally, films deriving from the United States took approximately two months – never less – to arrive on screens in Australia.¹¹ Within Australia the circulation of films varied widely according to studio, distributor, exhibition chain and specific title. There was never a nationwide simultaneous release strategy and it was not uncommon for capital markets outside Sydney to wait for months for a particular film.

Conventionally films arrived in Australia as a fine-grain master positive print. This print was held in a bond store (usually located in Sydney) and was released only after censorship classification and customs duties (levied on a per foot basis) were finalised. The film exchange then arranged for a negative to be struck and from this negative a number of prints (in this period, usually around 12) were printed for the Australasian market.¹² A maximum of three or four prints would arrive in each state for release. Films opening in Melbourne often had a simultaneous regional release, so that Ballarat, Mildura and Albury might screen the film before it reached the Melbourne suburbs. There was usually a one-week clearance period between first and second runs, but no further clearances as the film made its way to the outer suburbs. After a release had run its course, each state branch of the distribution company retained two prints for the possibility of extra screenings (e.g. doing the rounds of the migrant Italian or Greek circuits). Although revivals in suburban cinemas became more common during the 1950s as the studios trimmed their production slates, they were never the mainstay of cinema programming, and Hoyts cinemas, Melbourne's dominant theatre chain, seldom screened reissues. In the 1950s some suburban cinemas moved to simultaneous first-release screenings with the city ('splash' release), making the scheduling of print movements much more difficult. Because of the limited number of prints available in each city, exhibitors resorted to 'switching' films, the practice of sharing prints between theatres on the same night by moving them between cinemas on a reel-by-reel basis.¹³ As many as five theatres might share the same print on a given night, with reels being choreographed between cinemas by motorcycle, public transport or foot. The practice was so prevalent that Hoyts issued a 36-page handbook to theatre managers describing how switching should be organised and programmed.¹⁴

It is possible to see how delays in the arrival of films on Australian screens serve to define the Australian market as culturally dependent, with 'production' occurring

in one place (there) and ‘consumption’ occurring in another (here), linked only by the transparent but tardy dealings of distributors. This representation, however, rests on a questionable understanding of the role and agency of distributors and exhibitors in defining the social fields of their audiences. For example, Melbourne’s Greek cinemas almost invariably received US films as a last rental.¹⁵ But Greek exhibitors in turn relegated these titles to a supporting role in a double-bill programme in which the feature presentation was nearly always a prominent Greek movie.¹⁶ According to distributor/exhibitor Panayiotis (Peter) Yiannoudes, being the last ‘run’ for Hollywood films presented a commercial opportunity rather than a problem, because of the low flat-rate rental charges incurred:

We don’t mind because we have our own [films]. But many times our support gave us more money than the feature. If you have a good American film with Greek subtitles, then we never put a good film with that. We put only any rubbish. But usually we have [Greek] blockbusters and we have [US] supporting films. (Peter Yiannoudes)¹⁷

The position of US and Greek films on the programme was very rarely altered, but the quality mix of the programme could be adjusted. The programming of specific titles was also subject to a multitude of institutional, cultural and social schedules to accommodate the temporal demands of dual national citizenship and the observance of both Greek and Australian holidays in quite distinct ways:

We never put a good film on a name day or Greek Easter. The best week of the year was the week after Christmas, then the March Labour Day, and Easter, the Australian Easter. At Greek Easter we always closed most of the cinemas. The Queen’s Birthday was a good week, and so was the week of Melbourne Cup. Always then that we have good films, special films. (Peter Yiannoudes)¹⁸

In the mid-1960s, Greek exhibitors were active in the successful push for Sunday cinema trading in Victoria and New South Wales, bringing about a change of state government policy that significantly altered the tempo of cinema consumption.¹⁹ Within the evening’s entertainments other adjustments were made:

Our intervals were quite long, because the audience wanted to see and talk to each other. I used to say to my dad, ‘I wish we had an area where we could make a nice coffee place here, they’d stay after the theatre’. (Loula Anagnostou)²⁰

Exhibitor-distributor Loula Anagnostou’s romantic memory of a lingering audience is, however, challenged by cinemagoer Arthur Gioulekas, who found the late finishes a particular difficulty, as well as a contrast to his experience of watching films in Greece:

We used to go to Richmond. We used to go about nine o’clock and we used to finish twelve o’clock. But we had a shop ... We went down there, saw the film, come back. In the morning I had to open the shop, you know? (Arthur Gioulekas)²¹

Anna Vlattas, a Sydney exhibitor-distributor, linked the success of the Greek cinemas to the delays in other forms of communication, suggesting the cinema was a prescient form of cultural contact, anticipating correspondences-to-come:

There's no doubt the Greek cinema has kept Greeks happy here. They were very, very homesick those years, because communication was virtually nil. It was a matter of waiting for a letter, which sometimes took up to a month to communicate with their mothers, fathers or sisters or whoever. Wives. So the Greek cinema did give a lot of entertainment to the Greeks.

For Vlattas, the cinema screenings were a way of passing time, bridging a temporal and spatial breach, diminishing subjective time.²² For audience member George Siskamanis, however, attendance at screenings only served to highlight his temporal and spatial dislocation:

The cinema during the period was 'let's take a trip to Greece.' ... when we entered for a few hours, we forgot our commitments, our problems and we lived our need, meaning Greece, with her way of life, all those things. The problem was we would come out of the cinema, strangled by nostalgia, because we hadn't managed to get used to this life and we felt foreign in a foreign place. (George Siskamanis)²³

For both Siskamanis and Vlattas the temporal experience of the cinema was always counterposed with another temporality, constituting the cinema as place of reckoning – of weighing up – and of comparison. Accounts such as these enable us to look at the way diasporic cinemagoing participates in breaking the assumption that cultural consciousness is inextricably linked to specific categories of space or geographic locations (which are usually understood as *either* where you are from *or* where you are at). Diasporic cinema attendance entails remembering locations of belonging as an outcome of both imaginary and physical processes. It suggests that there are multiple temporal and spatial rifts between locations of residence and observations of identity that are constituted through the acknowledgement of both presence and absence in cinema experiences. In the diaspora 'location' is always already explicitly temporal, relational and interconnected. As such it offers insights into how we might also think about the migrations of cinema as it traverses the globe, in this case from various locations (but principally Greece) to Melbourne.

Marking Time: Greek Film Distribution in the Diaspora

The cinema would bring our country to us. (Anastasha and Paul Tamvakis)²⁴

The rise of the Greek film industry during the 1950s and 1960s was enjoyed not just in Greece but internationally throughout the Greek diaspora. This was especially apparent in Australia, where waves of postwar migration provided a ready audience for imported Greek cinema (alongside sometimes subtitled films from

other popular national cinemas, i.e. America, India, Turkey, USSR and Hong Kong). Between 1952 and 1974, some 220 000 Greeks came to Australia, with a very high proportion of them settling in Melbourne. In 1947 there were a mere 2500 Greeks in Melbourne. By 1971, the city boasted more than 98 000, and Melbourne remains the ethnolinguistic centre of Hellenism in Australia, and is sometimes described as the third largest Greek city in the world.²⁵ Between 1949 and 1970 there were more than 16 000 documented film screenings at Greek language venues in Australia, the majority of these featuring Greek films.²⁶ Greek diasporic entrepreneurs had entered the Australian cinema business in the 1920s and 1930s as theatre owners and/or managers. But it was not until the 1950s that a distinctive film circuit was established for Greek audiences (Cork, 1998). A thriving Greek cinema circuit made up of some 30 different inner city and suburban venues operated in metropolitan Melbourne alone. Screenings also occurred in the state capitals of Sydney (which also featured a successful theatre circuit), Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart and Perth as well as in many regional centres such as Geelong, Ballarat, Mildura, Albury, Wollongong and Newcastle.²⁷

Greek films were initially distributed and exhibited around the country on an itinerant basis, but by the early 1960s, a series of complex national circuits based on a modified zone-run-clearance system had developed. Taking Melbourne as a case study, it is possible to identify patterns in the timing of runs and the location of theatres that would suggest that within the Greek diaspora a spatial distribution of social hierarchies was also observed. The dominant Greek theatre chain in Melbourne was operated by Cosmopolitan Motion Pictures. By the early 1970s Cosmopolitan owned and leased 10 venues that screened regularly, as well as leasing some additional venues on occasion (Figure 14.1). Usually these cinemas were restricted to screening on weekends and only three venues regularly programmed matinees. Tickets could be reserved only at the National, Westgarth, Kinema and Paramount cinemas, which indicates that seats at these venues were in high demand. According to Peter Yiannoudes, a typical system of runs operated across the cinemas (see Table 14.1). Films would then be sent to Sydney (and vice versa for the Sydney circuits), followed by other capitals and regional centres or locations overseas, such as Wellington. A clearance period would then apply before the films were revived; some films reappeared as many as five or six times.

The circuit relied on importation of single film prints, and therefore relied on 'switching' prints between cinemas in weeks one and two. Since the cinemas involved in switching were not located in adjacent suburbs, and there was no evident efficiency to be gained from sharing prints, the practice suggests that Cosmopolitan made a conceptual connection between the cinema audiences frequenting these early-run venues. More generally, the circulation of films did not conform to a concentric expansion from a point of origin but rather criss-crossed the city. Although the circuit of runs does broadly correspond to Cosmopolitan's chronological acquisition of the cinemas themselves, there are several notable exceptions to this observation. Yiannoudes himself suggests that the movement of films in the circuit was principally focused on keeping competitors at bay. Films



Figure 14.1 The Cosmopolitan Greek cinema circuit in Melbourne in the late 1960s.

Table 14.1 Cosmopolitan Motion Pictures: itinerary of screenings, late 1960s.

Week	Venue	Location	Programme schedule
1	National	Richmond	Mon–Sun (with a Saturday matinee)
	Kinema	Albert Park	Fri–Sun (with a Saturday matinee)
2	Westgarth	Northcote	Sat–Sun
	Empire	Brunswick	Sat–Sun
3	Sun	Yarraville	Sat–Sun
4	Paramount	Oakleigh	Sat–Sun
5–6	Astor	St Kilda	Sat–Sun (with a Saturday matinee)
	Cathedral	Fitzroy	Saturday only
	Globe	Richmond	Sat–Sun
	Victoria	Richmond	Sat–Sun

started in Richmond because of the presence of rival Greek cinemas there, moving to Yarraville for the same reason. This explanation only goes so far, however.

Cosmopolitan’s circuit operated by distinguishing venues on the basis of the timing or ‘window’ between the first and subsequent screenings of a film, as well as the specific scheduling of films throughout the week according to various key attributes: whether the film was Greek or American, whether it was subtitled, and the film’s genre and leading actors. All of these distinctions served to distil and distribute social and cultural differences within the diasporic audience. The National

Cinema, for example, operated as the circuit's flagship and was promoted with the largest newspaper advertisements, which often incorporated images from the featured film. It was open for trade even when other cinemas in the circuit closed for religious or national holidays. According to Yiannoudes, the National attracted audiences across the social spectrum: small business owners, shift workers and families, each of whom frequented the cinema on different nights, according to the routine of their work commitments. The programming of films would be varied for these different audiences.

The organisation of the circuit's other cinemas was notable for the relegation of migrants in the poorly serviced western suburbs and the outer eastern suburbs (the Sun in Yarraville in week 3, the Paramount in Oakleigh in week 4) (Figure 14.1). The Cathedral (week 6), which was frequented by the Macedonian community, is a particularly acute example of how the circuit delineated social and cultural distinctions. This became especially apparent when many Macedonians 'crossed over' to other cinemas in the circuit in order to attend screenings of *Alexander the Great* (Rossen, 1956), a film of particularly high interest for them.²⁸ As Loula Anagnostou recalls, this made for a particularly tense atmosphere:

Then, for instance, we had *Mega Alexandro* (*Alexander the Great*), I would be the ticket seller, and we'd get a lot of the Macedonian Greeks who were not – the more Bulgarian side of it – they wanted to come of course. Well, I ran out of tickets: 'I'm sorry, there's no more.' Well, did I cop it. 'You put the Greeks in, but you don't want to let us in.' I said, 'No, it's not like that at all, go and have a look, there's no seats.' So I was the in-between person and look, there were funny nights, very funny nights, but there were some very sad ones too. They called me for everything that night, I remember that. Another thing was that when a lot of them were in the theatre and Philip of Macedonia comes out with Alexander as a baby and says, 'This is Philip of Macedonia, Philip of Greece', half of them walked out, they didn't like it you see. And we had a lot of that.

Q: Did you get that cross-over often?

A: Not always, no. It was only with *Mega Alexandro*. We translated it of course, word for word. They enjoyed it, but they didn't like that little bit, because they wanted him for themselves, and I could understand that too. I mean look at it, it's still going on. It's still going on. (Loula Anagnostou)²⁹

After its acquisition by Cosmopolitan in the late 1960s, the Victoria was also singled out for screenings of culturally distinct films such as Yugoslavian and Italian titles (week 6). After the introduction of the R certificate in 1971, Cosmopolitan established a further nuance to audience segregation: some fathers deposited their families at one cinema and went on to themselves attend another without them.³⁰

With the exception of Loula Anagnostou's admissions above, not one of the industry professionals identified the major Greek ethnic communities in Australia – Ithacans, Kytherans, Kastellorizians, Macedonians – as being of any significance in terms of the spatial or temporal segregation of audiences.³¹ Nor did they consider

political divisions in the Greek community relevant to audience behaviour, despite some evidence to the contrary. As far as the distributors were concerned, they serviced one big, coherent, happy audience. They were, however, prepared to acknowledge one key distinction: between prewar and postwar migrants. Most prewar Greek migrants living in Melbourne were Ithacan, while in Perth and Adelaide non-Kastellorizian postwar migrants were sometimes referred to as 'new Australians'. In this way a temporal distinction served to express a cultural one that could not otherwise be admitted.

Perhaps the most striking division to emerge from this research was the one drawn by film distributors between themselves and their audiences. In various interviews, Greek diaspora distributors speak of cinema audiences as if a distinct Other:

When I used to go and see the films and to buy the films, I never put my feelings, I never buy anything for myself. I used to buy the film for the others.³²

The audience, for the most part, was characterised as being less developed, locked in the past and oriented to tradition. Loula Anagnostou described her conception of the audience as a prime consideration in selecting programmes for the Victoria:

I chose the films that I thought that the Greeks would like here, because Greek producers also made films that were not for this public ... You see we were getting the migrant here. The migrant was coming from all over Greece. A lot of them had primary education, and only some of them had tertiary education. So you had to look at their mentality, what they would like. What they could understand better, you know? What they would enjoy.

Paris Vlattas concurred:

They like heavy drama because a lot of these people who came out here were single and they wanted drama that related back to their home. 'Oh mother I miss you', and this sort of thing that reminded them of what they've left behind.

In centring their narrative on the ways in which the audience experienced films as a form of nostalgia, these accounts of the various diasporic cinema audiences obscure the contemporaneity of Greek popular culture for Australian Greeks and the temporal specificity of the Greek circuit in the context of other cinema temporalities in Melbourne. Greek cinemas, for example, often screened foreign language film titles well before those same films were scheduled by specialised art cinemas. In characterising the audience as being both preoccupied with a past time, and as indicative of that past, these descriptions reveal that distributors were deliberately perpetrating the production of anachronism in the Greek film circuit. This is further emphasised by their management of the flow of films from Greece, and their regular use of revival screenings.

Because of its near monopoly on film exhibition in Melbourne, Cosmopolitan could afford to take their time bringing films over from Greece. Once the release season in Greece had ended and they could determine the relative success or failure of particular titles, the distributors would make their selections. Cosmopolitan only paid a deposit in advance to the one or two producers who could guarantee high-quality supply, so that in most cases they had no compelling financial motive to release the films promptly to recover their investment. The earliest a film could expect to arrive in Australia was within a month, but there was a further delay as the film wound its way through customs for 3 or 4 weeks, and censorship for a further week or so. Even if a film completed this process within a 2-month time-frame it was unlikely to be screened, since it might be reserved for special calendar dates, or held back in order to subdue a potential rival or more generally to heighten market expectation. Imported films were also not always drawn from the most current or recent releases. Between 1959 and 1965, Cosmopolitan contracted to take one film from the back catalogue of Finos films for every two new films they screened.

The majority of films arrived for their premiere screening in Melbourne or Sydney within 12–24 months of their Greek film release (Table 14.2), but the impact of rerelease or revival screenings on the overall temporal character of the circuit is evident in further analysis of the data. So, for example, from 1956, when the circuit developed critical mass and was distributing more than 20 films a year, the mode, or most commonly occurring time-lapse between the release date in Greece and the release date in Australia, varies wildly from year to year (e.g. in 1967 it is 1–2 years but in 1968 it is 11 years or more). However, the median time (the interval centrally positioned between the shortest and longest wait) ranges only between 3–4 and 5–6 years over the entire observed period (1949–1970) and the average or typical time lapse also sticks within a limited range – from the fastest turnaround of 3.6 years in 1960 to the longest delay of 5.5 years in 1968. These figures suggest that distributors were programming the mix of new release and revival films in order to ‘balance’ for an overall sense of temporal consistency. For Anna Vlattas the inclusion of revivals was a way of ensuring that successive waves of migrants arriving in the country would have access to cherished films:

And of course we had the titles that were famous. Greeks would see them over and over again. But they might have seen them when they were little and they would have loved to see them again when they’re adults. Films like *To Koritsi me ta mavra* [*The Girl in Black*, Kakogiannis, 1956]. (Anna Vlattas, Paris Vlattas and Costas Margaritis)³³

Loula Anagnostou remembers actively seeking direct feedback from the audience in order to determine repeat programming decisions:

Many times they would ask for screenings again. We guided ourselves by the public, how they liked it, and sometimes if it was a very interesting film I would get on the microphone and say, ‘Would you like to see that again?’ Just to see how the reactions, you know? (Loula Anagnostou)³⁴

Table 14.2 Gap between release year in Greece and screening in Australia (Greek films only).

Year	<i>Years since first release in Greece</i>											Total	
	0–1	1–2	2–3	3–4	4–5	5–6	6–7	7–8	8–9	9–10	10–11		11 or more
1949							1						1
1950		2						1					3
1954		1											1
1955	2		2	1									5
1956	4	1		5	4	1	4					2	21
1957	1	5		4	5	2	1	3	1				22
1958		1	1			1			1				4
1959	5	4	5	3	1	4	1	2	2	1	1	1	30
1960	4	5	6	5	6	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	37
1961	7	10	10	4	5	3	5	8	2	2	1	7	64
1962	6	8	16	15	7	7	3	6	6	3	3	8	88
1963	3	10	5	8	8		3	5	3	5	1	6	57
1964	4	11	18	9	11	10	4	3	2	5	5	7	89
1965	9	8	11	12	6	14	11	3	2	4	3	2	85
1966	5	11	12	11	11	8	7	7	2	1	1	3	79
1967	4	6	5	3	4	6	5	6	3	2	3	3	50
1968	3	25	20	23	19	15	15	14	18	11	5	30	198
1969	4	7	14	12	22	16	7	7	12	9	6	8	124
1970		29	8	11	12	11	7	5	10	3	4	13	113
Total	61	144	133	126	121	101	77	71	65	47	34	91	1071
Percentage	5.7	13.4	12.4	11.8	11.3	9.4	7.2	6.6	6	4.4	3.2	8.5	

The popularity of return viewings goes some way to explaining the success of the Greek video distribution outlets that succeeded the film circuits in the early 1980s. What is notable about the specific temporal horizons of the Greek cinema circuit is the way it demonstrates that it is not the diffusion of films through space that somehow causes film industries to ‘temporalise’ but that there are underlying conceptualisations of space and time at the core of any globalising cinema that constitute and enable a variety of meanings to the specific distribution of films.

Conclusion

This chapter considers some of the ways that migrant film distributor/exhibitors used cinema circuits to produce new temporalities (and spaces) in Australia. It also examines how enterprising film distributors brandished time to define social relationships and hierarchies within the Greek-Australian community. This example of diasporic entrepreneurship in the global film industry reveals how the

commercialisation of time (delineating temporal differences between audiences with window releasing and other distribution practices) supported the existence of internal differences within, and overlap between, apparently enclosed communities.

However, this essay seeks to go beyond simply recognising the difference that time makes to the social world. Certainly, understanding *when* film events occur contributes a great deal to understanding *how* and *why* they occur. But this essay also proposes that time is itself transformed by a multiplicity of practices and is not fixed or regular, that the imagined social relations between various 'selves' and 'others' also define our perceptions and uses of time, and that in a way these constitute time itself. Time as portrayed in this chapter then is not an objective phenomenon existing independently of its contents but can be seen to affect the events within it *and* is also affected by them. Through understanding cinemas as temporal intersections – as multiple and heterogeneous forms of affiliation that move across and between different temporalities and social groups – it may be possible to imagine new ways of writing about and researching the cinema.

Similarly, in analysing how the arrangements made for ethnic media consumption imagine, transform and mobilise new communities of belonging, this chapter does not suggest that the distribution of Greek cinema is a transparent carrier of globalisation. Rather, diasporic film audiences are constituted through ethnic media events and are constitutive of them. More generally, it shows that culturally defined communities can affiliate themselves translocally, through their imaginative comparisons of other places and other times. The formation of these communities need not be premised on perceptions or myths of spatial and/or temporal commonality. So although Australia's Greek cinema circuits may be understood as part of a specific process of 'Hellenisation', they also prompt us to redefine our understanding of 'national cinemas' as politically, linguistically or geographically bounded entities. We also need to reconsider some of our assumptions about the transportability of non-Hollywood popular cinema: the activities of Cosmopolitan Motion Pictures clearly point to what is typically left out of the summary description of the Greek film industry such as in the *Encyclopedia of European Cinema*:

The output of commercial Greek cinema consisted mainly of quickly made low-budget films aimed exclusively at the domestic market. A few films attempted to meet 'European' or Hollywood standards but met with little success abroad. Only Greek sex films had some impact on foreign markets. (Vincendeau, 1995, p. 190)

Finally then, in suggesting that cinema studies needs to undertake more culturally and temporally nuanced work, this essay acknowledges that the film historian is not outside the production of time either. There are inherent complexities in re-presenting oral histories for example, particularly when the interview subject does not distinguish past and present as sequentially distinct tenses in the same standardised way as the film historian is expected to write. Insofar as there is emerging an 'historical turn' in cinema studies there might also be an opportunity to rethink time in the practice of film history itself; to encourage histories that are

accepting of alternative temporal conceptions, and that above all are accepting of the familiar dictum, that all time is relative.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Michelle Mantsio, Olympia Szilagyi, Alwyn Davidson and Dean Brandum in the preparation of this chapter, and to thank Jill Julius Matthews and Colin Arrowsmith for their helpful feedback on earlier drafts.

Notes

- 1 See a discussion of some of these in Deb Verhoeven, Kate Bowles and Colin Arrowsmith, 'Mapping the movies: reflections on the use of geospatial technologies for historical cinema audience research', in *Digital Tools in Film Studies*, eds Michael Ross, Manfred Grauer, Bernd Freisleben (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2009), pp. 1–13. Other significant projects investigating and mapping the spatial dimensions of film distribution and exhibition include: in the United States the longstanding efforts of Jeffrey Klenotic and more recently Robert C. Allen; in Australia, Alwyn Davidson; in Germany, Jens Wagner, Roger Sennert and Michael Ross; and in Canada, Sebastien Caquard.
- 2 'Windows' may also refer to different stages in a film's format, which are also conventionally spread over a period of time – such as a release in cinemas (theatrical and non-theatrical), as packaged media (video or DVD rental and sell-through), for broadcast (television, video-on-demand, cable) and as digital files.
- 3 Day-and-date releasing may be calendrically coincident but is never strictly simultaneous, with territories east of GMT opening films before those to the west.
- 4 Showcasing entailed bypassing the zone-run-clearance system and opening a film simultaneously in a number of second-run venues (perhaps 20 in a smaller market and up to 100 in a major city). This form of distribution was generally reserved for low-budget genre titles. Roadshow releasing was characterised by opening films in a limited number of theatres in big cities for a specific period of time before moving them onto a general release. With its reserved seats, premium ticket prices, souvenir programmes and intermissions, roadshow releasing was Hollywood's attempt to differentiate product by offering a prestige form of presentation for audiences. For a detailed history of these practices, see Sheldon Hall and Steve Neale, *Epics, Spectacles and Blockbusters: A Hollywood History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010).
- 5 Miller explains that this expansion of the distribution network across the suburbs was based on the growth of suburbs themselves and the subsequent construction of theatres. Older and more central cinemas generally got the films before newer ones further from the centre of the city.
- 6 Stathis Raftopoulos in 2000, interviewers unidentified, posted by 'Rainscratch' online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pORfzQtuZPQ> on 13 October 2007. Accessed 5 November 2007.
- 7 Acland's observations, for example, bring forward Anne Freidberg's earlier description of an intensification of the temporality of cinema spectatorship produced by new forms of engagement with cable television, the multiplex and the VCR. Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 126.
- 8 See in particular, Charles Acland, "'Opening everywhere": multiplexes, E-cinema and the speed of cinema culture', in *Hollywood and the Social Experience of Movie-going*, eds Richard Maltby, Melvyn Stokes

- and Robert Allen (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), pp. 364–382.
- 9 See in particular Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora; Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996).
 - 10 To date, 26 interviews with members of the Australian Greek community have been recorded. A record of films and screenings was compiled and added to the Cinema and Audiences in Australia Project (CAARP) database (caarp.flinders.edu.au). This database holds records of Greek and non-Greek films screening in community-specific venues in Australia, and particularly in Melbourne. The database holds records for 1260 films that screened between 1949 and 1967 at 7598 screening events intended specifically for Greek audiences at various Australian venues. An additional 8786 screening events were held between 1967 and 1970 and are to be added to the CAARP database. By 2011 records for 1970–1980 will be added resulting in a total data set of more than 36 000 records.
 - 11 There were very occasional world premieres, such as *On the Beach* (Kramer, 1959), a Hollywood location film shot in Melbourne and which premiered ‘simultaneously’ in 18 cities including Moscow. See Philip R. Davey, *When Hollywood Came to Melbourne: The Story of the Making of Stanley Kramer’s On the Beach* (Melbourne: Philip R. Davey, 2005).
 - 12 An exception occurred for Technicolor films. Because of the lack of local Technicolor laboratory facilities all 12 or so prints were imported.
 - 13 This practice, which used to be done illegally by exhibitors in the 1910s and 1920s, was then known as ‘bicycling’.
 - 14 Referred to by Brian Miller (2006).
 - 15 One exception was *El Cid* (Anthony Mann, 1961), which they received immediately but was not particularly successful.
 - 16 One of the few US films that was screened as a main feature was *Atlantis: The Lost Continent* (George Pal, 1961), which flopped on first release, and was given to Cosmopolitan after only 3 weeks.
 - 17 Peter Yiannoudes, interview by Michelle Mantsio and Deb Verhoeven, 13 April 2006. Greek subtitles were added to many Hollywood films by Greek exhibitors in this period. For a detailed description of this practice see Bowles, K., Maltby, R., Verhoeven, D. and Walsh, M. (2007) More than Ballyhoo?: The Importance of Understanding Film Consumption in Australia, *Metro Magazine*, 152, March: Special feature section on ‘The Changing of Cinema Experience’, pp. 96–101.
 - 18 Peter Yiannoudes, interview by Michelle Mantsio and Deb Verhoeven, 13 April 2006.
 - 19 Anna Vlattas, Paris Vlattas and Costas Margaritis, interview by Michelle Mantsio and Deb Verhoeven, 29 November 2006.
 - 20 Loula Anagnostou, interview by Michelle Mantsio, 22 July 2006.
 - 21 Arthur Gioulekas, interview by Michelle Mantsio, 12 December 2007.
 - 22 It is not surprising that many venues made available traditional Greek snacks such as roasted pumpkin seeds, called *pasatempo* (‘passing the time’).
 - 23 George Siskamanis, interview by Michelle Mantsio, 3 December 2007.
 - 24 Anastasha and Paul Tamvakis, interview by Michelle Mantsio, 15 May 2007.
 - 25 The most rapid period of Greek migration to Australia began in the wake of the 1952 bilateral agreement on immigration between the two countries. In 2005, the Greek and Greek-Cypriot population of Melbourne was approximately 215 000, compared to approximately 160 000 in New South Wales. These figures probably underestimate the number of Greeks in Australia, since temporary Greek migrants would have been missed in the periods between censuses, and census documents fail accurately to distinguish ethnic identity from nationality thereby missing ethnic Greeks born in places such as Turkey, Egypt or even the Australian-born children of Greek parents. On this basis, Melbourne is sometimes described as the third largest Greek city (after Athens and Thessaloniki), although variations in the definition of the term ‘city’ suggest considerable caution is required in making this claim. See Anastasios Myrodis Tamis, *The Greeks in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 63.
 - 26 Preliminary analysis of the film titles that have an identifiable country of origin suggests that between 1949 and 1970 films from Greece comprised approximately 66% of all screenings, films

- from the United States 23%, and films from other countries of origin 11%.
- 27 For a detailed history of the foundation and early years of Melbourne's Greek distribution-exhibition circuit see Deb Verhoeven (2007) 'Twice born: Dionysos Films and the establishment of an Antipodean Greek film circuit', *Studies in Australasian Cinema*, 1 (3), 96–152.
- 28 For the attitudes of Macedonian audiences to the Greek film circuit see Pat and Stan Delov, interview by Michelle Mantsio, 28 November 2007.
- 29 Loula Anagnostou, interview by Michelle Mantsio, 22 July 2006.
- 30 Adult films were not permitted to be screened in the same cinema as family programmes, so in 1971 an additional cinema was added to the circuit specifically for these R-rated screenings, The Galaxy (which had previously specialised in screening Arabic and Italian films), and which was aptly renamed The Liberty.
- 31 These are the largest and most influential of Greek migrant groupings which followed chain migration patterns, drawing together settlers from the same region and in many cases the same entire village to the one place in Australia; from the islands of Ithaca (who settled principally in Melbourne), Kythera (in Sydney) and Kastellorizo (Perth and Adelaide). Macedonians dominated settlements in Shepparton and Werribee (both in Victoria). See Tamis (2005), p. 43 ff, for a description of the fierce parochialism which dominated Greek Australian life in the prewar and postwar period.
- 32 Peter Yiannoudes, interview by Michelle Mantsio and Deb Verhoeven, 13 April 2006.
- 33 Anna Vlattas, Paris Vlattas and Costas Margaritis, interview by Michelle Mantsio and Deb Verhoeven, 29 November 2006.
- 34 Loula Anagnostou, interview by Michelle Mantsio, 22 July 2006.

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