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Decadence and the Necrophilic Intertext of Film Noir:
Nikos Nikolaidis' *Singapore Sling*¹

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Because I refuse to discern the boundaries between reality, dream, and cinema,
I concluded that black-and-white film is the richest in chthonic colours.
— Nikos Nikolaidis²

An erudite, inveterate cineaste, dedicated *auteur* and provocateur, Nikos Nikolaidis (1939–2007) became one of the most distinctive and uncompromising voices of Greek and world cinema. *Singapore Sling: Ο Άνθρωπος που Αγάπησε ένα Πτώμα* [*Singapore Sling: The Man Who Loved a Corpse*] (1990) is his *chef d'œuvre*, a bold, independent film that has acquired cult status internationally. The film is an elitist shocker that, as the exotic cocktail of its title suggests, blends genres and styles: black comedy, Grand Guignol, splatter horror, Gothic melodrama, tragedy, and, most of all, film noir. In fact, classic film noir is not only referenced but is the very skin that gives form and shape to *Singapore Sling*. This is a film whose narrative and visual motifs rely on allusions to other films. Shot in lush black and white, it is a quasi-prequel and tempestuous cinematic love letter of sorts to Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944) that also gestures towards Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). Its exquisitely photographed, polished, and highly baroque *mise en scène* is replete with heavy furnishings, bibelots, *objets d'art*, vintage costumes, fabrics, and ostentatious jewellery. Its materiality blends with a fetishistic presentation of the female body in gorgeous, tactile textures and a geometry of dramatic contours. Its ambience of Gothic luxury and decay recalls Norma Desmond's mansion in *Sunset Boulevard* and even Paul Mangin's mansion in Terence Young's debut feature, the noirish Gothic melodrama, *Corridor of Mirrors* (1948).³

Singapore Sling is about a wounded detective who searches for Laura, a woman he has been romantically obsessed with for three years but deep down knows is dead; hence the subtitle *The Man Who Loved a Corpse*, a key line from Preminger's *Laura*. The title of the film derives from the

name Laura gives to the detective after she finds a recipe for the cocktail in his pocket. According to the director, the title ‘evokes something antique, lost, tropical, with much moisture and eroticism’.⁴ The title could also be an allusion to Mother Gin Sling from the exquisitely opulent but less familiar film noir *The Shanghai Gesture* (1941), directed by Josef von Sternberg (starring Gene Tierney, later cast as Laura in Preminger’s film). The investigation leads Singapore Sling (Panos Thanassoulis) to a suburban villa on a stormy night where he finds a mother (Michele Valley) and her daughter (Meredyth Herold), a serial-killing pair of incestuous and dissolute femmes fatales who have murdered the chauffeur and are burying him (even though he is, in fact, still alive). The detective, who we hear in voice-over but who never speaks on camera, becomes an involuntary participant in the two women’s torture and sex games. It turns out that they had employed Laura as a secretary and made her their first murder victim three years ago, after the death of the Father, a mummified figure who had initiated them into the practice of serial murder.

Film Noir and Cinematic Decadence

The network of intertextual allusions to film noir in *Singapore Sling* is composite and multi-layered. If Daughter represents the eponymous heroine of Preminger’s *Laura*, Mother, in her imperious authoritativeness, resembles Norma Desmond from *Sunset Boulevard*. Mother’s characteristic silent-era face with her darkly thick eyeshadow, metal diadem on her forehead (evocative of *Salomé*, Norma Desmond’s own obsession), and her elegant ring cigarette holder reinforces this association [figs 1 & 2]. *Sunset Boulevard* is itself a decadent intertext, and silent cinema seeps through *Singapore Sling* in the implicit allusion to Norma. Hence the film not only offers a ‘geological’ stratification of cinematic eras as a conscious legacy of film noir but also, as we will see, explores and indeed experiments boldly with the dynamics of intertextuality.



Fig. 1 (00:44:48): Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) and Joe Gillis (William Holden) from *Sunset Boulevard*.



Fig. 2 (00:11:14): Michele Valley as Mother evokes Norma.

Film noir is all about understatement, mystery, and hidden secrets – psychoanalytic subtexts, figures ensconced beneath the shadows. But Nikolaidis’ ‘decadent worlds’, Vrasidas Karalis notes, are characterized by ‘the dark, asocial, and animalistic tendencies of the unconscious’. The subtext of subdued desire in *Laura* is turned inside-out in *Singapore Sling*, which brings the gamut of obscene materiality to the foreground and finds an analogue in Georges Bataille’s ‘divine filth’ or the Marquis de Sade’s ‘sublime immorality’.⁵ Indeed, *Singapore Sling* is a kind of film noir version of Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975) [figs 3 & 4]. The decadent repertoire of unflinching perversion in Nikolaidis’ film includes necrophilia, incest, food play, vomiting, sadomasochism, urolagnia, electroshock, cross-dressing, dildo fellatio, and even sex with fruit. Nikolaidis’ panorama of perversion is glib, comedic, and over-the-top, rendering his dialogue with film noir pronounced and self-conscious. Still, he has called *Singapore Sling* ‘a very violent, personal explosion’ and ‘filmic vomit, which no one is obligated to bear’; a film that ‘doesn’t make any concessions to *comme-il-faux* aesthetics’.⁶

Yet Hollywood noir of the 1940s was already a decadent form; it was a derailment from 1930s melodrama and the latter’s focus on social concerns. Populated by amoral hardboiled recluses and indecipherable vamps, noir was deemed decadent from its inception. Aesthetic manipulation of light and dark in labyrinthine urban spaces – low-key lighting, chiaroscuro, backlighting, silhouetting, Venetian blinds, and shifting shadows – reflected an obsessive focus on morbid psychological states, or what Richard Dyer recognizes as ‘decadence, perversion, aberration’ and lack of masculinity.⁷ As early as 1946, the German intellectual Siegfried Kracauer noticed that the violence of film noir was not raw and spontaneous but instead ‘originat[ed] from compulsive, sadistic urges’: ‘unlike the gangster movies of the depression era, the new films deal less with social abuses than with psychological aberrations’.⁸ The critic found such films fixated on ‘the sickness of the psyche’ and ‘disintegration’.⁹



Fig. 3 (01:14:21): Meredyth Herold as Daughter with binoculars, one of a number of scenes that alludes to Pasolini's *Salò*.



Fig. 4 (01:50:32): Still from Pasolini's *Salò*.

In addition, there are palpable links between noir and the decadent 1890s. Surprisingly, Preminger at the dénouement of *Laura* references Ernest Dowson: the cantankerous closeted gay dandy Waldo Lydecker (Clifton Webb) appears in Laura's apartment while the radio broadcasts his voice reciting Dowson's '*Vitae summa brevis spes nos vetat incohare longam*' by 'electrical transmission'.¹⁰ The urban ambience of noir also resonates with Arthur Symons's city poems; and the femmes fatales of noir seem to be reincarnations of the cigarette-smoking New Women from the pages of *The Yellow Book*. In a recent study of Ben Hecht, the author who was influenced by British decadence and was later actively involved in the Hollywood film industry (collaborating also with Preminger), Kate Hext demonstrates that the 'deviant behaviour in the night streets' that characterizes noir has its origins in the 'backstreets' of Arthur Machen's and Arthur Conan Doyle's fiction.¹¹

But why does Nikolaidis treat film noir in such an explicitly depraved and genre-violating manner? During the 1940s and 1950s, Hollywood's Motion Picture Production Code, a document that codified the moral guidelines of cinema, was at its apex. Also known as the Hays Code, the guidelines sought to purge cinema of onscreen nudity, immorality, lustfulness, soft-core eroticism, profanity, overtly violent scenes, and taboos of the time such as homosexuality and miscegenation, among others. The Code promoted an ethics of sanitised middle-class family values. Remarkably, within this asphyxiating regime of institutionalized self-censorship, the film noir sensibility thrived through nuance and tacit suggestiveness. Its dark and amoral themes seethed under the surface, and their being muffled was conspicuous. Film noir emerged out of the constricting net of Hollywood's moral mores, just as fin-de-siècle decadence was the unintended by-product of Victorian puritanism. With its panorama of explicit perversions, *Singapore Sling* insinuates itself as a symmetrical inversion of film noir, a cultural product partly defined by the restrictions imposed upon it. Through this manoeuvre, Nikolaidis does not superimpose a radical postmodern reading on film noir but, rather, unlocks its potentialities. He emphatically explodes the latent perversions

under its surface, visualizing and amplifying what Lydecker in *Laura* can only imply in words: ‘a disgustingly earthy relationship’.

Together with the dense tangle of its onscreen tropes of bizarre sexuality, in its intertextual dynamics *Singapore Sling* speaks to the notion of decadence as a departure from what we might call, for all intents and purposes, classicism, a deviation from an accepted standard of proportion. In his introduction to J.-K. Huysmans’s *À rebours* [*Against Nature*] (1884), Havelock Ellis endowed ‘decadence’ with relativism, asserting that a ‘decadent style is only such in relation to a classic style’; ‘a further specialization’ of classic style concerns ‘the whole [...] subordinated to the parts’.¹² In literature, work from the late Roman Empire is often cited as the chief paradigm of deviation from classical proportion. But what about cinema? In his recent essay on ‘Decadence and Cinema’, David Weir tests the applicability of this deductive model, observing that ‘cinema no less than literature has had its classical eras’.¹³ Yet, alert to cinema’s peculiarity as an art form, Weir argues that once a cinema trend is established, periodized, and succeeded by a new trend determined by technological innovation, it turns from decadent to classic. Within this phenomenon there are films that consciously pay tribute to the decadent cultures of the past. Weir singles out the examples of *Fellini-Satyricon* (1969) and *Salò*, which adapt ‘the two most foundational historical periods of decadence – the Roman Empire and libertine France’; however, Weir adds, these are ‘problematic’ since they conventionally reproduce the style and sensibility of the sources they are based on, Petronius and Sade respectively. They no longer constitute deviations and so they do not challenge classically established norms; they are socio-politically somewhat muted.¹⁴

For all its qualities of ‘disintegration’, following Weir’s idea of the forward-shifting boundaries of cinematic decadence, film noir quickly became a classic cinematic style. In line with Weir’s paradigms of Fellini’s appropriating Roman indulgence and Pasolini’s eighteenth-century libertinism, Nikolaidis responds to the psychological and urban malaise of film noir. Since film noir was originally deemed decadent, by analogy, it also accords with a secondary sense that Weir has ascribed to the notion of ‘classical decadence’: not so much a deviation from classical

‘perfection’ but an effort to emulate the ‘decadence of antiquity’.¹⁵ Notwithstanding, Nikolaidis does not just end up recreating retroactively the sensibility of its source material, as Pasolini did with *Salò* and Fellini with *Fellini-Satyricon*. Neither is *Singapore Sling* to film noir what Tinto Brass’s quasi-pornographic *Caligula* (1979), for example, is to the conventional sword-and-sandals epic. The iconography of Bataillean excess in *Singapore Sling* foregrounds and dramatizes an intertextual necrophilic yearning. By chasing the fleeting dream, Preminger’s *Laura*, and by extension the genre of film noir in general, *Singapore Sling* is like Dowson’s desire for the unobtainable Cynara, whose spectre is held within sight yet remains out of reach through a poetics of orgiastic excess, a ‘cry[ing] for madder music and for stronger wine’.¹⁶

Nikolaidis introduces a parallax view to the attraction towards the dead body of film noir that maps onto two broad manifestations of decadence: understatement and intemperance, or the passive suffering of unfulfilled desire and the excesses of taboo-breaking desire. The detective evokes the former attitude whilst the two femmes fatales evoke the latter. While he is enfolded in the generic universe of film noir trappings, the two women, on the contrary, are agents of filmic self-consciousness, subverting the genre with their zany antics and transgressive sexuality. The scenes featuring *Singapore Sling* follow the classical, continuous editing of film noir; on the other hand, the two women constantly make the filmic narrative conscious of itself through roleplaying entangled with a disruptive use of cinematic language: Daughter splits as narrator (and even film director) and play-actor within the same scene, especially when she breaks the fourth wall, speaking directly into the camera [fig. 5], like the sultry Elsa in *Θα σε Δω στην Κόλαση Αγάπη Μου* [*See You in Hell, My Darling*] (1999). In an offbeat scene, Mother, who also addresses the camera, narrates the previous night’s events in three short consecutive takes, as if rehearsing them, in what has been regarded as a little tribute to Jean-Luc Godard.¹⁷ In fact, this is a technique Nikolaidis first used in his debut feature *Euridice BA 2037* (1975), likewise a black-and-white film whose orphic theme of returning from the dead proved to be a recurrent one for the director.¹⁸ In another characteristic

instance, the two women perform a short, impromptu cancan burlesque routine, an allusion to the three libertines' similar dance routine near the end of *Salò*.



Fig. 5 (00:17:42): One of the many instances when Mother and Daughter break the fourth wall.

The Necrophilic Metaphor

The film's overarching theme of necrophilia as a metaphor for Nikolaidis' futile desire for a dead genre is conspicuous enough, but it also calls attention to the viewers' very act of experiencing cinema, their fetishistic obsession with vivid simulacra, with scenes and actors coming to life. This experience is what Paul Willemen calls the 'cinephiliac moment' which carries 'overtones of necrophilia, or relating to something that is dead, past, but alive in memory'; 'you can go back time and again and reconsume' the film 'almost ad infinitum'.¹⁹ Necrophilia in *Singapore Sling* is not just an overarching background metaphor, but a dynamic one that splinters into myriad motific variations on the surface of the narrative and calibrates its intertextual theme.

In their approaches to *Singapore Sling*, both Mikela Fotiou and David Church dismiss 'parody' as an applicable term and focus on 'pastiche'. Fotiou looks at Nikolaidis' film alongside

his other noir ‘necroromance’, *See You in Hell, My Darling*, as ‘an elitist pasticcio of pastiches that demands cinephile and cineliterate audiences’.²⁰ Fotiou emphasizes that, in addition to *Laura*, *Singapore Sling* pastiches Billy Wilder’s *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) in ‘style’ and narrative with the entrapment of Joe Gillis in Norma Desmond’s mansion, as well as in its ‘metacinematic’ aspect.²¹ Nikolaidis’ theme of necrophilia is ‘linked to the longing for the “dead” film noir’.²² Framing the film as a postmodern neo-noir, Church argues that its ‘parodic, modernist potential is deflated by a postmodern use of pastiche’.²³ He sees the film’s cinematic textures as ‘fetishized’ and, in discussing its necrophilic theme, claims that ‘the intertextual references to *Laura* ensure that the film never fully disavows the death of classical noir, nor poses as an independent reinvention of the genre’.²⁴

The necrophilic intertextuality of *Singapore Sling* transcends even pastiche. It pivots on the interplay between decadence as understatement and excess, manifested in a series of inversions that co-exist with what is inverted in double perspective, like a cubist painting: implicitness and explicitness, idealistic desire and graphic sadomasochism, mysteriousness and demystification. In an interview, Nikolaidis himself hinted at the ancillary ingredient that supports *Singapore Sling*’s intertextuality. He rejects parody (validating Fotiou’s and Church’s readings) and arrives at an idiosyncratic use of ‘sarcasm’:

[T]he film is not parody exactly; it doesn’t parody film noir or melo noir²⁵ [...] it just expresses sarcasm for something that is now lost, forgotten [...] one way by which we can experience the lack of this thing is through light sarcasm. ... As it also happens with our great love affairs ... when we are greatly struck by an intense relationship [...] sometimes we sneer at that relationship, struggling to get over it but always with a sense of bitterness, not because of defeat, but with nostalgia [...] that’s how the film is sarcastic and self-sarcastic towards the genres it engages.²⁶

Nikolaidis’ relationship with film noir is personal and engrossing as much as it is aestheticized: it is a studied yet tumultuous love affair. Sarcasm reveals more about the person who uses it than about the target, thinly disguising the subject’s own feelings. Hence, through sarcasm, *Singapore Sling* closes in the parodic distance. It does not just set up a metaphor of nostalgic longing for *Laura* but communes in a bittersweet manner with the dead body of *Laura*, in both senses of the

name. Etymologically, the word ‘sarcasm’ means to tear flesh, from the Greek *sarx* (flesh).²⁷ It implies a maenadic tearing apart (in a sense, the opposite of bringing together, the opposite of pastiching). In the film, this process translates to a fetishistic atomization of the object that is desired and yet is inaccessible, in accordance with the general understanding of decadent style as one in which the details or parts are emphasized at the expense of the whole.

The black-and-white celluloid, the filmic skin itself, is the aesthetic signature that propels Nikolaidis’ deeply personal concept of necrophilia. Nikolaidis collapses the line between cinematic illusion and reality and so prefers the black and white of noir because, as he says, it ‘is the richest in chthonic colours’.²⁸ Of film noir movie stars, Nikolaidis asks: ‘did colour ever manage to [paint their lips] so scarlet and wet, with such deadly temperature, as black-and-white did?’²⁹ The witty question not only highlights the visual intensity of noirish black and white but also plays on its ingrained quality of death mingling with sensuality in portraying the actress-star. In another interview he says: ‘stubbornly refusing to tell the boundaries between reality, dream, and cinema apart, I concluded that black-and-white is the most colour-rich film’.³⁰ Explaining the double meaning of the film’s subtitle, *The Man Who Loved a Corpse*, Mimis Tsakoniatis posits that the ‘corpse’ symbolizes ‘the black-and-white film violated daily by the crassness and babble of colour’ since ‘only black-and-white celluloid can convey the archetypal confrontation between love and death’.³¹ *Singapore Sling* raises and rapturously destroys and is destroyed by the elusive spectre of the film noir celluloid woman (Laura) and the half-personified film noir genre itself. The result is an intertextual kaleidoscope of distortions, mutations, exaggerations, subversions, and deviations.

The film concocts a number of film noir elements from the outset, fetishizing the dead genre by exaggerating its trappings. It enhances and at the same time unhinges them, alerting the viewer to a curious tension that places the film in the ‘classic decadence’ category. The opening credits are stylized in vintage 1940s font. The wet, stormy nightscape in fine-grain black and white is like gleaming ribbons against masses of tenebrous shadows; the texture of the rain is so luxurious that it even brings to mind Kenneth Anger’s oneiric *Eaux d’artifice* (1953) [figs 6 & 7].³²



Fig. 6 (0:00:20): Film noir meets symbolist fantasy in a shot suggestive of Kenneth Anger's *Eaux d'artifice*.³³



Fig. 7 (00:11:13): Still from *Eaux d'artifice*.

Mother and Daughter are in the garden, clad in frilled nightgowns, lingerie and stockings, yet bespattered and equipped with more practical wellingtons, raincoats, and goggles, burying the half-dead chauffeur's body, tucking in his spilled guts as they do: their mismatched attire intimates their dabbling in both sex and murder. In the meantime, the lackadaisical and moribund trenchcoated detective has pulled up at the villa in a classic-looking black sedan [fig. 8]. He speaks in voice-over (bringing to mind Joe Gillis in *Sunset Boulevard*), over Glenn Miller's mellow 'Laura' jazz theme, a leitmotif that punctuates the film at key moments and signals the intrusion of his necrophilic fantasy. The detective confesses that he is one of those solitary and penniless men 'who chase after lost causes with female names, which lead nowhere', the name of his lost cause being 'Laura'.³⁴ Suspecting that the girl haunting his dreams is dead, he admits he 'is in love with a corpse' [my translation]. This is of course the key line from Preminger's *Laura* that supplies *Singapore Sling* with its overarching theme: in *Laura*, when Waldo Lydecker figures out the obsession Lieutenant McPherson (Dana Andrews) has with the supposedly murdered Laura Hunt after he sees her painted portrait, he taunts him: 'I don't think they've ever had a patient who fell in love with a corpse'.



Fig. 8 (00:04:00): The wounded detective in classic film noir trenchcoat; a wreck and burnout in search of Laura.

Tropes of Transgression

Nikolaidis' necrophilic intertextuality is specialized into a variety of tropes of objectified materiality (representations of transgressive bodies), especially in relation to various postures of authority. In the extended reimagined flashback early on in the film, Daughter narrates how she and Mother lured and murdered Laura: they ritualize her story by playing the incestuous sexual game of the 'Young Secretary', a metafictional ploy in which Nikolaidis frames his film noir nostalgia and elevates it to the level of the narrative. With theatrical bravura, Daughter impersonating Laura enters the scene in formal gabardine and suitcase in hand [fig. 9]. Mother beckons to her from an armchair to approach, assuming the guise of an authority figure, in this case a lewd Roman-Catholic priest hearing confession: 'What's your name my child [...]. Come closer?' and 'How long has it been since you confessed?': she lifts her skirt to reveal a strap-on dildo, forcing Daughter-as-Laura to perform fellatio, which she eagerly does. The film cuts to a scene where the phallic Mother gags the Daughter and rapes her. A little later, in an absurdly jocose vignette of reverse necrophilia, the dead Father as a mummy, wrapped from head to toe in tattered linen strips, also sexually violates the Daughter [fig. 10]. The mummified Father seems to be an allusion to the pre-Code horror melodrama *The Mummy* (1932), directed by Karl Freund and starring Boris Karloff, a film whose theme of moulding a modern Egyptian girl in the style of a lost love, an ancient Egyptian princess, resonates more generally, yet richly, with the necrophilic intertextuality of *Singapore Sling*.

By propping up this power structure, Nikolaidis subsumes film noir's subtle aesthetic negotiations against prescriptive censorship in an ambivalent manner. Nikolaidis stresses that the relationship between Mother and Daughter revolves around 'the ghost of the father, who left bestowing [to them] his philosophy of Authority', fighting 'who will be leader in the house'.³⁵ Their 'competition' marks the entire film as 'an objection against social conventions'.³⁶ Because the film evokes the cinema of an earlier era when the Hays Code was in effect, it also evokes the violation of that code. The two women may represent a Sadean abuse of authority; and yet, in their jabbing

at the heart of the holy family ethos, they are agents of the film's most decadent, radical subversions.



Fig. 9 (00:11:03): Daughter impersonating Laura, playing with Mother the sadomasochistic roleplaying game of 'Young Secretary'.



Fig. 10 (00:17:07): In this expressionistic composition the mummified dead Father copulates with Daughter in the attic.

It is ironic and indeed bathetic that, notwithstanding Mother's and Daughter's *particeps criminis* and sexual perversion, the principal offence Daughter commits that most challenges the patriarchal authority enforced by Mother is her smoking habit. In order to smoke freely, Daughter finds sanctuary in the attic where she has sex with the mummified dead father. The attic is a Gothic, Bosch-like space whose intricate compositional geometry of candle rows, dungeon chains, nets, and metal bicycle wheels – symbolizing lost innocence – populate the depth of field and suggest the sets of German expressionist cinema [fig. 11]. A medical anatomical model torso with its organs exposed looms large in the background. The anatomical model functions as a variant motif of demystifying film noir cinema as an intertextualized dead body, one that undermines the clandestine space of the attic as Daughter's inner sanctum, rendering the film noir heroine open to scrutiny by peering beneath the generic veil of her mysteriousness and laying her sexuality bare. The rule that prohibits smoking is an oblique, playful allusion to Hollywood censorship as part of the legacy of film noir. It is also an expression of male anxiety over dangerous femininity because smoking is a generic signature, a stylized gesture that typifies the empowered, seductive woman so common to the genre.



Fig. 11 (00:18:14): Daughter addressing the viewer. The anatomical medical model looms in the background.

As with the two women's ambivalence in maintaining authority and violating it, the 'male protagonist', according to Nikolaidis, 'accept[ing] things that his reason tells him don't exist, just to re-live the dream, constitutes a reaction. Rejecting the dimension between reality and fantasy is a reaction'.³⁷ Ironically, in his counter-intuitive quest for a foredoomed idealism the detective's entering the women's universe of libertine transgressions is a sort of anomaly that itself seems subversive and radical. Nikolaidis' blurring of reality with fantasy is a shorthand formula for the orphic recovery of the exquisite intertextual corpse of film noir. In this context it is noteworthy that mid-way through the film *Mother* teaches a mock-sign language to the mute Singapore, who imitates her gesticulations with infantile wonder. It is as if Singapore is an avatar for the director himself, who, in the guise of a film noir detective, is like a picaresque hero who steps into the subterranean virtual reality of film noir and has to learn a new film language in order to cope with its excess.³⁸



Fig. 12 (00:15:48): Laura's beating heart and viscera adorned with pearl jewellery.

The intertextual inversions of *Laura* and the genre transgressions of film noir are epitomized in the evisceration and dissection of Laura's body by Mother and Daughter, following

the enactment of the 'Young Secretary' backstory. The scene is accompanied by Sergei Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, a work of late-romantic nostalgia that resonates with the director's necrophilic obsessions. This is an eye-popping scene where the two women extract the internal organs of Laura's dead body and array them one by one on the kitchen countertop, with the disembodied heart still beating (even hinting at a symbolic vivisection). In a touch of grim humour, they adorn and so stylize Laura's organs with her pearl jewellery [fig. 12]. Throughout his films, Nikolaidis fetishizes and dissects the female body scopophilically, as is the case with Elsa and Vera in *See You in Hell, My Darling* and with the two women whose naked flesh and unbridled sensuality dominate the cinematic frame in *Singapore Sling*. Yet Nikolaidis strips woman, as the unattainable object of desire, of her skin too: Laura, symbolic of the forever lost film noir, is inverted; her body has been turned inside-out: her viscera fill the foreground like the negative of black-and-white celluloid. This is an important scene where Nikolaidis' film *sarcastizes* (destroys obsessively, flesh-tears) Gene Tierney as Laura Hunt in Preminger's film. And yet Laura's corpse, reduced to an absurd arrangement of body organs, wearing jewellery with the heart still beating, formalizes the decadent excess of film noir inversion, as does the anatomical model torso kept in the attic.

In the form of a stylized assemblage of internal organs, the dead Laura doubles as the stylized portrait of Daughter-as-Laura on the wall, a direct allusion to the haunting picture of Laura in Preminger's film [figs 13 & 14]. Nikolaidis experiments with the Gothic trope of the magnetic double as a seductive portrait, developed beautifully in Terence Young's *Corridor of Mirrors* (1948) as well as in Albert Lewin's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945). In *Laura*, it is through the alluring picture that the police detective Mark McPherson becomes infatuated with the presumably dead woman. In a pivotal sequence, McPherson fiddles with Laura's closet and dresser, sniffing her perfume and fondling her personal effects discreetly and in the briefest of moments: Preminger's subtle touch is enough to communicate the undertones of McPherson's dark infatuation just under the nose of the censors.



Fig. 13 (00:36:25): Daughter's/Laura's portrait in *Singapore Sling* alludes to the one in *Laura*.



Fig. 14 (00:12:56): The haunting portrait in Otto Preminger's *Laura*, or Laura's figurative presumed 'corpse'.



Fig. 15 (00:55:32): Singapore Sling passive, at the mercy of Mother and Daughter.

Besides, as Waldo Lydecker tells Laura: ‘When you were unattainable – when he thought you were dead – that’s when he wanted you most’. *Laura* itself reproduces the unspoken desire of Victorian decadence, and Nikolaidis alludes to these coded transgressions and negotiations with the censor inherent in film noir by blowing them up in his own cinematic universe: the suggestiveness and alluring mystery of Laura’s portrait is juxtaposed with Laura’s bejewelled, disembodied viscera.

About a third into *Singapore Sling*, Daughter, again as a kind of film director herself, conjures up the setting of the original *Laura* when she plays Glenn Miller’s version of Laura’s theme on the turntable. The camera pans across her portrait on the wall, suggestive of the one of Laura in Preminger’s film, looming overhead and fringed by heavy curtains, which for Fotiou constitute ‘a frame of baroque aesthetics that emphasizes Daughter’s obscure multilevelled character and highlights her excessiveness’.³⁹ Daughter then has sex with the male detective who, in an inversion of gender roles, takes on a passive femininity as he is tied to the bedpost, like a male damsel in distress [fig. 15]. In this scene Singapore Sling is also a figure of excess and genre transgression:

the alienated, hardboiled noir detective becomes malleable and his torpid psychology is hyperbolized at the expense of his prescribed masculinity.

Filmic Vomit

Daughter-as-Laura's entrancing portrait is also juxtaposed with Daughter's promiscuous behaviour *in situ* in a dichotomy that reaches into the dark corners of the sexual politics in classic film noir. In the portrait she is depicted in a rather demure polka-dot dress, whilst, as an actual person, she flashes her vulva to Singapore Sling from her white ruffled nightgown, a cross between a brash female satyr and a sultry siren, before proceeding to engage him in sex. Meanwhile, Julie London's otherworldly crooning of 'Laura' takes over the soundtrack, comparable to the intrusion of Dowson's poetry by 'electrical transmission' in Preminger's film noir, and Daughter repeats the closing verse of London's song: 'but she's only a dream'. Nikolaidis comments that 'a song from *Laura* intrudes through Julie London's voice: cinema itself comes to intervene and claim a role that is now dramatic and not cinephilic'.⁴⁰ Film noir turns into an actor, a returning ghostly presence.



Fig. 16 (00:40:08): Daughter's 'memory puke'.



Fig. 17 (00:45:31): Nikolaidis' economy of Sadean eroticism: torture of Singapore Sling by electroshock drives Mother to orgasm.

Then in a gesture that resembles ejaculation, she vomits on him and says softly, 'forget her Singapore Sling' [fig. 16]. Her vomit is symbolic of what Nikolaidis has called 'memory puke'.⁴¹ This is a peculiar, symbolic gesture, one in which cinematic language has been reinvented. Daughter's vomit is a tragic, profound gift to Singapore Sling: as if expressing wistfulness for a kind of idealistic love that was only possible in the enchanting black-and-white cinema of the 1940s, vomit stands for a cultural memory that can never be recaptured and returns to the present reality in the form of something insalubrious. What Nikolaidis places in parallax in his necrophilic intertext are forgetfulness and recall, mystification and demystification, filmic fantasy and filmic reality. A more extreme inversion of film noir predicated on Nikolaidis' economy of waste, juxtaposed with the dreamlike sexual encounter with Daughter, is Mother's unnerving, baroque sadism in raping the detective: gagged and chained to the bed, Singapore Sling is subjected to electrocution while mounted by Mother, who is clad in black. Daughter, dressed in white, cranks up a vintage-looking generator, resulting in the violent jerking of his body whose spasms serve as an instrument for Mother's orgasm [fig. 17]. In the moment of climax, in this economy of

channelling the agony of one's torture into the other's sexual energy – like communicating vessels – Mother urinates on Singapore Sling's face.

In accord with the female characters' sex-associated bodily fluids (vomit, urine), the film showcases excessive imagery of food and eating. Nikolaidis' obsession with food and vomiting brings to mind the two girls in Věra Chytilová's experimental Czechoslovakian masterpiece *Sedmikrásky* [*Daisies*] (1966) who, with comedic excess, indulge in and wreck a lavish long table lined with opulent dishes when they come across it before the arrival of guests; both Nikolaidis and Chytilová with their imagery of culinary excess challenge bourgeois conventions. In addition, the women's morbid gastronomic hedonism alludes to the four degenerate friends in Marco Ferreri's *La grande bouffe* [*The Big Feast*] (1973) who eat themselves to death, sequestered in a villa over the course of a weekend. *Singapore Sling*, alongside these two films, is an example of what Aleksandra Drzał-Sierocka calls 'anti-food films or reverse food films', where food as an essential element acquires a 'metaphorical meaning'.⁴² There are two banquet sequences where Mother and Daughter, styled as a silent-era actress and a kind of heathen princess respectively, indulge in food sensually and carelessly, with Singapore present as a restrained observer and indisposed participant, in what looks like a carnivalesque parody of table manners and bourgeois decorum. The table is opulently set up with elaborate dishes, including aphrodisiac seafood, sheep's brains, and luxurious confectionery, accompanied by blood-red wine. Making the most of his black-and-white cinematography, Nikolaidis' camera arrests the tactile, rich textures of the gleaming tableware, the food, the fabrics, and the characters' beautifully expressive faces [fig. 18]. Everything blends into a lush, sensuous composition, where grossness is tempered by swanky, baroque aesthetics. The sessions quickly degenerate into obscene displays of bad table manners, with the two women becoming messy with their hands, gorging themselves, gagging, and self-inducing reflux and vomiting (yet without being queasy), besmirching Singapore Sling with food, spoon-feeding him in an infantilizing fashion, and making him disgorge. These gastronomic rituals are highly suggestive of the Lucullian banquets of Roman decadence [figs 19 & 20].

What is quite innovative here is that the film's playhouse of perversions (its culinary rituals and *recherché* sex vignettes) enacts its intertextual decadence through the figure of reflux, of something coming back to the surface in a corroded (but not putrefied) form. Referring to the idea of 'scene', Roland Barthes in *A Lover's Discourse* comments that a 'scene' has no meaning; 'it is a luxury – and idle: as inconsequential as a perverse orgasm: it does not leave a mark'. Barthes refers to Sade's prose as an example: a body subjected to violence 'is instantaneously restored – for new expenditures'; hence '[b]y the very insignificance of its tumult, the scene recalls the Roman style of vomiting: I tickle my uvula (I rouse myself to contestation), I vomit (a flood of wounding arguments), and then, quite calmly, I begin eating again'.⁴³ Like a hall of mirrors, *Singapore Sling* rehearses a series of variant confrontations with the enchanting world of film noir in terminal, 'idle' repetitions. From the standpoint of his own time, the late 1980s, and his own experience of struggling for artistic freedom and resources in his dealings with the Greek Film Centre, Nikolaidis strives to capture film noir only to regurgitate its memory and start afresh in endless repetitions, making *Singapore Sling* – in his own words – a conceptual 'filmic vomit'.



Fig. 18 (1:23:37): The dinner table in dappled black-and-white; a tactile and sensual mise en scène.



Fig. 19 (00:47:12): Daughter's food indulgence in a scene that suggests both bourgeois ritualism and Gothic exoticism.



Fig. 20 (00:51:58): Nikolaidis' culinary excesses constitute a legacy of Roman decadence.

The two supper sequences are followed by two equally tactile scenes in the privacy of the attic where we see Daughter as an animalistic force of unbridled orgasm engaging in masturbatory activities, exploring her own sexuality to Rachmaninov's tempestuous music. In the first instance she uses her fingers again to simulate self-induced vomit whilst, in segued jump-cuts, she tussles and stimulates herself with the straps of her own lingerie gown. The second attic sequence showcases a bold piece of method acting by Meredyth Herold: Nikolaidis' scopophilic camera follows Daughter having sex with a kiwi fruit. With clear nods to the eclectic, quasi-pornographic cinema of Walerian Borowczyk, Daughter sensually caresses her body with the fruit; her ecstasy crescendos when she crushes it into her vagina in an unflinching close-up, leading to an eruption of juices. This is a sublime moment when the director's *inversion* of film noir's aesthetic baggage reaches its peak. But, like Laura's disembodied organs in full view, this is a moment when all the layers have been peeled to reveal a terminal, futile excess.

'I'm alive now': Intertextual Convergence

The fantasy of Preminger's *Laura* converges with the filmic reality circumscribed by *Singapore Sling* through stagecraft and playacting. In keeping with the bifurcation of the decadent modes of excess and understatement, the symbolism of bygone genres returning in a rather obscene form ('filmic vomit') is paralleled with the return of *Laura* through pastiche. The women, being disruptive agents of intertextuality, in interacting with the detective and in their effort to outmanoeuvre each other, increasingly smuggle in script segments from *Laura*. Earlier in the film Daughter had pointed out to Singapore that Laura 'is only a dream'. But now, in his voice-over reflections Singapore believes that Laura is alive as the Daughter who slides into this role in order to motivate him to get rid of her controlling mother. Dressed as Laura in her polka-dot attire, she says beguilingly as she plays Laura's theme on the turntable once again [fig. 21]:

You see, Singapore Sling, you don't need to love a corpse. I'm alive now. I've read your notebook and understood that you loved me before you ever met me. The time you saw my portrait and thought I was dead ... But it seems some other girl died in my place. I left

because I was tired. I wanted to be alone to think things over. Don't feel you were deserted. I went to the lake house for three days. Newspapers aren't delivered there and the radio was broken. That's why I didn't hear about my death. But now we'll finally be together. You have to help me Singapore Sling because that woman out there won't let me smoke.

This is a key instance where Preminger's script is embedded and repurposed in Nikolaidis' script. The web of intertextual allusions is compressed in this moment. Daughter-as-Laura initially plays by the intradiegetic script, *Singapore Sling's* 'notebook' which reproduces Preminger's necroromantic premise that coincides with and describes the detective's situation. Then her character is subsumed by an extradiegetic manipulation, the script of *Laura*, as she paraphrases lines by the original Laura Hunt played by Gene Tierney. Preminger's plot is prompted by the investigation of Laura's supposed murder. Because of the off-screen shotgun blast to the face the victim cannot be positively identified. Lieutenant McPherson conjectures that the body is Laura's because it is found in her apartment. It turns out that the victim is another woman, Diane Redfern, who was secretly brought there by Laura's fiancé Shelby Carpenter (Vincent Price), whilst Laura was away for the weekend in her country house. It is during that investigation weekend that McPherson sees her portrait and falls in love with her 'corpse'. In *Singapore Sling*, Daughter as an intertextual agent resuscitates Preminger's Laura and samples segments of her explaining to a surprised McPherson her weekend getaway and, in light of her reappearance, her alibi. Daughter's bathetic motivation – to escape Mother's restrictions on smoking – nonetheless agrees with Nikolaidis' strategy of inversion. It is a fig leaf that inverts censorship restrictions and reduces them to comic absurdity.

Fotiou fittingly posits that in this scene, 'by recreating [*Laura*] and imitating parts of it' Nikolaidis 'shows his necrophilia for this "dead" cinema through pastiche. Nikolaidis lusts for *Laura* (the film) in the same way that the detective lusts for Laura (the person)'.⁴⁴ In addition to his use of pastiche, Nikolaidis here expresses the sharp irony tinged with personal obsession that designates the sarcastic lover: the statement of the daughter, who is the symbolic mouthpiece of film noir ('you don't need to love a corpse. I'm alive now'), is in itself a contradiction. Nikolaidis'

necrophilia is not an attempt at resurrecting film noir but animating it, leading him to mould his own cinematic material so that it imitates the noir sensibility. The scene features the decadent topos of the mirror's artifice, the preference of the substitute to the real thing. The director, and by extension Singapore, can be compared with the obsessed Scottie Ferguson in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) who adjusts Judy Barton's appearance to look like the dead Madeleine. Even more so, Nikolaidis is like the aesthete master of ceremonies Paul Mangin in *The Corridor of Mirrors* who is slave to his own fantasy and as a Pygmalion fashions the stately Mifanwy Conway as the reincarnation of the Renaissance princess of the clandestine portrait he owns.⁴⁵



Fig. 21 (0:55:13): Daughter dressed as Laura heralds Preminger's film with theatrical flourish.

Fragments of plot and dialogue from *Laura* bestrew the film's action to the point of blurring role-playing and reality. Daughter may or may not pretend to escape when she enters Singapore Sling's black sedan only to find her move anticipated by Mother, who creeps up from the back seat. The dialogue that follows reads like cryptic nonsense but is cleverly manipulated to resemble Preminger's plot, making sense only in the interstitial space of intertextuality:

[...] ‘Where have you been?’
‘I was in the country, at the lake house. Give me the keys.’
‘A woman was murdered in this house. Everyone thought it was you.’
‘I don’t know anything. When did this happen?’
‘Three years ago. On a Saturday night. They also found two glasses; guess what was in them.’
‘Singapore Sling.’

Back at the house and in front of the detective, in a classic film noir trope, Mother questions Daughter, flashing an intimidating desk-lamp in her face that alludes to McPherson’s interrogation of Laura [fig. 22]. Allusions to *Laura* include Mother pretending to torture Daughter in order to make the detective reveal what he knows about Laura’s murder, and the duo immersing him in the bathtub while synopsising a prequel-twist variation of Preminger’s film in their characteristic theatrical breaking of the fourth wall. The effect is one of convolutedness of presentation where allusions to film noir are at once signposted and subsumed.



Fig. 22 (1:00:57): Blurred intertextual boundaries: Mother interrogates Daughter/Laura before a spectating Singapore Sling.

Church appositely asks, ‘is the noir narrative merely a backdrop for the sex play, or is sex play the backdrop for the noir narrative?’²⁴⁶ The multiplicity of roleplaying games transmigrates to

the plane of sexuality and murder: in an extended *decoupage*, an orgy of sexual games and entanglements among the three characters is intercut with Singapore digging a grave. The three characters' shifting, fluid combinations in their choreographed sexual activity reflect the film's multiplicity of intertextual scenarios [fig. 23]. The sequence is accompanied by a late Renaissance choral piece, Giaches de Wert's *Tirsi Morir Volea* [Thyrsis Wished to Die], which is about death though the act of sex. Tsakoniatis remarks of this sequence that 'Laura's erotic embrace leads with mathematical certainty to death'.⁴⁷



Fig. 23 (01:07:05): The roleplaying games of the three characters in their efforts to outmanoeuvre one another lead to sexual orgy and death.

Nikolaidis' films typically end in an orgy of death. Singapore kills Mother and replaces her in the game of the 'Young Secretary', crossed-dressed in a vintage costume and heavy makeup, an appearance that conflates elements of both women but is also evocative of Sadean libertinism. But instead of the dildo, his strap-on is a phallic knife. In the dramatic scuffle that ensues in and around the villa between him and Daughter, he mortally penetrates her with the appended knife-phallus, while she inflicts a deadly wound with her noir-style luger pistol [fig. 24]. Church astutely

comments that each of the three characters ‘has simultaneously occupied multiple positionalities within a scenario allowing the free play of different confused motivations, destabilizing all stable identities and allowing different circuits of desire to flow through each person’.⁴⁸ For instance, Church argues that Singapore Sling occupies ‘three positions at once’: the role of Mother in filling her vacancy in the ‘Young Secretary’ scenario, the role of the Father as a ‘phallic destroyer’, and his own role as a ‘searcher for Laura’.⁴⁹ In resisting fixed identities, Singapore both fills the vacuum of patriarchal authority and sexually violates Daughter/Laura: his deadly appendage means that he is both destructive and impotent. In his transvestite outfit he symbolizes Nikolaidis’ intertext (his name is also the film’s title) further *sarvasizing* (flesh-tearing) Daughter and Mother, synecdochic avatars of *Laura* and *Sunset Boulevard* respectively.



Fig. 24 (00:22:12): Daughter as the archetypal film noir femme fatale wielding a luger pistol.



Fig. 25 (01:49:22): The symbolism of costume: Singapore Sling disguises his libertine identity with his film noir attire.

Conclusion

Early on in the film, Daughter refers to planting ‘decorative and aromatic flowers on the graves’, adding that ‘corpses were the best fertiliser for the soil; and our gardenias had become as tall as trees’, a striking image that brings to mind Clara and the revolting Chinese prison-garden of Octave Mirbeau’s *Le jardin des supplices* [*Torture Garden*] (1899). Daughter’s image of macabre regeneration bears a special significance: the dead Laura (and the eponymous film noir she symbolically represents) becomes the intertextual fertiliser for an altogether different cinematic experience, yet one that is itself subject to a cycle of morbid renewal. *Singapore Sling* is self-aware of the prospect of turning into a work of classic decadence, just like the genre it speaks to in turn. At the end of the film, the wounded Singapore Sling, emerging from the shifting shadows of the moonlit, wet alley, puts on his trenchcoat over the libertine costume, as if encasing his libertine impulses within the more restrained identity of film noir [fig. 25], and ruminates in deadpan voice-over:

You slide inside yourself like falling with a parachute. Then you hold your breath and go without resisting, recalling all those who did the same before you. All those who fell into the void underneath a white parachute. A bunch of suckers and losers, without a future, work and age. Who are still chasing a dream with a female name. I'll be in good company tonight. [my translation of subtitles]

Julie London's 'Laura' resounds this time extradiegetically (forming a symmetry with the beginning of the film) like an irresistible siren's call while Singapore Sling lies in the grave he has opened and makes an attempt at self-burial. The camera freezes on his hand sticking out of the pit. Tsakoniatis interprets this gesture as a 'last-gasp effort to touch the dream'.⁵⁰ It is Nikolaidis' grand attestation of the curse of unfulfilled desire as Dowson expresses it: 'But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire, | Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night is thine' (an image that could as well serve as a befitting film noir descriptor).⁵¹ The real femme fatale is the spectre of the eroticized film noir. Singapore Sling is the last in a string of victims, forever trapped in his liminal desire. In addition, his final voice-over and liminal arrest in the grave comprise a free rendering of Lydecker's recitation of Dowson's poem '*Vitae summa brevis*' at the finale of *Laura*:

Out of a misty dream
Our path emerges for a while, then closes
Within a dream.

Singapore Sling's final thoughts are an intimation of a necrophilic intertextual performance. The motions of 'chasing a dream with a female name' are performed in the film's repeat viewings. In his lucid moment of dying, the hardboiled, forlorn detective has an intuition indicative of the film's self-consciousness. He projects the fantasy of Nikolaidis in which his neo-noir film is itself bound to become inert and classic, a corpse to be intertextually torn apart by the decadent cinema of the future.

¹ My gratitude goes to David Weir for his erudition and helpful suggestions on drafting this essay. I am also grateful to Marie Louise Nikolaidis for being so accommodating and generous in providing me with source material from her personal archive, especially hard-to-find interviews by Nikos Nikolaidis. In addition, I wish to express my warm thanks to Marie Louise Nikolaidis for granting me permission to reproduce stills from *Singapore Sling*.

² Mimis Tsakoniatis, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, ed. by Marie-Louise Bartholomew, Simeon Nikolaidis, and Yannis Soldatos (Athens: Aigokeros, 2007), p. 41. My translation. This and other Greek sources in this essay are translated and transliterated.

- ³ For the film's baroque aesthetics and *Sunset Boulevard*, see Mikela Fotiou, 'Nikolaidis' Diptych *Those Who Loved a Corpse: A "Pasticcio of Pastiche"*', in *Contemporary Greek Film Cultures from 1990 to the Present*, ed. by Tonia Kazakopoulou and Mikela Fotiou (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2017), pp. 342–68 (p. 351).
- ⁴ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Vassos Georgas, 'Nikos Nikolaidis: The Man Who Loved a Corpse', *Cine7* (1990), 40. My translation.
- ⁵ Vrasidas Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema* (London and New York: Continuum, 2012), p. 228.
- ⁶ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Nikos Kavvadias, 'Singapore Sling', *Odos Panos*, 55 (1990), 98–109 (p. 108). My translation.
- ⁷ Richard Dyer, 'Resistance through Charisma: Rita Hayworth and *Gilda*', in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. by Ann Kaplan (London: BFI, 1980), pp. 91–99 (p. 92).
- ⁸ Siegfried Kracauer, 'Hollywood's Terror Films: Do They Reflect an American State of Mind?', *New German Critique*, 89 (2003), 105–111 (pp. 106 & 107). First published in *Commentary*, 2 (1946), 132–36.
- ⁹ Kracauer, 'Hollywood's Terror Films', pp. 108 & 109.
- ¹⁰ *Laura*, directed by Otto Preminger, Twentieth Century Fox, 1944. All quotations are taken from the film version.
- ¹¹ Kate Hext, 'Ben Hecht's Hard-Boiled Decadence: The Flâneur as Reporter', *Modernist Cultures*, 13.2 (2018), 235–54 (p. 241). See also p. 252 n.28.
- ¹² Havelock Ellis, 'Introduction', in J.-K. Huysmans, *Against the Grain*, trans. by John Howard (New York: Lieber and Lewis, 1922), p. ix.
- ¹³ David Weir, 'Decadence and Cinema', in *Decadence and Literature*, ed. by Jane Desmarais and David Weir (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 300–15 (p. 311).
- ¹⁴ Weir, 'Decadence and Cinema', p. 311. On the other hand, a film like *Jaws* with its technological innovations could be regarded as decadent (Weir, 'Decadence and Cinema', p. 312).
- ¹⁵ David Weir, *Decadence: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 13.
- ¹⁶ Ernest Dowson, 'Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae', in *Collected Poems*, ed. by R. K. R. Thornton with Caroline Dowson (Birmingham: Birmingham University Press, 2003), p. 85.
- ¹⁷ Tsakoniatis, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, p. 138.
- ¹⁸ See also Tsakoniatis, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, pp. 128–29.
- ¹⁹ Paul Willemsen, 'Through the Glass Darkly: Cinephilia Reconsidered', in *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press; London: BFI, 1994), pp. 227, 237.
- ²⁰ Fotiou, 'Nikolaidis' Diptych', p. 350.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 349.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 345.
- ²³ David Church, 'Singapore Sling: Postmodern Noir, Narrative, and Destructive Desire', *Offscreen: Eclectic & Serious Film Criticism*, 11.10 (2007), 1–15 (p. 15).
- ²⁴ Church, 'Singapore Sling', p. 14.
- ²⁵ Classic melodrama with noirish elements such as *Casablanca* (1942) or *Road House* (1948).
- ²⁶ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Tasos Sagris, *Rollin Under* (1991), 5–11 (p. 5). My translation.
- ²⁷ Examples of the prefix sarc- include *sarcophagus* (flesh-eating) or *sarcoma* (fleshy outgrowth, tumour).
- ²⁸ See the epigraph to this essay.
- ²⁹ Tsakoniatis, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, p. 41. My translation.
- ³⁰ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Maria Katsounaki, 'Visions in White and Black', *Kathimerini*, 7 June 1990, p. 56.
- ³¹ Tsakoniatis, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, p. 130.
- ³² Anger's title is untranslatable because it is a pun on '*feux d'artifice*' [fireworks], since the film does with waterworks what is ordinarily done with fireworks – create a spectacular visual display.
- ³³ The image also suggests the discharge of various bodily fluids, a recurring motif in *Singapore Sling*.
- ³⁴ *Singapore Sling*, directed by Nikos Nikolaidis, Greek Film Centre, 1990. All quotations are taken from the film version.
- ³⁵ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Giannis Halaris, *MEN*, 17 (1990), 122, 126, 128, 122.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ Also for Tsakoniatis all three characters blur fantasy with reality, on an 'illusionary, paranoid level'. See *Nikos Nikolaidis*, p. 138.
- ³⁹ Fotiou, 'Nikolaidis' Diptych', p. 352.
- ⁴⁰ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Vena Georgakopoulos, 'Time to Feel Exposed', *Sunday Eleftherotypia*, 2 December 1990, pp. 40–41 (p. 40). My translation.
- ⁴¹ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Maria Katsounaki, 'Personal Challenges...', *Kathimerini*, 25 November 1990, p. 39.
- ⁴² Aleksandra Drzał-Sierocka, 'Celluloid Flavours: A Brief History of Food in Film', *Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne*, 54 (2015), 52–70 (p. 66). Italics in original.
- ⁴³ Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), p. 207.
- ⁴⁴ Fotiou, 'Nikolaidis' Diptych', p. 353.

⁴⁵ Lydecker himself shows Pygmalion-like tendencies. Laura for him proves to be a decorative ornament, a trophy, as he projects his cultural tastes onto her, playing her his records and reading her his articles.

⁴⁶ Church, 'Singapore Sling: Postmodern Noir', p. 11.

⁴⁷ Tsakoniatis, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, p. 139. My translation.

⁴⁸ Church, 'Singapore Sling: Postmodern Noir', p. 13.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Tsakoniatis, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, p. 142.

⁵¹ Dowson, '*Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae*', in *Collected Poems*, p. 85.