

Antamosi and *Only the Brave*: the early films

Kokkinos wrote and directed *Antamosi* (1991) as a filmmaking student at the VCA and released *Only the Brave* (1994), which she directed and co-wrote with partner Mira Robertson, two years after her 1992 graduation. The latter, her professional debut, premiered at the Melbourne International Film Festival in 1994 and quickly garnered critical attention. The film won the ‘Grand Prix for Best Film’ at its festival premiere, for example, and later won two awards at the 1994 Australian Film Institute Awards (namely ‘Best Short Fiction Film’ and ‘Best Screenplay in a Non-Feature Film’). For Paul Byrnes (n.d.c) in his curation of the Australian Screen archives, *Only the Brave* was ‘clear evidence that a major new voice had arrived in Australian film’. For Kokkinos, who released her first professional film at thirty-six years of age, the career change had been a success and had placed her ‘at the forefront of the new directing talent in the country’ (Katsigiannis 1998: 6). Moreover, more than two decades later, the film continues to resonate: recently re-released as part of the Melbourne International Film Festival’s 2017 celebration of ‘Pioneering Women’, *Only the Brave* featured alongside the work of other high-profile Australian women directors, including Gillian Armstrong and Tracey Moffatt.

There are important reasons to consider these two films together in this chapter. For one, they are Kokkinos’s first films as well as her only non-feature films: *Antamosi* is a 37-minute short, while *Only the Brave* is a 59-minute short feature. For another, they both prefigure the outsider central to Kokkinos’s

oeuvre and establish her emerging stylistic and thematic preoccupations. These films also share important contexts having both been released in the early 1990s, including the comparative mainstreaming of multiculturalism and queerness in Australia, the international trend towards social realism, and the Australian cycle of women-centred films. To very briefly flag these contexts: in the late 1980s and 1990s, Australian cinema was characterised by dual shifts towards internationalisation and co-productions on the one hand, as the imperatives of a cash-strapped national film industry looking for opportunities for commercial collaboration, and towards more plural representations of the local and national on the other hand (O'Regan 2001). The latter was fuelled by shifts in government policy, most notably the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*, as well as by broader social and cultural shifts, including around more inclusive attitudes towards queerness. Indeed, the early 1990s saw the increasing institutionalisation of gay and lesbian studies in universities; the increasing popularity of 'queer' as an umbrella term for non-heteronormative sexualities (Jagose 1996); the emergence of New Queer Cinema (which I take up further in the following chapter); and the emergence of gays (and, to a lesser extent, lesbians) in mainstream popular culture in Western industrialised nations. Deborah Hunn has described this as the 'queer moment':

In Australia the queer moment has coincided resonantly with a shift in more general debates about what constitutes Australian identity. [...] [In the] 1980s and 1990s, 'the official story of Australian identity was built around the idea of a multicultural, cosmopolitan and tolerant society embracing and invigorated by change', a move which led to a degree of inclusiveness towards gays and lesbians and some recognition of sexual identity as a legitimate area of concern in the dialogue that was reshaping national identity. (Hunn 2000: 113, quoting Reynolds 1999: 58–9)

These shifts are, to different extents, reflected in the multicultural and queer cycles of Australian cinema at the time. Certainly films featuring multicultural characters and milieus were entering the

Australian cinematic mainstream in increasing numbers in the early 1990s (Collins 2009). Indeed, as noted in the Introduction, a number of successful comedies focused on multicultural milieus were released, most notably *Death in Brunswick* (1990), *The Heartbreak Kid* (1993), and perhaps most influentially, *Strictly Ballroom* (1992).¹ *Strictly Ballroom* offers affable, though often 'caricatured' representations of Spaniards – and specifically the 'tourist cliché of the Andalusian gypsy' – who stand in contrast to comedically dysfunctional 'suburban white Australians' (Callahan 2001: 97). The narrative eventually moves towards a good-natured acceptance of the 'ethnic other', which is symbolised by a crowd clapping on the Spanish-influenced new dance steps of ethnically unmarked protagonist Scott (Paul Mercurio) and ethnically marked love interest Fran (Tara Morice) at a dance competition (O'Regan 1996). But for James Bennett, this neatly packaged and highly 'managed' representation of ethnicity reflects a 'good multiculturalism', in which the audience are invited to 'extend, through tolerance, the boundaries of Australian identity to the Other' (2007: 61). While Bennett's (2007) 'good multiculturalism' functions to mask the reality of the hegemonic, it perhaps also reveals the fraught tension between the conflicting trends within the industry at the time, namely of both a nostalgic return to nationalism as well as an 'open-ness' to change (Craven 2001: 2).

This negotiation over what could be represented in Australian cinema at the time was also occurring around sexuality. Indeed, queer characters also began to emerge in the Australian cinematic mainstream in the mid 1990s, with the release of explicitly queer films like *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994), *The Sum of Us* (1994), and *Love and Other Catastrophes* (1996), and preceded by implicitly queer films like *Muriel's Wedding* (1994). According to Hunn (2005: 38), these films heralded the so-called 'explosion of queer Australian films in the 1990s'. Certainly they collectively mark a very significant shift towards explicit and non-punitive representations of queerness in mainstream Australian cinema. Deb Verhoeven (1997: 25) has argued that before this time the representation of 'queer characters in

Australian films ha[d] [...] been almost entirely and quite literally “in the closet”. Nevertheless, the most prominent films of this first wave of Australian queer cinema – namely *Priscilla* and *The Sum of Us*, which both garnered significant national attention – have been widely criticised for their problematic representations. *Priscilla* (1994), for example, has been criticised for emphatically misogynistic and racist depictions of women, lesbian, and Asian characters (Brooks 1999; Rustin 2001; Kunze 2013), while *The Sum of Us* has been criticised for its heterosexism and misogyny (Berry 1995). These films, again all comedies,² nonetheless represent a prominent precedent – as the ostensibly ‘wholesome representations of lesbians and gays that Australia’s multicultural context had [...] tried to nurture’ (Jennings and Lominé 2004: 147) – and are key counterpoints to the confronting social-realist representations of queers and queerness that Kokkinos offers in *Only the Brave*, *Head On*, and *Blessed*.

Indeed, another context that Kokkinos’s early films reflect is the international trend towards social realism in the early 1990s. Though Kokkinos employs different genres and styles within her oeuvre – from social-realist dramas (*Antamosi*), melodramas (*Blessed*), and coming-of-age films (*Only the Brave*, *Head On*) to a rape-revenge film (*The Book of Revelation*) – she typically favours a stylised realist approach. Social-realist films are most associated with uncompromising depictions of social injustice and are typically focused on marginalised characters in working-class milieus: ‘characters who usually figure as background presences in the generic mainstream, who are marginalised by virtue of their social status and/or ethnic identity’ (Hallam and Marshment 2000: 190; see also Dermody and Jacka 1988a). Both the broader Australian and international cinematic contexts were strongly reflecting social realism at the time of Kokkinos’s emergence with a ‘new and global cycle of realism in Western cinema’ taking shape in the 1990s (Jorgensen 2005: 147). This contemporary social realism has inevitably been employed in different ways in different cinemas, but is broadly marked by an interest in the ‘politics of representation’ (Hallam and Marshment 2000: 190)

that is typically enunciated through masculine protagonists. The latter is particularly true of the historically androcentric Australian cinema (Jorgensen 2005), although there were a 'handful' of Australian social-realist films focused on women in the 1980s and 1990s (Hancock 2014: 5). Grady Hancock (2014) identifies *Fran* (1985), *Sweetie* (1989), and *Radiance* (1998), all directed by women, as emblematic of this 'handful' of gynocentric Australian social-realist films of the period. To these, we can add Kokkinos's *Antamosi* and *Only the Brave*, both of which are focused on female protagonists (and in the former, on three generations of women).

There was also a broader cycle of women-centred films in Australia during the same period, which alongside *Sweetie* included films like Jackie McKimmie's *Waiting* (1991), Gillian Armstrong's *Last Days of Chez Nous* (1992), and Susan Lambert's *Talk* (1994). Though diverse in preoccupations, these films tended to eschew a focus on 'heterosexual romance as a goal of the plot' and instead foreground the 'relations between women' (O'Regan 1995: n.p.). Lizzie Francke (1993: 19) has described these (alongside key New Zealand films) as an 'Australasian new female wave', although few of these films gained attention comparable to their cultural significance at the time.³ Among them, Campion is internationally well-known for her ongoing emphasis on the stories of strong, complex, female characters and was arguably the most prominent figure in the shift in Australian cinema of the late 1980s and 1990s towards women-centred texts (French 2007; Hancock 2014: 5), a trend to which both *Antamosi* and *Only the Brave* can be seen as contributing. Interestingly, Kokkinos has cited Campion as an early influence: 'there was no doubt that for me, particularly in that period, Jane Campion's work was very inspirational because, again, another very strong woman director was emerging [...] [T]hat was a terrific impetus' (qtd in Barber 1998: 5).

It was within these broad and overlapping contexts that Kokkinos emerged in Australian cinema in the early 1990s. In this chapter, then, I am broadly interested in establishing the features and preoccupations of Kokkinos's developing style, including the social-realist focus on Greek-Australian migrant families

in working-class Melbourne for which she is best known. I also track the emergence and characteristics of the proto-outsider, emerging first in the final scene of *Antamosi* before its partial realisation from the first scene of *Only the Brave*. As such, I am particularly interested in the construction of protagonists Katina in *Antamosi* and Alex in *Only the Brave*, including in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. Together, these early films reveal important insights into Kokkinos's emerging style as she progresses from film student to filmmaker.

Antamosi

Written, edited, and directed by Kokkinos, *Antamosi* is a short black-and-white film set in Melbourne that depicts the relationship between three generations of women in a Greek-Australian family. With *Antamosi* Kokkinos begins her 'filmic preoccupation with exploring Greek-Australian migrant life in Melbourne' (French 2013: n.p.). And as with other Australian filmmakers of the period interested in "looking" and representing onscreen the experience of parents who travelled and settled in Australia, the "looking" is done through the eyes of children' (Tuccio 2008: 18–19). In this instance, the film is told from the perspective of the youngest daughter, seven-year-old Sophia (played by Xaris Miller, but whose adult-self voice-over is performed by Helen Trench), and focuses on the fraught relationship between her mother Katina (played by Phillippa Adgemis) and her namesake grandmother Sophia (played by Stella Stefanidis), who is visiting from Greece. Grandmother Sophia is in many ways the obvious 'outsider' both to Australia and to her daughter, from whom she is estranged. But it is Greek immigrant Katina who is the film's protagonist and, as I argue later in this section, the first outsider of Kokkinos's oeuvre, though by no means as emphatic an outsider as the protagonists in her later films.

The film itself is focused on the mother–daughter dyad – first, Katina and her mother Sophia, and later Katina and her daughter

Sophia – which is refracted through the lens of the working-class, Greek-Australian family. While I return to the film's foregrounding of constructions of motherhood later in this section, the cultural differences between Greece and Australia are initially flagged through clothing. Grandma Sophia arrives in a simple, dark dress with a dark scarf – stereotypical peasant garb reflective of the elderly woman's origins in a poor, rural village – wrapped around her grey hair. Her relatives (Katina and husband Basili, alongside Sophia and older sister Crystalos) are all dressed in conservative but modern clothes, contrasting the old and (negotiated) new worlds of the migrant. The 'new' world is symbolised by Madge (played by Maureen Hartley), a white Australian hairdresser for whom Katina briefly works – although notably by whom she is never paid – and the only female character outside the family. Madge talks in 'ocker', or stereotypically vernacular ways.⁴ On Katina's first day of work, for instance, Madge pours them both a drink saying: 'Cheers luv, down the hatch.' Madge then notes, 'You know, 'Tina, you're not a bad looker really. You should do something with yourself'. Madge proceeds to put a short, blonde wig on Katina, before telling her she now looks like 'a doll'. In doing so, Madge makes explicit the hegemonic Australian ideal, first by anglicising Katina's name (to Tina), and second by reconstructing her in the image of a white woman. Katina's differences can be 'tolerated' by the white Australian – in a scene demonstrative of Bennett's (2007: 61) notion of 'good multiculturalism' – but are nevertheless incongruent with the hegemonic ideal.

In contrast, Katina's Greek origins are revealed through the family's alternation between English and Greek, through flashbacks to rural Greece, and by drawing on 'tropes used to signify Greekness in earlier Australian cinema, where it is repeatedly identified with Greek folk music and folk dancing, with weddings, with oppression (both political and cultural)' (Freiberg and Damousi 2003: 219). Though there is no folk dancing in *Antamosi* (as there is in *Head On*), the film nevertheless begins and ends with Greek folk music, while grandmother Sophia notes the importance of marriage (and particularly of daughters securing marriages to financially

prosperous men). Numerous oppressions are also touched upon: the Military Junta in Greece when Katina was growing up, the oppressions of the stereotypically patriarchal Greek family on women, and the oppressions of the working-class that Basili's strike unsuccessfully attempts to challenge. Like *The Heartbreak Kid* (1993), then, *Antamosi* 'complicates the issue of ethnicity by introducing class differences' (Freiberg and Damousi 2003: 218), as do *Only the Brave*, *Head On*, and *Blessed*, and is an early indicator of Kokkinos's emerging interest in intersectional outsiders. In *Antamosi*, Katina embodies these overlapping sites of difference until her breakdown at the film's end.

Kokkinos signals her approach to these issues through the film's title – 'antamosi', an English translation of the Greek word *αντάμωση* meaning 'meeting again' or, more broadly, 'coming together'. The title can be read as the re-meeting or 'coming together' of migrants in a new country. But it also functions to introduce the central relationship of the film, as daughter Sophia notes in her voice-over at the film's start: 'Grandma's visit – Mum hadn't seen Grandma for eighteen years.' The women are, quite literally, meeting again after a long absence. But their reunion is by no means a warm one. The women's fraught relationship is initially depicted through the absence of intimacy which, given that most of the film is set in the intimate sphere of the family home, sets familial relationships up as the key site of drama in the film. Indeed, while the rest of the family all hug the older woman on her airport arrival, Katina stands away from her, staring in silence, and eventually extends a hand to her mother's arm in a demonstration of their distance, literally holding her 'at arm's length'. Katina's hostility to her mother is made more explicit – though it is still unexplained at this point – in later scenes where, for example, her daughters cook grandmother Sophia a surprise breakfast but Katina takes the unfinished plate away from her mother and scolds her daughters for wasting food.

Where father Basili is depicted as playful and irresponsible, and grandmother Sophia as warm and compassionate with her granddaughters (though wary of her daughter), Katina is depicted as an

inexplicable antagonist to her mother and a disciplinarian to her children. This construction of Katina both foregrounds and problematises key constructions of motherhood. The 'good' mother, as identified by Terry Arendell (1999: 3), is a white, married, heterosexual woman who is both financially dependent upon her husband and solely occupied with the task of mothering, though Susan Goodwin and Kate Huppatz (2010: 2–3) expand on this to note that there are numerous 'variations on' this theme, such as the 'good working mother' or the 'good mother on welfare'. Key, then, is that the good mother is 'self-sacrificing, devoted and passive' and her emphasis is on nurturing her family – the 'family unit' being the 'foundation of society' and the site through which mothers 'socialise girls to be mothers' (Pascoe 1998: 6, 12). Moreover, this focus must also fulfil her emotionally. A good mother is thus a happy one, whereas 'an unhappy mother is a failed mother' (Johnston and Swanson 2003: 23).

But Katina is shown as unhappy for most of the film, outside of one brief scene. In fact, Katina is constrained both within and by family in a clear demonstration of the limits of notions of the good mother. This plays out in relation to space, for as French (2012: 66) notes, *Antamosi* 'establishes [Kokkinos's] exposition of psychological landscapes, the inside of her characters'. Most of the film takes place in the run-down family home – in its rooms and, to a lesser extent, backyard – which is depicted, for Katina, as a site of restriction and containment. In the home, shots are tightly, even claustrophobically framed with Katina usually stonily faced serving others: ironing, mending socks, clearing away dishes. The only moment Katina is shown relaxed, chatting, and joking warmly is when she is outside the home and away from the family. The house is also gendered, implicating the role of gender inequality, among other marginalisations, in her unhappiness: when Basili has a group of men over discussing the strike, Katina only enters the space to serve the men before leaving the room and closing the doors behind her, separating the male and female spaces of the home. Katina's containment by the family plays out in relation to her husband in more direct ways, too. For example,

Katina has to ask her husband for money, even as his role as breadwinner is undermined (he is fired after going on strike). He tells her one night, after returning home unemployed and drunk, that she is his 'good little wife', because she 'mends socks', 'cooks and cleans'. That she remains silent and downcast throughout his short monologue positions her, at least in this moment, as the stereotypically obedient Greek wife and mother typical of much Australian cinema (Freiberg and Damousi 2003). But it is a role with which she is struggling amid cultural, financial, and familial pressures that are brought together and intensified by the arrival of her own mother and their long-unresolved issues.

The cause of Katina's hostility to her mother is eventually revealed to centre around her deceased father. Katina remembers him as a hero who died fighting for the Greek resistance, whom she has mythologised in oft-told bedtime stories to her youngest daughter. Katina narrates:

Well your grandpa was a tall, handsome man. He had a long moustache that he used to twirl with his fingers. I remember when he stood at our house waving us goodbye. He was going to the mountains to fight the fascists. They wanted to take what little we had away from us. Your grandpa was fighting for a new Greece. To have enough to eat. To have work. For people to be equal. That's why he was a communist.

Here he is the idealised hero in his daughter's familial fairy-tale, a narrative around which she has built her life. In her discussion of the work of Sylvia Plath, Susan Schwartz (2017: 218) has discussed this as the 'dead father effect' on a daughter, where the daughter remains 'shackled to the absent and dead connection'. In *Antamosi*, we might extend this to Katina being 'shackled' to the hetero-patriarchal ideologies that he represented, too. Certainly Katina is traumatised when her mother offers a conflicting account of her father in the penultimate scene in the film, which effectively severs Katina's anchor to her own life and results in her psychotic break. In an earlier conversation that triggers the

revelation, grandmother Sophia tells Katina that she is selling the family home in rural Greece to move to the city. Katina responds with 'My father's house? [...] You were never proud of what he did [...] You embarrass me.' That Katina dismisses her mother and considers the house her deceased father's indicates not only her complicity in patriarchy, but equally her inability to see herself: she is, after all, living a life not dissimilar to the subservient role of Greek wife and mother that her own mother once occupied. Indeed, Kokkinos's stylised framing emphasises a reading of Katina and her mother as reflections or doubles – a visual enactment of the mother–daughter dyad – through mirroring (see Figure 1.1) and identical poses (see Figure 1.2).

Alongside the symbolic visuals, Kokkinos further emphasises their role as doubles through their near-identical circumstances, despite the different countries in which they live: both women are mothers to two daughters and wife to a husband who is unsuccessfully engaged in political action. For grandmother Sophia, her husband was engaged in the Greek resistance to fight for better conditions, but died a traitor to the cause. For Katina, her husband is engaged in a strike to fight for better conditions, but is instead fired. Where Katina criticises her husband for his role in



Figure 1.1 Katina and Sophia in mirrored poses in *Antamosi*



Figure 1.2 Katina and Sophia in identical poses in *Antamosi*

the strike, Basili counters that his daughters will ‘think I’m a hero’, just as Katina views her own deceased father at the expense of her relationship with her mother.

In doing so, Kokkinos problematises the mother-blaming trope prevalent in Australian cinema (among many other sites around the world), which is part of broader patriarchal discourses of the ‘good’ (and ‘bad’) mother flagged earlier (Reimer and Sahagian 2015). Core to this trope is the assumption that the mother is responsible both for any conflict between her and her child as well as for all of her ‘child’s problems’ (Pascoe 1998: 22). In *Antamosi*, the trope is initially implied through protagonist Katina’s barely veiled hostility to her mother on her airport arrival; Katina clearly blames her mother for some significant, mysterious wrongdoing, and the audience is invited to do so, too, viewing her as a suspicious site of motherhood. However, Katina’s mother-blaming is depicted as increasingly unreasonable. As the film progresses, Katina’s hostility escalates in inexplicable ways – from removing food from her mother’s unfinished plate to excluding her from outings – which is contrasted to grandmother

Sophia's wary but otherwise empathetic behaviour. Through this contrast, which occupies much of the film, Kokkinos invites audiences to call into question Katina's 'blaming' of her mother, before eventually revealing it as the undeserved result of a misunderstanding: grandmother Sophia does not also hero-worship Katina's dead father, because he was never a hero.

One of the implications of the mother-blaming trope is that if the mother is responsible for her child's problems then, as Caroline Pascoe (1998: 22) points out, 'the daughter' is subsumed 'into the role of victim, without control of her life'. The mother-blaming trope and broader discourses of the 'good' mother thus socialise the daughter into the same passive, subservient role of hegemonic motherhood. As flagged through Kokkinos's symbolic representation of Katina and grandmother Sophia as 'doubles' or 'mirror images', then, the daughter becomes the mother who socialises the daughter and so on. Hetero-patriarchal discourses are not a finite removal of a daughter's or mother's agency, but a continuing one that expands into each future generation as girls are brought up within them, the film suggests. The result is that when her tether to her father's narrative is challenged, Katina has no independent sense of self on which to rely; she is instead traumatised and experiences a break with reality.

Indeed, Katina's breakdown is triggered in the penultimate scene of the film when grandmother Sophia reveals: 'You thought he was so wonderful. Eyes only for your father. Your father was a traitor, killed by his comrades.' Katina is horrified and tells her mother to 'Get out!' Indeed, they are the last words she speaks to her mother who returns to Greece the following morning. Her mother's revelation nevertheless triggers a childhood memory of Katina coming across a group of adults standing over her father's dead body, as if confirming her mother's disclosure. In the final scene of the film, which takes place the following morning, Katina breaks down. When daughter Sophia is bumped and spills her drink, Katina roughly undresses her and forces the naked child to stand in the rain in the backyard. As Basili slowly resolves the situation, Katina appears distant and dazed, before

mumbling to herself, 'Whichever way I turn . . .', in an apparent psychotic break.

The line is the last Katina speaks in the film before wandering the house in distress as the rest of the family returns grandmother Sophia to the airport. Though not referenced in the film, the line recalls Walt Whitman's 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking'. The despairing poem about mortality notes an adult whose grief for a lost love has made them child-like again as they ask, 'Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate back again, if you only would' (Whitman [1885] 1991: 75). Certainly Katina is re-grieving her father, this time her child-like misconception of him and its foundational role in her own sense of self that has now given way. In problematising the deceased patriarch, Kokkinos also calls into question the active patriarchy of Katina and her own family and its impact on her constrained self-identity and mental health. French (2013: n.p.) notes that with *Antamosi* Kokkinos begins a preoccupation that is 'central to her oeuvre, including an interest in female perspectives, trauma, identity, working-class life, and parental influence on relationships'. These interests converge in the film's final shots.

The film concludes with Katina's slow-motion search through the now empty house, first in the absent room recently occupied by her mother, and then holding the gifts her mother brought with her: Katina's dead father's ring and a cross necklace from her mother. The objects are symbols of Katina's estrangement from her absent parents: one deceased, one rejected, but both newly 're-met' apropos the film's title. The final image of the film is a mid-shot of Katina who has transitioned from brightly lit rooms to a dark, dimly lit room. Katina is framed on the left of the image, indicating her unbalanced and gloomy state. In slow motion she runs a hand through her hair with the final image of her hand resting over her heart. The image is of pained estrangement from her family (whom she has just abused and rejected), from her past (which she has misremembered), and from her own sense of (fractured) self. Katina is, in this moment, untethered – an outsider to her own life. The shot is both visceral and affecting:

its slow motion and tight framing encourage an intimate empathy with her distressed estrangement that is externalised through the suddenly dark and unrecognisable *mise en scène*. These emphases on visceral depictions and psychologically reflective *mise en scène* are the first examples of Kokkinos's 'dynamic, kinetic and visceral style' (French 2013: n.p.), which increasingly characterises her later films.

Though the film's organisation, indicated by its title, around 'coming together' or 'meeting again' is not realised in the mother–daughter dyad of Katina and grandmother Sophia – or at least, while the women certainly 're-meet', there is no reconciliation – it is realised in the mother–daughter dyad of Katina and daughter Sophia. Over the final image of Katina, the film concludes with daughter Sophia's adult voice-over:

I was on my way to Greece when Grandma died. Mum gave me the money for the fare. 'You go, you're her namesake,' she said. On the morning of the funeral, the heavens opened up and it poured. As I walked in the procession I kept a space for Mum, just beside me.

Grandmother Sophia's death, like her departure from Australia, are both marked by pouring rain; they are watershed moments for the women in the family. But where her departure showed Katina breaking down, her death shows daughter Sophia picking up the pieces and actively bridging the gap between cultures, countries, and generations. As the VCA's description of the film on YouTube emphasises, the initial 'bitter embrace between mother and daughter [on her arrival] is observed by Katina's own daughter, Sophia, who must play her own role in' these characters' 'estrangement'. Importantly, Sophia rejects discourses of the 'good' or 'bad' mother, or its enunciation through the mother-blaming trope; she goes to her grandmother, and at the same time keeps a 'space' for her mother beside her. Neither are blamed and both are accepted as they are. In this sense, Sophia offers the symbolic 're-meeting' or 'coming together' of her mother and grandmother, with the film concluding, as with all of Kokkinos's

films, with a sense of ambiguous optimism via the outsider (in this case, Katina facilitating Sophia's trip to Greece).

But where the prototypical outsider emerges in *Antamosi's* final scene, the outsider is much more explicitly realised over the course of Kokkinos's second film, *Only the Brave*.

Only the Brave

Only the Brave (1994) is a 59-minute short feature directed and, with Mira Robertson, co-written by Kokkinos. The film was funded by the now defunct Women's Program of the Australian Film Commission (AFI) and the Independent Filmmaker's Fund (IFF) of Film Victoria. While the AFI's Women's Program was designed to bring more Australian women into filmmaking, the IFF had 'the express purpose of funding shorts as a training ground for feature film-making' with the 'intention' being for 'funded films to be more ambitious in scope than a student short, but not as complex as a feature' (French 2003: 109). Certainly the longer format of *Only the Brave* allowed Kokkinos to build and extend upon many of the foci established in *Antamosi*, among them the emergence of the outsider.

Set in the outer western suburbs of Melbourne, *Only the Brave* is a social-realist coming-of-age film that focuses on working-class, queer, Greek-Australian teen Alex (played by Elena Mendalis), who lives with her white Australian father and fantasises about the return of her Greek-Australian mother, who left when Alex was a child. Alex is exploring a same-sex attraction to her teacher Kate (played by Maude Davey) and shares an intense and fraught friendship with troubled school-friend Vicki (played by Dora Kaskanis). Where Alex is a capable and applied student, Vicki is angry, disinterested, and self-destructive. Both girls are rebellious and dream of escaping to Sydney which is where Alex hopes to find her mother and Vicki hopes to begin a singing career. It is revealed late in the film that Vicki is being sexually abused by her father and, traumatised when Alex finds out, she sets alight

to herself burning to death with Alex helpless to stop it. The film concludes with Alex leaving town on foot.

The coming-of-age or rite-of-passage film, organised as it is around one or a small group of youth protagonists and their symbolic transition to adulthood, has been a staple of Australian cinema since the late-1960s revival. Jonathan Raynor (2000: 142–3, 145) writes of the genre that the ‘protagonist undergoing fundamental formative and traumatic experience, travelling and questing within a country supposedly his own but over which he can exert little control, emerges as a key characteristic of Australian film narratives’ in the 1970s and 1980s, with a ‘particular emphasis on female adolescence’ emerging in the late 1980s and 1990s. Social realism sites this narrative within a working-class milieu and embodied by a socially marginalised protagonist. At the heart of the social-realist coming-of-age film, then, is often an outsider who, through the ‘formative’ and ‘traumatic’ experiences they encounter over the course of the film, comes to terms with their emerging independence in an unjust socio-cultural environment.

Alex is established as a social outsider in the first scene of the film, as the ostensible leader of a gang of four Greek-Australian, working-class girls focused on Alex and best friend Vicki, alongside Maria (played by Helen Athanasiadis) and Sylvie (played by Tina Zerella). The film begins at night with the four girls huddled around a lit match before setting alight to bushland. For Whitney Monaghan (2017a: n.p.), they are ‘wild girls [...] the kinds of girls that sneak out at night to cause trouble’. Certainly the girls exist on the social margins as rebellious Greek-Australian teenagers in a bleak, working-class environment. Their ‘wildness’ is reinforced in high-school English class in the following scene. Alex recites a passage from William Golding’s (1954) novel *The Lord of the Flies*, which offers a famously dystopian vision of youth at the extremes of marginalisation (literally separated from society as island outcasts). In *Only the Brave* its reference introduces the theme of adolescence as a dangerous, volatile state of liminality that not all of them will survive. The liminality of adolescence is a common theme among coming-of-age films, of course, with their

emphasis on the transition between childhood and adulthood. However, as Monaghan writes:

Only the Brave engages with this idea of liminality, but it is not about the possibility of youth. This film gives a sense of being caught in a liminal space between worlds, or of being pulled in multiple directions at once. [...] [Alex] is caught between childhood and adulthood; between her love of literature and her rebellious girl gang; between her Greek heritage and her suburban Australian location; between her queer feelings and the expectation to conform to heterosexuality. [...] Kokkinos replaces the nostalgia of the coming-of-age film with menace, drawing attention to the instability and danger of adolescence by ruminating on fires and the girls who light them. (Monaghan 2017a: n.p.)

This liminality of adolescence is emphasised through muted blue (Monaghan 2017a), black, and grey tones and is sited in specific spaces: night-time scenes of misadventure, the train track, the train yard, an abandoned shack. These spaces – extensions of Kokkinos’s ‘exposition of psychological landscapes’ (French 2012: 66) – are marginalised – unoccupied, run-down, and on the outskirts of town traversed by, as the film’s title suggests, ‘only the brave.’ Though the train tracks in particular hint at the transitional nature of adolescence, Alex and Vicki sit in abandoned train carriages, suggesting their ‘stuck-ness’ rather than directional potential: here adolescence threatens to be an endless liminality. This threat is reinforced through the film’s soundscape. Rather than the up-beat pop soundtrack of most coming-of-age films (Henderson 2007: 262), Kokkinos draws on discordant and eerie tones that are interspersed with background sounds of nearby industry.

Adolescent liminality is also associated, as Monaghan (2017a) noted above, with fire. Richard Dyer with Julianne Pidduck (2003: 280) note that the ‘film begins and ends ablaze’. But there are many more fires, too: aside from the girls’ arson in the first scene and Vicki’s eventual self-immolation, there are also multiple campfires, a fireplace, and Vicki’s off-screen arson of the school

library – the latter the symbolic antithesis to the protagonist's 'awakening knowledge' in the genre (Caputo 1993). Indeed, fire is an important symbol throughout the film, though it is employed in different ways. For Alex, fire is associated with her queer desire. But fire also symbolises the girls' obverse journeys, and particularly Vicki's increasing volatility and danger. I discuss these separately.

Alex is the first of several queer youth protagonists in Kokkinos's oeuvre (alongside Ari in *Head On* and Roo in *Blessed*), with her queer desire linked to fire several times in the film. And, like her outsider status, Alex's queerness is also evident from the first scene of the film when the girls set alight bushland. The girls are initially silhouetted against the blaze, before Maria and Sylvia run off leaving Alex and Vicki. Vicki dances in front of the fire – first in a slow-motion close-up, running her fingers through her hair in what Monaghan (2017a: n.p.) describes as 'an almost erotic movement', and then in a mid-shot – while Alex is shown watching and smiling. Monaghan (2017a: n.p.) argues, 'This is very clearly a queer point of view and the first glimpse of Alex's desiring gaze.' It also immediately offers a queer orientation to the film, inviting viewers into a queer, outsider gaze. However, Alex's queer desire is made more explicit later in the film with Kate and through increasingly contained depictions of fire.

Alex and Kate share a clear admiration of each other throughout the film that develops a tentatively flirtatious undertone when Kate invites Alex to a poetry reading and the two end up at the teacher's house after the event. The event is framed as queer: it occurs after Kate has lent Alex a book of queer erotica (Anaïs Nin's *Little Birds*), while the female poet (played by Karen Hadfield) reads a poem by lesbian Australian poet Pam Brown. The two sit across a softly lit table and, after the event, sit in front of a fireplace in the living room of Kate's house. The two discuss each other's writing and stroke each other's hair in *mise en scène* that plays on conventional signifiers of romance (McWilliam 2017a; Harris 2000). Unlike the run-down, often abandoned spaces Alex

spends much of the film in, which are often depicted in cool tones, Kate's living room is stylish, middle-class, and shot in the warm orange and red tones of fire. But this fire occurs in a fireplace: unlike the wild blaze that began the film, here it connotes romance and emergent control of sexual maturity, rather than volatility and imminent danger.

Later in the evening, Kate and Alex face each other in a bedroom doorway, a framing device that marks the boundaries of the intimate space of the bedroom and the sexual potential it heralds. While the two lean in to each other kissing briefly, Kate pulls away and the moment ends. Though no further intimacy occurs between the two, queer desire has nevertheless been made evident. That the moment occurs between a student and a teacher is not insignificant, of course. The student–teacher trope has a long history in lesbian cinema from *Mädchen in Uniform* (1931), which is set in a German boarding school and is 'considered the *Urtext* of the schoolgirl genre, a staple of lesbian film' (Mennel 2012: 6), through to more recent films like *Loving Annabelle* (2006) and *Cracks* (2009), which are also set in boarding schools, and *Bloomington* (2010), which extends the trope into an American college setting. In some ways, *Only the Brave* transposes this trope, which is typically set in privileged European or American settings, into a working-class Australian setting. The trope is not unique to lesbian cinema, however; the student–teacher relationship is a common feature of the coming-of-age genre more broadly, 'given that a coming-of-age theme is typically about awakening knowledge of the world' (Caputo 1993: 16). Thus, Alex and Kate's book sharing, poetry reading, and roles as student and teacher – framed as they are within Alex's queer desire – all emphasise the significance of queerness to Alex's coming of age. They do not do so in ways typical of queer coming-of-age films, however.

At the time of its release, *Only the Brave* was not just unusual in eschewing the romanticism of other coming-of-age films (French 2014); it was also unique in focusing on a queer girl in the coming-of-age genre. Indeed, *Only the Brave* was arguably the

first queer coming-of-age film in Australia, with the first cycle only emerging in the 2000s⁵ with the release of films like *Tan Lines* (2006), *Newcastle* (2008), and, later, *Monster Pies* (2013).⁶ *Only the Brave* was also one of, if not 'the' first coming-of-age film internationally to focus on a queer girl. As Glenn Dunks (2015: 27) notes, *Only the Brave* 'was quite unlike its contemporaries by foregrounding [...] a queer female voice'. Internationally, queer coming-of-age films emerged in the USA, Britain, and Western Europe in the 1990s. Queer coming-of-age films typically focus on male protagonists, such as in *Get Real* (1998) and *Edge of Seventeen* (1998), undergoing 'all those firsts' for which the genre is known: 'first crush, first date, first kiss, first love, first grope, first time getting drunk, losing your virginity' (Kitson 2008: 30). In queer coming-of-age films, however, those 'firsts' typically occur against a specifically homophobic background, whether symbolised by peers, family, or the school. Though appearing in fewer numbers, queer coming-of-age films with female protagonists also emerged in the mid to late 1990s, most notably with American films *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love* (1995) and *All Over Me* (1997), and the Swedish film *Show Me Love* (1998). Two decades later, the coming-of-age genre is now 'the dominant model of young lesbian representation in world cinema' (Beirne 2012: 259).

Queer coming-of-age films in the 1990s were among the first films to consistently offer sympathetic portrayals of queer youth: 'positive, pro-gay, upbeat' films that reassure audiences that it is 'ok to be gay' in 'repressive and homophobic culture[s]' (Bronski 2000: 26). Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, queer coming-of-age films have also tended to depict queerness in particular ways. While the 'formation' of an independent 'identity' is typical to the genre more broadly, in queer coming-of-age films protagonists usually claim a specifically gay or lesbian identity which is revealed through the protagonist's 'coming out'⁷ late in the film (Padva 2004: 355; Bronski 2000). Monaghan (2010: 59) describes this as the 'trope of "coming out as coming of age"'. There is thus a frequent emphasis in queer coming-of-age films of the period of

transitioning from one identity (heterosexual) to another (gay or lesbian). Padva writes that many queer teen films

in the 1990s and 2000s are largely based on the presumed distinction, perhaps even an essentialist dichotomy, between straight and gay sexualities, and presuppose that one should realize what one is to live one's true sexual identity. Characters reflect little sexual fluidity unless they are in transition from one sexual identity to another. And, like their youthful viewers, are often seen as confused queer adolescents. (Padva 2014: 98)

This transition between defined sexualities is evident in most Australian queer coming-of-age films, too.⁸ In stark contrast, in *Only the Brave* Alex is not confused or anxious about her sexuality. She also never explicitly self-identifies in any particular way and never 'comes out'. In fact, Alex never refers to her sexuality at all. She is shown arm-in-arm with a male date in one scene (though the two later split) and pursuing her female teacher in a later scene, and both with the same calm self-assuredness. In refusing to depict her sexuality in any fixed way, 'Kokkinos is oblique' about sexuality in the film with Alex depicted as "queer" rather than lesbian' (Dyer with Pidduck 2003: 281).

But her queerness also completes her transition into a more explicit outsider, which is emphasised when she is literally punished for it in the scene immediately following her night with Kate. Vicki, jealous that Alex chose time with Kate over time with her, tells Tammy (played by Peta Bray), who is the leader of the rival girl gang at school, about the queer date; Tammy then attacks Alex in the school bathroom for being a 'fucking lezzo'. Notably, it is the 'only time' in the film that Alex's queerness 'is explicitly mentioned' (Monaghan 2017a: n.p.). The scene is consistent with most queer coming-of-age films which feature a queer protagonist negotiating a hostile homophobic environment (Padva 2014; McWilliam 2017b), reinforcing both the heteronormativity of space and of coming of age more broadly. It also represents Alex's transition from the ostensible leader of a gang of outsider girls



Figure 1.3 Alex (left) is confronted by girls in the school bathroom in *Only the Brave*

into a more traditional outsider: rejected by her friends, Alex faces the bathroom of girls (and the implicit world at large) alone (see Figure 1.3).

The scene makes clear the outsider's association with themes of alienation and disaffection and, increasingly, with intersectionality with, in this case, Alex's queerness the site of difference for which she is being punished. Though a now emphatic outsider, however, Alex is neither cowed nor changed. But her falling out with Vicki – Vicki is one of the girls facing off against Alex in this bathroom scene – also leads into the tragic final scenes of the film.

As I noted earlier, fire is associated with Alex's queer desire with shifts from wild blazes to Kate's fireplace symbolising Alex's emerging sexual maturity and control. It is also associated with Alex and Vicki's obverse journeys, and in particular with Vicki's increasing volatility and danger. As Alex's best friend and foil, Vicki's volatile excess is contrasted throughout the film with Alex's comparative control. Vicki drinks to the point of vomiting, she breaks windows, she carries a razorblade and threatens violence, while Alex frequently chastises and calms her destructive behaviours. But most often Vicki starts fires and, over the course of

the film, does so as increasingly dramatic responses to emotional flashpoints: when Alex spends the night with Kate instead of her, we see Vicki sitting at a campfire; after Alex accidentally witnesses Vicki's father's abuse of her, Vicki burns down the school library; when Alex eventually finds her after that act, after following a trail of empty petrol cans, Vicki sets herself alight.

Vicki's death occurs on the roof of an empty industrial building at night aside a silent train track. When Alex finds Vicki sitting alone, covered in petrol, on top of the building, she is facing away from her and towards the distant night-time cityscape. Vicki dies almost immediately after Alex's arrival: she clicks a lighter and dies in silence, with Alex's screamed 'no' in the background the counterpoint. Kokkinos uses changes in camera angles and focus to abruptly shift between shots of Alex's reaction, abstract shots of buildings, and extreme close-ups of the flames to explore – albeit less convincingly than in her later films – the visceral experience of trauma for the outsider. The link with Alex's outsider status is emphasised spatially. French (2013: n.p.) argues that Vicki's facing towards the distant cityscape signals these girls' marginalisation and specifically how 'cut off from communities, families, and "the action"' they feel. But while this spatial motif underscores Alex's outsider status – the person closest to her now dead – Vicki's death also newly orientates Alex by giving her a direction, given that she leaves town the following day. As Sara Ahmed (2006: 1) writes, 'To be orientated is also to be turned toward certain objects' and people that 'help us find our way'. Where Vicki could not find her way out of the volatile liminality of adolescence, symbolised by the fire that ultimately consumed her, her self-immolation nevertheless steels and guides Alex to find her way through it and to leave town as the two had previously intended.

Self-immolation is by no means a common feature of coming-of-age films, of course, and is more widely associated with protest and ritual in developing countries (Biggs 2012). In Western popular culture it is typically used as a device in response to 'individual maltreatment or as a means to end intense personal suffering' (Romm et al. 2008: 988), and underscores the connection between

sexual abuse and suicide (Bahk et al. 2017). Certainly for Freiberg and Damousi (2003: 221), the scene depicts the Greek body as a 'suffering body' with Vicki's suicide a response to the abuse she suffers at home and the shame she feels at its exposure. Indeed, breaking with stereotypical representations of the Greek family in Australian cinema, 'Vicki's Greek father is portrayed as a sexual abuser rather than an over-protective patriarch' (Freiberg and Damousi 2003: 219). The earlier scene that reveals the sexual abuse shows Vicki calmly waiting for her father to enter her room, bent over and holding onto the end of the bed. When he does enter the room, her bedroom door remains open during the abuse, revealing it as an accepted family ritual rather than a secret act being carried out. This depiction is all the more horrific precisely because of how quotidian it is shown to be. It is when Alex accidentally discovers this abuse by looking through Vicki's window that Vicki, on seeing her friend, becomes dissociative and suicides the following evening. That it is Alex doing the looking, emphasised in an extreme close-up of her eyes, foregrounds the outsider as a witness to traumatic injustice and the failures of institutions ostensibly intended to protect, in this case the family (a motif that, as I discuss in later chapters, re-emerges in Kokkinos's later films). Vicki, then, stands in dramatic counterpoint to Alex's own coming of age, not least because the abuse she suffers and her later suicide represent a tragic perversion of two of the key rites of passage in the genre, namely foundational sexual encounters and the formation of an identity independent of the family (McWilliam 2017b; Goldsmith 2010). In contrast, Alex's sexuality is depicted through standard signifiers of romance (as I noted earlier), while her single-parent family is depicted as safe and comparatively supportive of her independence.

Though quite unlike Vicki's abusive family, Alex's Greek-Australian family is also depicted in ways unconventional for Australian cinema. Alex's Greek heritage is symbolised by absence, and the absence of her Greek-Australian mother in particular. Freiberg and Damousi (2003: 218) write: 'Alex's Greek mother, far from being the loyal subservient wife and mother, has abandoned her husband and daughter.' Though

the mother-blame trope is central in *Antamosi*, Alex does not resent her mother for her absence in *Only the Brave*; rather, she longs for her return. Throughout the film, Alex's mother is always shown in a fitted red dress, first in photos and later in memories, which is now Alex's. For Vicki, who tries the dress on in an earlier scene, the dress symbolises the glamorous singer she will never become. For Alex, the dress is a talisman for the return of her mother. Alex recalls a number of memories of her mother in the film, always in the red dress, with two memories in particular cast in blues and greys and occurring at a train station. In the first memory, Alex is on a train and sees her mother on the passing platform; she shouts to her mother, who looks briefly before turning away. In the second, Alex is on the platform and watches her mother sitting beside Alex-as-a-child on a passing train. Neither train stops. The scenes, occurring in the transitional spaces of the train station, cast Alex's relationship with her absent mother as a rite of passage in her coming of age, and specifically her need to let go of her so as to embrace the independent identity symbolic of coming of age. In many ways, then, Alex's mother represents the liminality that threatens to 'shackle' Alex to her past, just as Katina was shackled to hers through her father in *Antamosi*.

When Alex is reunited with her mother in the penultimate scene of the film, as Alex lies in hospital after Vicki's death, the scene recalls Sophia and Katina's reunion in *Antamosi*'s opening scene. In both instances, long-estranged mothers and daughters stare at each other silently without embracing. In fact, there are no words spoken in the scene at all, though Alex's father, mother, and Kate all briefly visit. But unlike Katina, Alex – newly oriented by the trauma of Vicki's death – no longer idealises her parent. The broader silence in the scene thus calls into question institutions of adult authority and especially, as is typical of the genre, school and the family (Gottschall 2010). Vicki's family has abused her to the point of suicide; Alex's mother has arrived too late to parent; and Alex's teacher failed to heed her earlier call for help with Vicki. Alex's 'awakening knowledge' has exceeded that offered by these childhood institutions: she has come of age.



Figure 1.4 Alex's mother's dress hung on the fence at the abandoned shack in *Only the Brave*

The final scene of the film shows Alex hanging her mother's iconic red dress on the fence outside the abandoned shack she shared with Vicki and friends (see Figure 1.4), before leaving town on foot.

By the film's end Alex is no longer in a liminal space: she leaves the symbol of her longing for her mother (and Vicki's longing for a future) on the fence, a boundary marker of her childhood, and walks towards adulthood and independence. The final image of the film is of Alex, first in a close-up and extending to an extreme long shot (see Figure 1.5), as she walks along an empty road, leaving town in perhaps the quintessential rite of passage.

Raffaelle Caputo writes of the genre:

Imagine the last scene of a film [...] in some lonely country setting. [...] He has a clear view of everything on the horizon, and at times seems as though he can reach out even further. He is at the end of an initiation journey in which, plunged through his first heart-rendering experience, he lost his greatest, most passionate love. The loss precipitates the gain, the experience draws him closer to manhood, and now the world before him opens up to take him in. This is [...] the prototypical image of coming-of-age. (Caputo 1993: 13)



Figure 1.5 Alex leaving town: the final image of *Only the Brave*

Alex, too, has experienced great loss as she walks towards a larger world. And in concluding with such a quintessential coming-of-age scene, it is therefore significant that – for the first time in Australian cinema, at least – it is through a queer, working-class, Greek-Australian girl that Kokkinos has enunciated the genre. And it is a broad configuration that Kokkinos largely returns to in her first feature film, *Head On*, which also employs the coming-of-age genre but with a queer male protagonist.

From Only the Brave to Head On

Kokkinos's student short *Antamosi* (1991) and short feature *Only the Brave* (1994) both offer insights into her emerging style as she progresses from film student to filmmaker. In this chapter I have been broadly occupied with noting the features and preoccupations of this developing style, in particular her recurrent focus on Greek-Australian migrant characters in working-class Melbourne. However, the Greek-Australian families she depicts across these films vary significantly, in an early hint of the pluralistic and unfixed depictions of Australian identity that Kokkinos's oeuvre

collectively reveals. In noting the emphases and preoccupations of these films, this chapter was particularly interested in the emergence and characteristics of the proto-outsider in her oeuvre, emerging first with Katina in the final scene of *Antamosi*, and then with Alex, who begins *Only the Brave* as one of a group of outsiders, before transitioning into a more traditional, lone outsider by the film's end. Both protagonists embody multiple sites of difference as working-class Greek-Australians, while Alex is young and queer, too. And, to different extents, they reveal Kokkinos's emerging constructions of the outsider as specifically intersectional, the sum of complex and 'shifting configurations' of difference (Atewologun et al. 2016: 224). This is perhaps epitomised by Alex's transition into a traditional outsider with the 'outing' of her queerness.

Together, these protagonists also reveal Kokkinos's outsider as an emerging motif for the disaffection and powerlessness of the marginalised, which are epitomised through increasingly dramatic and visceral depictions of trauma: through Katina's untethering to her idolisation of her father, and Alex's witnessing of Vicki's abuse and suicide. The latter in particular reflects the first signs of Kokkinos's outsider as a witness to the failures of hegemonic institutions – here the family and school and, in later films, the police and the government – and a counter-testimony to dominant constructions of Australia available at the time. In many ways, these preoccupations are explored in greater detail, although often in very different ways, in her three feature films. How and to what extent, then, do these features recur in *Head On*? And how does protagonist Ari compare with Kokkinos's female proto-outsiders?

Notes

- 1 'Most influentially' because *Strictly Ballroom* was not only the most commercially successful of these films – indeed, it is still in the Top 10 'Australian Feature Films of All Time' as ranked by national box office (Screen Australia 2017) – but it also spawned a subsequent film cycle known as the 'glitter cycle' (on which, see Rustin 2001).

- 2 That the predominant genre used to represent difference in early to mid 1990s mainstream Australian cinema was comedy perhaps underscores the notion that comedy can depict marginal subjectivities in ways that are experienced as less threatening or confronting by the mainstream. A converse explanation is Gilbert's (2004: 166) point, in her discussion of American comedy, that 'comedy creates a "safe" context for the actual hostility and frustration' felt towards 'various groups'.
- 3 Even so, there have been attempts to reclaim these 'overlooked' 1990s Australian feminist films, as with the University of Sydney's 2016 'FemFlix' exhibition, for more on which, see <<https://sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2016/08/02/femflix-revisits-an-overlooked-decade-of-90s-feminism-in-austral.html>> (last accessed 12 April 2019).
- 4 Although I acknowledge Kirkby's (2007) point about the challenges of applying this term to female characters, who have historically been excluded from the grotesque masculinity it has typically revolved around.
- 5 Though I argue that the queer coming-of-age cycle in Australia only emerged in the 2000s (see McWilliam 2017b), Gottschall (2010: 179–80) has read *Love and Other Catastrophes* (dir. Emma-Kate Croghan, 1996) as a coming-of-age film, which would challenge that argument, though still not precede *Only the Brave*.
- 6 For an account of post-millennial queer coming-of-age films in Australia, see McWilliam (2017b).
- 7 Coming out is typically described as the public claiming of a queer identity, though Michael Bronski (2000: 20) notes that it can 'have a variety of meanings and actions: a self-acknowledgment of same-sex desires, claiming the self-identity of being gay or lesbian, acting sexually on these desires or identity, or publicly proclaiming this identity'.
- 8 This distinction is evident in, for example, *Newcastle* when Fergus's same-sex crush on Andy is taken to mean that therefore 'you don't like girls', as though the two are mutually exclusive possibilities. And in *Monster Pies*, Mike repeatedly 'comes out' after Will suicides, the latter tragically unable to accept his own queer desire. However, as I note elsewhere (McWilliam 2017b), *52 Tuesdays* (dir. Sophie Hyde, 2013) is a notable exception, as is the earlier work of Kokkinos.