

"Awkward in Life": Greek Cinema in Times of Crisis

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A number of recent Greek films - *Kynodontas/Dogtooth* (2009), *Attenberg* (2010) and *Alpeis/Alps* (2011) - have been dubbed the 'weird wave' by international critics and are frequently interpreted as a response to the economic crisis that has unravelled in Greece since 2009. The designation 'weird wave' or, indeed, the idea of a new wave or movement in Greek cinema is not something accepted by the filmmakers themselves, and a number of Greek film scholars have observed that the connection between the weird wave and 'the crisis' is rather tenuous and a coincidence of timing. Both *Dogtooth* and *Attenberg* were shot and produced before the crisis and their success originated outside of Greece on the international festival circuit. These films cannot be said to be a *response* to the crisis in any direct sense. The crisis, from my perspective, is not just an unprecedented financial or economic meltdown, which it unquestionable is, but is at the same time a wider crisis of values, a crisis of the Greek state, during *metapolitefsi*, the period of the restoration of democracy after the fall of the military junta in 1974. It is this broader socio-cultural crisis, I will argue, that the films of the weird wave articulate rather than a country undergoing economic collapse and grinding austerity. The weird wave addresses the traumatic kernel of the crisis, the failure of *metapolitefsi*, the post-dictatorship social bond, through the portrayal of the disintegration of the traditional family, of communication, of sexual relations, and of our very species being. There is, therefore, no simple homology between the weird wave and the crisis. These films circle around the absent centre of the crisis, but in their own particular and unique ways. In short, the crisis and the weird wave are two faces of the same trauma, a trauma that is retrospectively constructed in the present but its core, the failure of Greek modernisation, has been long in the making.