

The Films of Theo Angelopoulos: A Voyage in Time

Evangelos Makrygiannakis



Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Edinburgh

2008

Abstract

This thesis provides a critical enquiry into the films of Theo Angelopoulos. Dividing his films into two periods—the one running through the seventies and the other starting with the advent of the eighties—I will examine the representation of history in the first period of Angelopoulos and the metaphor of the journey in his subsequent films. Furthermore, I will trace the development of an aesthetic based on long takes which evokes a particular sense of time in his films. This aesthetic, which is based on the internal rhythm of the shot, inscribes a temporality where past, present, and future coexist in a contemporaneous image. Being free from the requirements of an evolving plot, this image is an autonomous image which allows the passing of time to be felt. Autonomy, which I will define after philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis as an immanent movement towards change, can be also used to describe the process of changing oneself or a given society from within. In exploring the resonances autonomy has, I will make a connection between the social and the cinematic; an attempt which is informed by what Angelopoulos' films do of their own accord. In this way, I will suggest that Angelopoulos is important not only for the history of film but also for one's *modus vivendi*.

Acknowledgements

I would like to deeply thank my supervisors, the late Professor Dietrich Scheunemann, Professor Martine Beugnet and Professor John Orr, for all their precious feedback and support throughout the years.

I would also like to thank those that have been my friends and companions during my time here in Edinburgh and who have shaped my every day life: Stella for *being there* through this last period and before, Tony for the delightful surplus of words and for the nights of screenings at your flat, Stefane the world is our rock lobster: thank you for the little bits of madness that bring the sun back on a cloudy day and for more, Georgia smoke shall be our shield: thank you for the many discussions over the phone and for being one of the few smokers left in this country, Penny let our music flow: for the gigs we went to see and for those that we are about to see and also for the poster of *Kaligari*, Niko for being the only classic orchestral punk I know and for being the leader, Antoni for the time of onica we spent in the kitchen and for the image with the flowers and the whiskey, Giorgio for the ride with the van after the night at the Quarry and for keeping F.D. alive, Tijanna for being supportive, Dimitri and Petro for the great ride in the North which continues and for bringing me in contact with the *Maestro*, Sylvana and Christo for the night of the Road to Nowhere, Anesti for the Sunday meetings for coffee throughout the years, Vangeli and Maria for embarking the ship right before the end, Antoni for your music selections that have been a great Friday companion, the vm crew for keeping the concept of *radio* still alive, Saki for being there for more than ten years and for your frequent visits to Edinburgh, Scott for your support in the Library during hard times, David for being more than a gentleman. And the absent present: the Vangelis Trinity, My dear brother Giorgio who keeps putting up with my whims, Vana, Aristh, Michali.

Last but not least I want to thank my father who made it all possible: for his endless faith, love and support.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

(Vangelis Makrigiannakis)

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
RECONSTRUCTION / ΑΝΑΠΑΡΑΣΤΑΣΗ.....	25
<i>Reconstruction: the herald of N.E.K. (New Greek Cinema).....</i>	<i>25</i>
Greece is not sunny any more.....	31
The narrative of <i>Reconstruction</i> : Against the system of suture.....	37
The use of Myth.....	50
DAYS OF '36 / ΜΕΡΕΣ ΤΟΥ '36.....	57
Framing the unsaid.....	61
When two sequences collide.....	64
THE TRAVELLING PLAYERS / Ο ΘΙΑΣΟΣ.....	75
The narrative of <i>The Travelling Players</i>	77
The Epic.....	87
Time.....	97
Death?.....	101
Conclusion.....	106
THE HUNTERS / ΟΙ ΚΥΝΗΓΟΙ.....	109
Closing the circle.....	111
“He was talking to the corpse...I could not overhear what they were saying.”.....	123
Back into the snow.....	130

MEGALEXANDROS / Ο ΜΕΓΑΛΕΞΑΝΤΡΟΣ.....	135
The sublime image of Megalexandros.....	141
Power Over and Power Against.....	148
The Dialectic of the Shot.....	157
 VOYAGE TO CYTHERA / ΤΑΞΙΔΙ ΣΤΑ ΚΥΘΗΡΑ.....	 169
“One, two... One, two... I’m losing the tempo...”.....	172
Objectivity/subjectivity.....	180
 THE BEEKEEPER / Ο ΜΕΛΙΣΣΟΚΟΜΟΣ.....	 195
A journey to the south.....	197
The drifter.....	206
 LANDSCAPE IN THE MIST / ΤΟΠΙΟ ΣΤΗΝ ΟΜΙΧΛΗ.....	 213
The space between.....	221
 THE SUSPENDED STEP OF THE STORK / ΤΟ ΜΕΤΕΩΡΟ ΒΗΜΑ ΤΟΥ ΠΕΛΑΡΓΟΥ.....	 227
The silence of the chorus.....	233
 ULYSSES’ GAZE / ΤΟ ΒΛΕΜΜΑ ΤΟΥ ΟΔΥΣΣΕΑ.....	 259
A new beginning?	266
 ETERNITY AND A DAY / ΜΙΑ ΑΙΩΝΙΟΤΗΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΜΙΑ ΜΕΡΑ.....	 273
To the Sea.....	293
 CONCLUSION: A HISTORY OF RUINATION.....	 299
 FILMOGRAPHY.....	 313
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 319

INTRODUCTION

Imagine that you are sitting in the cinema and the following sequence is projected on the screen. The sequence starts with an image that shows the front entrance of a hotel on the side of a lake in a mountainous area. To one side of the hotel lies a pier. The camera frames the entrance of the hotel and the start of the pier. A group of middle-aged men together with their wives come out of the hotel with glasses of wine in their hands and singing merrily, some of them waving their hands to the rhythm of the tune. Their dress suggests that they all belong to an upper middle class milieu. The song they are singing is a Royalist anthem in favour of the king of Greece. The group walk down the few steps in front of the hotel and start moving towards the pier. Suddenly they freeze and look off screen to the right towards the pier. They remain there suspended; their singing stops and is replaced by the sound of a harmonica coming from offscreen towards where they are looking. The camera that had been still, observing the group from a certain distance, now performs a panoramic movement towards the right. Through the pan the gaze of the camera bypasses the pier and then introduces a procession of rowing boats on the lake. All the boats are carrying red flags. Having left the pier out of frame, the camera now focuses on the procession of boats that sail by at a certain distance from the edge of the lake. The sound of the harmonica accompanies the procession. High mountains are visible in the background. The camera then falls still again as it records the boats as they pass by before disappearing off screen to the left. The whole sequence is staged in one long take. A cut ends the sequence.

Welcome to the cinema of Theo Angelopoulos. The sequence described above comes from his 1977 film *The Hunters*, a film rarely seen outside Greece yet in my view one of his most accomplished films. The film tells the story of a group of hunters whose members are representative types of the new ruling order that emerged after the end of the Civil War in Greece, which broke out in 1946 and ended in 1949. The film presents the group as haunted by a past that they are trying to suppress: a past that erupts continuously into the present in order to foil their attempts to enjoy a feast. The

film also serves to remind the viewer that this new ruling order was built on top of acts of violence and suppression against those who were defeated in the war and against those who found themselves clinging on to socialist ideals. The sequence described above is one example of this.

Before giving an overview of this thesis, I would like to explain why I chose to start with this particular sequence. I believe that all the basic elements that constitute Angelopoulos' cinema are condensed into it; it also contains most of the themes that I will raise throughout this thesis.

The sequence is filmed in one long take. It shows an interconnected action between two groups in a unified time and space. This action takes the form of a collision. The group of the rowing boats represents a past which the group of hunters is trying to suppress. This past nevertheless erupts into the present and forms an event which is staged in a somewhat monumental fashion. In addition the action takes place in a natural location. The camera frames the action of the group but it also frames the space between them. The sequence has a meaning which is there but not directly given. The camera observes and reveals the action in its process of becoming.

In a manner similar to the juxtaposition of two groups in the sequence from *The Hunters*, I would now like to juxtapose the whole sequence with the following quote. The extract is taken from Walter Benjamin's essay 'Theses on the philosophy of History'.

A Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from

Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.¹

The image from this extract appears before my eyes every time I watch a film of Angelopoulos. I would not argue that Angelopoulos is consciously visualising or imitating Benjamin's text. Yet for me it encapsulates the way I choose to see his films and it profoundly informs my research. If one chooses to see the action of the *Angelus Novus* as one that does not strictly refer to history but rather as a way of seeing which incorporates a way of treating the past, then I think one finds a very poetic description of the films of Angelopoulos. Angelopoulos presents us with a cinematic space where the action unfolds before a camera which observes from a distance, as if it were contemplating the action. In the sequence from *The Hunters*, the camera does not come close to the subjects. It observes from a certain distance. It is as if the camera does not wish to intervene but rather allows the action to unfold in its full process. The camera moves of its own accord, contrary to the action. It follows the gaze of the hunters but then frames the rowing boats from its own point of view, as though acquiring its own subjectivity. Furthermore it frames the boats as they disappear out of frame. If we see the boats as the return of a past that is trying to be suppressed it is the camera's eye that brings this return to the surface. The rowing boats represent a catastrophic experience: that of the Greek Civil War. The camera makes this trauma visible. Yet it cannot stay and do justice to the past. It merely records the trace of a wound in the present. Like Benjamin's description of the *Angelus Novus*, it will move away, unable to change the course of events. Like the angel of history, the subjectivity of the camera is not that of an everyday observer. The camera adopts a point of view that delivers a space of high poetic resonance.

This thesis is not restricted to questions concerning how history is represented in Angelopoulos, although that is one of its central concerns. This thesis will also aim to describe a way of seeing that comes through the films of Angelopoulos. It will demonstrate why Angelopoulos is important not only for the history of film but for

one's *modus vivendi*. This thesis aims to make a connection between the social and the cinematic; an attempt which is informed by what Angelopoulos' films do of their own accord. In a period where European cinema is receding more and more towards the framing of the everyday experience, to the minor narratives of individuals, the road towards neo-liberalism seems to be the only imagined path in the sphere of the social. At a time when the political regimes of the former socialist states of Europe have crumbled after their totalitarian identity was laid bare, a totalitarianism that according to the philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis buried the last remnants of the project towards social and individual autonomy², and at a time when the ex-communist countries are chasing after capitalism as a longed-for dream, the films of Theo Angelopoulos present us with a dream of a different nature. With their eyes set in the past but pointing towards the future the films evoke a feeling of the need to be part of a community. His films imply the need to search for alternative ways towards the future, ways that are not dictated by the laws of the market. In *The Suspended Step of the Stork* the main character Alexandros exclaims: 'How can we find a new collective dream?'. The films of Theo Angelopoulos are informed by socialist ideals yet they are not in any way propagators of particular political or social ideas. Still they raise a flag: that of change. By showing the gaps of inequality and exclusion that run not only through Greek society but in any given society, his films suggest the imperative need to ceaselessly reconsider our place in the world both on a personal and a social level.

In a recent interview, Angelopoulos noted that what interests him is a kind of new humanism.³ I believe that this statement reflects the power cinema can have in changing one's life. As Angelopoulos said in a personal interview, he has stopped believing that art can change the world, yet he does not stop making films that deal with communal issues. This thesis takes into consideration the call to humanism but approaches the work of Angelopoulos from a multi-theoretical point of view. I believe it would not be fruitful to stress the affinities between the work of this Greek director and any single philosophical theory or film theory. The affinities of the images with calls to social theory or philosophy do not fix the image into a closed meaning, but rather continue an ongoing dialogue. This thesis draws on theories from diverse

thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Fredric Jameson and Cornelius Castoriadis.

In terms of filmmaking I will demonstrate how Angelopoulos' films defy current global trends where the imitation of American action-based recipes has led to the production of a multitude of films where style becomes an end in itself.⁴ The films of Theo Angelopoulos follow a different flow. They include a particular type of temporality which becomes difficult to follow in cultures which are fully immersed in speed. A hundred years ago, Benjamin saw the rise of short stories and the abbreviation of the novel as signifying a reduction in the time devoted to one's personal and social activities unless they become labour⁵, an alienating experience in his eyes. In a similar way, the films of Angelopoulos resist the abbreviation of filmic time, an act that can also be seen as reflecting a resistance to the abbreviation of our sense of lingering time in a world of fast consumption. Angelopoulos makes films that still maintain a three-hour format. He is exemplary in his use of long takes and of the sequence shot in particular, where one or more actions are included in one take without a single cut. The long take inscribes in the celluloid the time that takes place between two actions. It is this time that comes to the foreground as well. Throughout this thesis I will trace the development of this aesthetic.

As I mentioned earlier, Angelopoulos stages his films in natural settings. Yet his films do not follow the norms of a naturalist drama where the succession of shots follows a linear pattern of cause and effect. The sequences carry a strong sense of autonomy and the emphasis for building the narrative falls mainly onto the *mise-en-scène*, onto what happens within the confines of a singular shot. Angelopoulos starts off from a notion of realism by placing the action of his films in a natural setting, yet this does not mean that his films reflect an unmediated objective world which lies out there. One could argue that this is an obvious point since what appears before the camera is staged. Yet that might lead us to conclude that since Angelopoulos abstains from editing, all his films are theatrical and the camera merely records passively what is directed in the *mise-en-scène*. There are two main factors against such an argument.

The first and the more obvious is that the camera in the films of Angelopoulos is in constant motion. The second lies strictly in the nature of the cinematographic image.

According to the film theorist Gilberto Perez, the cinematographic image is formed between a play of absence and presence.⁶ The image carries with it something of the world that pre-exists it, a world which is mechanically reproduced onto the celluloid. Yet this is not an objective rendering of the real, an unmediated shining through of a material world waiting there to be recorded. Perez follows the thought of American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce who saw the photographic image as being both an icon and an index:

A photograph is both an icon and an index. It is an icon because it gives an image, a likeness, of the subject it represents. It is an index because it has a direct connection with that subject, as a footprint has with a foot or a seismograph with movements of the ground.⁷

An index is not a likeness. Pictorial and photographic representation have in common that they can represent a likeness of the object. But the index of the painting points towards the painter who represents the world, while the index of the photographic image points towards the object itself since the light reflected from the object is then imprinted onto the celluloid. Perez cites Roland Barthes who claims that:

The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star.⁸

However, according to Perez the likeness of the object depicted is based on convention. The index of a photograph testifies to the object having been there before the photographic apparatus, yet this does not mean that the inscription of the object is unmediated or free of interpretation. Seeing a tree in the cinema is not the same as

experiencing the presence of a tree in person. Just as the painting of God in the Sistine Chapel does not testify to God's immediate presence but rather rests on the viewer's acceptance of conventions to represent something that is absent, so it is that in the cinema the image of a tree rests on a convention of us viewers accepting its absence despite seeing the object on the screen. The icon and the index go hand in hand. As Perez puts it: "The photograph as index bears witness to the reality of its subject, the photograph as icon is what gives testimony to its being an index of that reality."⁹

We can claim then that the image carries with it a trace of the material world. The index functions towards the documentary side of the photographic image, being able to record bodies and objects in space. The cinematographic image bears a trace and an imprint of its subject, transforming it into something else - into a cinematographic image. Furthermore, the cinematographic image does not exist in isolation; it is edited together with other images. In other words the image becomes part of a constructed world, a world of fiction. Even the most truthful objective image carries the intention of the operator who intervenes even by choosing where to place the camera. The image is thus not unmediated. Yet it is the simultaneity of the index and the icon that led the film theorist André Bazin to speak of this masking of reality by cinema, as being able to capture an image of the world which becomes animated on screen.¹⁰ Bazin spoke of a perfect illusion so he also spoke of a convention of realism. Yet he saw the staging in depth and the emphasis on the long take as simulating our everyday perception where the flux of phenomena appears before our eyes. Bazin hailed the long take over fast editing because he believed that through editing or montage the reality effect is destroyed and the images function by leading the audience towards pre-determined reactions.¹¹ In short the images are manipulated towards particular meanings and this deprives the audience from investing their own thoughts and emotions in the image. As Ian Aitken points out:

Bazin's theory of spectatorship is grounded in the idea that, when the spectator gazes upon the realistic film image, he or she seeks to both transcend the contingent forms of knowledge and experience imposed by

mortality and achieve a degree of self-realisation founded on free thought and action.¹²

Bazin is not interested in content. What matters is the sensation evoked by staging in depth and giving the effect of an outside reality. An example from the films of Angelopoulos will help clarify this thought.

In a sequence near the opening of his 1986 film *The Beekeeper*, we witness the main character Spyros (played by Marcello Mastroianni) who, after attending his daughter's wedding, walks across a bridge over a river that passes through the rural town where he lives. It is close to the end of winter. After crossing the bridge, and with his back almost fully turned away from the camera lens, he walks close to a tree in full blossom. The sequence is presented in one long take in which we see Mastroianni from a certain distance. We as viewers do not see his reaction (if there is one) when he comes close to the blossom tree in winter. Yet the camera keeps on recording the man and the tree along with the space around them and it is as if the sequence has lost its narrative drive, giving way to a sense of autonomy in the image.

We could claim that the image together with its function as an image of a fictional world also carries a documentary resonance, bringing to the foreground the act of recording. The sequence conveys very little in terms of plot evolution. The effect is that the image has been freed from its function as an element of a story and, by giving the impression of someone who is merely looking at a man walking, evokes the act of recording. The filming of a location without any cuts brings forth the indexical or documentary side of the image yet Angelopoulos goes beyond the feel of a documentary. The persistence in the recording of physical reality brings forth a realm where the tree acquires another kind of signification which is equally an element of the fictional world, although it does not have a particular symbolic function in the drama. It renders a sense of awe that the tree emanates without being a symbol with a fixed meaning. The world seen through the camera lens is not a world prior to cinematic representation, yet it carries the trace of a world that pre-exists it.

Finally, the persistence in recording without a cut delivers a sense of time that cannot be measured in terms of a particular movement on frame. The use of a fix frame which then becomes a tracking shot or a slow pan framing a succession of one or more choreographed actions, together with the time between those actions or even the time before and after a singular event, provide a direct image of time passing. The emphasis lies on the internal rhythm of the shot which evokes a sense of time quite similar to that described by Andrei Tarkovsky.

For Tarkovsky, who is informed by the theories of Bazin, every shot contains a time pressure which is then combined with other shots of different time pressure in order to form an organic whole where one senses a transcendental flow of time.¹³ This flow is transcendental in the sense that it frames the flow of time as moving beyond motive perception as well as the actions of humans. Furthermore, if the acts of humans make history then this sense of time gives a sense of permanence that exists in a realm higher than that of history. This feeling of time can be sensed through nature, which is why the blowing of the wind or the presence of the rain are so important in Tarkovsky. They provide a time image which is simultaneously uniquely cinematic but also aims at transcending the materiality of the medium and making a connection between humans and the organic rhythms of nature. Nature in the films of Tarkovsky is constantly opposed to technology which appears as an alienating force.¹⁴

The films of Angelopoulos also contain this time pressure built on the internal rhythm of the shots. The rhythm is reinforced by the slow movement of the camera, a camera that moves as if at will, creating a space which quite often becomes circular as the camera moves through 360 degrees. The camera often brings to the foreground a material world which does not serve as mere decorum for the action controlled by the characters. Still, Angelopoulos is not interested in merely recording the flow of life. The action of his films does not transcend history but is instead deeply involved in it.

Eirini Stathi and John Orr point out that the narratives of Angelopoulos' films evolve on a *metahistorical* realm¹⁵, meaning that Angelopoulos does not present a historical documentation of a era in the manner for example of a Costa Gavras film, where the

unfolding of the action follows a linear chronological pattern and is situated in an actual historical period. Gavras (or for that matter Oliver Stone) present us with a filmic world as a perfect reconstruction of an actual or probable historical period bound to the laws of cause and effect. Angelopoulos on the other hand makes films that present a view of a historical period, hence my parallel with Benjamin's angel of history. They are involved with history but from a point of view that brings the act of showing or telling a story through images to the foreground. His films are not faithful objective recreations of a historical time but rather show a past as seen from the present. Like the angel of history who is simultaneously inside and outside the event, the films of Angelopoulos deliver a realm where past and present fuse but are not indistinguishable. Like the angel, who gazes straight at an event only to move forward, so the camera in the films of Angelopoulos pauses over an action only to move away at a slow, contemplative pace.

Angelopoulos creates fictional worlds that are in direct confrontation with history or become mythical explanations of an era. Unlike Tarkovsky, who believed that the handling of the image should not deliver predetermined concepts, in Angelopoulos the image is not bereft of a historically specific meaning. Angelopoulos' films carry a double resonance. While recording the unfolding of time and life, the images more than frequently, aim at the formation of a concept. Still the meaning of an image as argued above is not directly given. This function strangely enough brings him close to Sergei Eisenstein's theory of montage, a theory that Tarkovsky repudiates. I will discuss this argument in greater detail when dealing with the *Trilogy of History* and *Megalexandros*.

Angelopoulos has stated that there are two main cinematic influences on his work: Orson Welles for the use of the depth of field and the sequence shot, and the Japanese director Kenji Mizoguchi for the use of offscreen space.¹⁶ The Greek director notes that although his travelling shot has been directly influenced by Orson Welles, Friedrich Murnau, the prolific German director of the silent era, and his use of the tracking shot, has been equally influential.¹⁷ The Hungarian director Miklos Jancsó with whom the director shares many affinities on the use of circular shots has also left

an imprint on Angelopoulos as I will discuss in my chapter on *Days of '36*. Yet Angelopoulos' work, although it is in favour of an aesthetic based on long takes, is not entirely foreign to the idea of Eisenstein's montage. The effect however is different, as I will demonstrate when I discuss each film individually. Furthermore the freezing of the action to allow the issuing forth of a different perception of time, along with the personal journeys of the Angelopoulou hero of the second period, bring the films of Angelopoulos close to the cinema of Michelangelo Antonioni and the phenomenological wanderings of his characters. Finally we should add his friend and contemporary, in terms of filmmaking, German director Wim Wenders. Wenders is seldom referred to in relation to Angelopoulos, yet his reinvention of the road movie, his affection for open landscapes, and the search for identity are common features of both directors' work, particularly the second period of Angelopoulos. In my analysis of Angelopoulos' films I will illustrate how his work relates to the above mentioned directors in their historical context.

The Films

First Period: *Reconstruction – the Trilogy of History - Megalexandros*

Angelopoulos has made twelve feature films to date together with one short and an unfinished documentary. His most recent film, *The Weeping Meadow* (2004) is not included in this thesis since it is part of a trilogy that is yet to be completed. His work can be roughly divided in two periods, a distinction drawn by the director himself. As Fredric Jameson argues, the first period, which includes the films *Days of '36*, *The Travelling Players*, *The Hunters* and *Megalexandros*, is a direct study on history where Angelopoulos deals with the major historical events that informed Greece as a nation from the period starting in 1936 until the end of the seventies.¹⁸ The second period starts with *Voyage to Kythera* and includes all the consequent films to date:

The Beekeeper, Landscape in the Mist, The Suspended Step of the Stork, Ulysses' Gaze, Eternity and a Day and *The Weeping Meadow*. These films turn on a more personal worldview where the story of each film evolves around a singular character voyager with the exception of *Landscape in the Midst* where the major parts are played by two children.

The first period of the director's work coincides with the years after the fall of the Junta of the Colonels in 1974. This was a period characterised by an intense preoccupation with politics in everyday Greek life, a fact that is also reflected in the filmic production of the era. Angelopoulos became a prime figure of the so-called *New Greek Cinema*. The wave was not entirely political in content nor was it structurally coherent. It reflected the need for change in the Greek film industry. The need for changes to the social structure of the country became more intense during the first years after the fall of the junta. Many filmmakers, including Angelopoulos, attempted to fulfil a popular demand that remained suspended since the Civil War: to reclaim history on behalf of those who had been defeated and prosecuted after the end of the Civil War. This meant the Left in its broader sense but in particular the Communists, whose party had been declared illegal from the end of the Civil War in 1949 until the establishment of parliamentary democracy in 1974. The claiming of history had to come through a break with the old motifs of cinematic representation. The work of Angelopoulos together with the emergence of the New Greek Cinema appeared in the aftermath of the preceding European wave, the New German Cinema. Although it would be going too far to make a direct connection between the Greek director and New German cinema, both movements carry the promise of a break with the dominant existing trends of film making and film viewing. This promise came right after the 1968 Cannes film festival and it was the promise of the new. It was the belief, as expressed in the Estates General of Cinema in Paris in 1968, that a political cinema cannot be political if it deals only with political issues: a film is mainly political through its form.¹⁹

Angelopoulos' first feature, *Reconstruction* (1970), is set in a mountainous village in the north of Greece. Angelopoulos bases his story on a real incident whereby a

woman and her lover had killed her husband and buried his corpse in the front yard of the house. The film starts with the husband's return from Germany where he had been working as an immigrant. The continuity of the action is then broken however, and establishes the present tense of the narrative as the period after the murder when the couple has already been arrested and the police are going through numerous reconstructions of the killing in order to establish the killer's identity.

The rural setting of *Reconstruction* paved the way for almost all the subsequent films of Angelopoulos, which are set in mountainous areas and the rural landscapes of Greece. Angelopoulos sets his first film away from cities. As he has mentioned in interviews he was in search of the "other Greece", a search that continues today.²⁰ Until the 1950s, Greece mainly consisted of small rural towns and villages that were gradually abandoned as people started emigrating to urban centres following the industrial modernisation of the country. The film becomes a documentation of this abandonment.

In the chapter on *Reconstruction*, I will demonstrate how the film becomes a portrait of a dying land, a portrait that is balanced between documentary and fiction. Taking Kaja Silverman's essay *On Suture* as a starting point, I will juxtapose the narrative techniques of Angelopoulos with that of a culturally dominant American way of filmmaking that has its roots in what is widely known as the classical studio system of the 1930s. Although by the 1970s this classical pattern had been seriously modified in the States, I believe that its basic principle, that of a cause and effect narrative where the action is driven around individuals, kept and keeps on formulating the narratives of mainstream cinema. Angelopoulos instead builds an episodic narrative based on the dialectics between autonomous sequences that break the continuity of an evolving action. This juxtaposition of autonomous sequences allows the viewer to become actively involved in order to establish his/her own reading of the film. In this work, I will demonstrate how Angelopoulos delivers a filmic world based on long takes where the filming of the landscape shapes a narrative which frames the main characters not as prime agents of the action but as subjects that are entangled in a web of social relations.

The films *Days of '36* (1972), *The Travelling Players* (1975) and *The Hunters* (1978) form what is widely known as the *Trilogy of History*. The *Trilogy* was then followed by *Megalexandros* in 1980. These films dramatise a direct encounter with the events that have shaped modern Greece as an entity. In the *Trilogy of History* Angelopoulos adopts a form of inquiry where there is no psychological identification with the characters: they are elements of a gaze that maintains a distance from the consciousness of the characters. Angelopoulos builds his *Trilogy of History* on a form based on long takes and long shots. The camera maintains a sense of autonomy from the action unfolding in the mise-en-scène.

Days of '36 deals with the last days before the military coup of General Georgios Metaxas. A prison convict takes his lawyer, who is also a rightwing member of the parliament, hostage. The narrative evolves mainly inside the prison while negotiations take place for the release of the hostage. Through a series of travelling and static shots inside the prison corridors and around the institutional buildings of state power, Angelopoulos frames a grotesque game of power that seems to be taking place as if beyond the public's power to act.

In the chapter on *Days of '36*, I look into how Angelopoulos builds up a narrative that employs a conscious self-censorship in the form of the film in order to protest against the state of censorship that he himself had been working under whilst making the film. The film contains long silences where the absence of speech gives way to choreographed movement, based on the formula of action-reaction. I will argue that the long take incorporates an inner montage where two actions are juxtaposed in order to bring a particular concept to the foreground. I will go on to demonstrate how this montage principle also informs the editing of the film when two autonomous sequences, each carrying a completed action with a full meaning, are then juxtaposed for a third new meaning to be born. Finally I will show how Angelopoulos treats characters as types and is thus able to move from the level of individual narratives to a wider social sphere and comment on a particular society as a whole.

The Travelling Players evolves around the major historical events that occurred during the period from 1939 to 1951. In a way it takes over from where the previous film ended, leaving aside the years of the Metaxas dictatorship. A band of travelling players moves through Greece staging the play *Golfo the Shepherdess*. They witness and become entangled in the events that marked this period: the 1941 Greco-Italian war; the Nazi occupation; the British occupation; the American intervention; the Civil War; the defeat of the Left and the Democratic Army and finally the establishment of the rightwing government of Papagos, effectively a dictatorship. The troupe is modelled on myth of the Atreides. In the ancient fable, Agamemnon returns to his kingdom in Mycenae after the end of the Trojan War only to be murdered by his wife Klytaimnestra and her lover Aigisthos, who then becomes king at her side. Electra, the daughter of Klytaimnestra and Agamemnon, endures the rule of the murdering couple whilst she waits for revenge. Revenge comes in the shape of her brother Orestes who returns in order to avenge the crime and restore order.

In the chapter on *The Travelling Players* I will examine how Angelopoulos uses the structure of the myth of the Atreides and places it in the context of recent Greek history. I will then follow the thought of film critic Isabelle Jordan who has characterised the film as Brechtian and explore how Angelopoulos incorporates the theories of Brecht's epic theatre into his long take aesthetic. Furthermore I will demonstrate how Angelopoulos incorporates a time shift that unites two points in time within the confines of a single long take. This will lead me to examine Angelopoulos' view of history which I will then parallel with Benjamin's writings in the *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. Finally I will claim that the mise-en-scène of the film reveals a principle that the theorist Roland Barthes saw as being inherent to the photographic image. For Barthes the time of the photograph belongs to the *it has been*.²¹ The stillness of the photographic image makes its subject appear before me as past and gone, while on the contrary what I see in the cinema is this past animated through movement. I will claim that Angelopoulos' staging in the film evokes a sense of an irretrievable past, a sense that lies very close to the nature of the photographic image.

In *The Hunters*, a group of hunters in 1977 finds the frozen body of a partisan rebel which has been preserved intact since the end of the Civil War that ended in 1949. The group of hunters represents the ruling order that was established after the end of the war. The dead partisan becomes a psychological wound that forces each diegetic character into a time lapse that brings up repressed memories and anxieties. The return of the repressed becomes a means for the director to draw a map of Greece from the end of the Civil War until the period of the film's release.

Having argued for the autonomy of the long takes in the films of Angelopoulos, I will demonstrate how the time shifts in the narrative evolve in *The Hunters* in relation to *The Travelling Players*. I will examine Angelopoulos' theatrical arrangement of the mise-en-scène and finally I will relate the sense of autonomy that emerges in the form through an episodic narrative to the notion of autonomy in the social sphere as described by the philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis. Seeing how the long takes incorporate an internal time shift as well as an immanent evolution of the action in relation to the duration of the shot, I will draw a parallel with a political view that asks for the immanent movement of a given society towards self-government and change to its current political status quo.

The last film of Angelopoulos' first period, *Megalexandros* (1980), creates an allegory that comments on the workings of ideology and provides a metaphor for Stalinism. At the turn of the century, the chief of a gang of bandit-rebels, Megalexandros, escapes from prison and takes a group of English lords hostage. He demands the reallocation of the land for his people as he moves north towards a village where a commune has been established. The army lays siege to the village while Megalexandros turns from liberator to despot.

With *Megalexandros* Angelopoulos directly questions the traditional Marxist revolutionary model that asks for the establishment of an avant-garde subject as the mediator towards socialism. I will demonstrate how Angelopoulos creates a filmic world of mythical proportions that draws equally from Greek and European history in order to form a unique parable on the theme of power. I will also show how the film

incorporates visual motifs from Byzantine iconography to the popular shadow play *Karagiozis* that emerged under the rule of the Ottomans, blending them with the director's personal style. Furthermore, using John Holloway's notion of anti-power I will claim that the film presents an image against the fetishisation of power, what Holloway describes as a *power over* which separates itself from the social flow.²²

Second period

The second period of Angelopoulos opens up to a different mood. From *Voyage to Kythera* onwards the director makes a turn into a more personal view of the world adopting, the frame of a male hero wanderer and the world seen through his subjectivity (with the exception of *The Weeping Meadow* where the main character is a woman and *Landscape in the Mist* where we see the world through the eyes of two children). History in this second period appears as an echo. Angelopoulos continues his mosaic of modern Greece and his characters embark on a journey that has a double vector: the one traversing across physical planes and the other launching towards the psyche of the voyager. Angelopoulos adopts a semi-autobiographical attitude for the narratives of the second period which is again divided into trilogies, namely the *Trilogy of Silence* and the *Trilogy of Borders*.

Jameson claims that Greece entered a post-historical space after the establishment of parliamentary democracy in 1974.²³ This is the space that marks *Voyage to Kythera*. Jameson's statement suggests that any popular struggles for a radical change of the social conditions after that period cease to exist. By the 1980s the abandonment of rural Greece was complete; the project of the Left was in tatters and the urbanisation and Americanisation of local culture growing larger. Greek cinema entered its most critical period with the expansion of the video recorder and the growing problems of a national industry that was failing to attract wider audiences. Increasingly in the 1980s, Angelopoulos was the sole representative of Greek cinema at major international film festivals.

Angelopoulos now presents a space of uncertainty. His films turn into what French philosopher Gilles Deleuze has called the *trip/ballad film*.²⁴ The ballad is the story of a journey, a journey that opens up to what the philosopher has called *optical* and *sound images* that in turn open up to a different perception of time and space. The journey as a narrative device loosens up the tight narrative frame of cause and effect. The journey also opens up to an episodic narrative that loses sight of the final destination. The characters are not the prime agents of the action but instead give way to an involuntary perception of time. The long take with its persisting, enduring image creates an energetic field between the character and the space around him.

In his book *The Time Image*, Deleuze describes the state of affairs that gave rise to optical and sound situations, thus paving the way for the rise of what he calls the regime of *the time image*.²⁵ After the end of the Second World War and with the appearance of Italian Neorealism, cinema presented a different image, one in which the characters become carriers of a gaze in a world of instability where the capacity for direct action breaks down:

What defines Neorealism is this build-up of purely optical situations...which are fundamentally distinct from the sensory-motor situations of action image in the old realism...it may be objected that the viewer has always found himself in front of ‘descriptions’, in front of optical and sound images, and nothing more. But this is not the point. For the characters themselves reacted to situations; even when one of them found himself reduced to helplessness, bound and gagged, as a result of the ups and downs of the action. Now the character has become a kind of a viewer. He shifts, runs and becomes animated in vain, the situation he is in outstrips his motor capacities on all sides, and makes him see and hear what is no longer subject to the rules of a response or an action. He records rather than reacts.²⁶

The work of Angelopoulos in his post-eighties films can be described using the notion of the “seer”. The characters record and their passage becomes a passage for the long

takes to deliver the space between the audience and what is presented onscreen. The camera adopts a semi-autonomous point of view, where the subjectivity of the camera and that of the main camera often intermingle in an indistinguishable oneness.

The Trilogy of Silence

Voyage to Kythera (1984) concerns a young filmmaker, Alexandros, who wants to make a film about his father's return from his self-imposed exile to counties of the Eastern Bloc. He had fled there at the end of the Greek Civil War in 1949 in order to escape death. He finds the image of his father in a wandering salesman who triggers the motion of a film inside the film. The old father returns and together with his family they move to their home village where the inhabitants are about to sell their land to a company who are planning to build a winter ski resort. The father refuses to give away his land. He is then arrested by the police for not having a residence permit and taken to the port, where he is made to get on a raft in the sea in the international zone waiting for a solution.

Using Pier Paolo Pasolini's text *Cinema of Poetry* I will show how Angelopoulos redirects his aesthetic towards a more personal discourse during this period. I will also attempt to define the director's *free indirect point of view shot* - a term I borrow from Pasolini - to describe the fusion of the character's point of view with that of the director's, a fusion that dictates the form of the film.

The second film in the trilogy is *The Beekeeper* (1986). Set in contemporary Greece the film revolves around the last days of a beekeeper. After his daughter's wedding and having retired as a school teacher, Spyros sets out to collect honey from his beehives at the beginning of spring. On the way he encounters a young female vagabond and picks her up. The film portrays the dead end between the two and ends

with Spyros' suicide after this last attempt to find a purpose in life fails. In accordance with the preceding chapter I will show how the director builds a cinematic landscape which is informed by the discourse of the main character. I will also examine how the director incorporates long takes based on silence in order to deliver a *material* death that refuses to be used as a space of martyrdom that propagates an ideal.

Landscape in the Mist (1988) follows the attempts of two children to trace their father in Germany. The children believe that Germany is just on the other side of the Greek border and they can get there by catching the train. In this self-reflexive fable, signs and characters from all the previous films of Angelopoulos reappear in a space of uncertainty marked by the silence of the grand ideologies of the Left, represented here through the absence of the Father. Drawing on Gilberto Perez's notion of *the space between* I will discuss how Angelopoulos constructs a filmic landscape where the focus lies not in isolated objects in the mise-en-scène but rather in the space between them. I will argue how this reflects an ideological space that stands between the lament for and the criticism of past ideals while sustaining the belief in changing current social conditions.

The Trilogy of Borders

The *Trilogy of Borders* starts with the *Suspended Step of the Stork* (1991). A TV journalist is preparing a documentary about immigrants who have gathered in a town near the border. He comes across an old man whose striking resemblance to a politician who disappeared ten years earlier triggers a quest to prove that it is the same man. The quest becomes a metaphor for the retrieval of a sense of meaningful political discourse that could re-establish a loss in communication not only among nations but within one's self, if only by a leap of faith.

My approach to the film is to see it as an immanent critique of the political project of the Enlightenment. I will argue that the film frames the movement of wandering immigrants as proof of the constructed character of the existing national borders in the

Balkans. I will show how, by challenging the dichotomy between reality and fiction, the immigrant with No Name, played by Marcello Mastroianni, resists a fixed national or social identity and thus becomes a subject who is in a constant state of becoming. I will relate this breakdown of the borders between reality and fiction to the form of the film and claim that the film presents a poetical landscape which sustains the element of change by remaining open to a multitude of different readings.

In the second film in the trilogy, *Ulysses' Gaze* (1995), A. is a filmmaker who embarks on a journey that starts in Florina in northern Greece and moves through the Balkans to reach Sarajevo in search of three lost film reels dating from the beginning of the twentieth century. The film becomes a metaphor for a search for meaning at the turn of the century after the collapse of the communist states in Europe. The search for the reels becomes a search for an original gaze; I read the film as an attempt to bring cinema back to its roots in order to voice a new form of resistance in the face of what the director sees as empty 'reconstructions' of history. Using Deleuze's notion of a *time image* I will illustrate how the director again employs the long take in order to deliver an aesthetic of affective time that goes against a dominant trend of action-based political films that function under the aesthetic of abbreviating time.

With *Eternity and a Day* (1998) the director closes the trilogy. The film focuses on the last day of a dying writer, Alexandros, before he is admitted to hospital. It is on that day that he meets an immigrant boy from the Greek minority of Northern Epirus in Albania. Together they embark on an adventurous journey that takes them from Thessaloniki all the way to the border with Albania and back again. Alexandros and the boy traverse a plane where reality, memory and dream intermingle, forming an image that sustains the dream towards the impossible, as a way of changing what seems to be a dystopian present. Critics such as Vasilis Rafailidis and Michel Ciment have associated the films of Angelopoulos with an idea of melancholia. In this thesis, I will claim a different reading based on Benjamin's notion of melancholia, where the remains of the past acquire political connotations and serve to make visible the gaps of social inequality on a given society. I also view the film through the prism of a personal loss generating a ghostly presence that allows the lost object to remain

hauntingly alive. I will claim that although the film is one of the most personal films of Angelopoulos it remains highly political, by portraying immigrants not as happy nomads who move around the globe promoting difference and ignoring national borders, but as subjects who are more than often reduced to a state of powerlessness.

coda

Angelopoulos is widely considered as one of the great living directors of European cinema, yet his films are little known in the United Kingdom. However, over the last few years there has been a growing interest in his work, culminating in a retrospective held at the Riverside Studios in London and in Edinburgh's art house cinema Filmhouse at the end of 2004. Furthermore there has been a growing interest in the Greek director's work through the University of Essex where Angelopoulos was recently awarded an honorary doctorate. This thesis hopes to contribute towards making his films more accessible not only to a wider audience but also help towards establishing his films as an indispensable material for study in the curriculum of departments of film studies throughout the country.

¹ Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in *Illuminations*, Fontana Press, London, 1992, p. 249.

² See Cornelius Castoriadis, 'The Retreat from Autonomy: Postmodernism as Generalized Conformism' in *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis and the Imagination*, ed. Werner Hamacher & David E. Wellbery, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 1997, pp. 38-40.

³ See Andrew Horton, *The Films of Theo Angelopoulos: A Cinema of Contemplation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1997, p. 196.

⁴ If one thinks of *City of God* (2002) by Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, a film that portrays life in the Brazilian favelas and then compares it with a film like Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), one can see that the way both films choose to tell their stories is in fact quite similar. It could be argued that the *City of God* employs a narrative style similar to that of pulp fiction gangster films in order to show that like in a B-movie, life is unimportant among the gangs in the favelas. The subjects of the *City of God* may be imitating American gangsters while immersed in their killings, and the film shows us exactly this type of alienation, this type of madness. Yet by adopting a narrative style full of visual effects and culminated action, the film ends up promoting the very type of behaviour it wishes to criticise.

⁵ See Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov' in *Illuminations*, Fontana Press, London, 1992, p. 92.

-
- ⁶ See Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost: Films and their Medium*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1998, p. 25.
- ⁷ Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost: Films and their Medium*, *ibid.*, p. 32.
- ⁸ Roland Barthes cited in Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost: Films and their Medium*, *ibid.*, p.32.
- ⁹ Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost: Films and their Medium*, *ibid.*, p.33.
- ¹⁰ See Andre Bazin, 'The Myth of Total Cinema', in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy & Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 201-202.
- ¹¹ See Andre Bazin, 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema' in *What is Cinema?*, University of California Press, Berkley and Los Angeles, 1967, p. 34-36.
- ¹² Ian Aitken, *European Film Theory and Cinema: A Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2001, p. 183.
- ¹³ See Andrei Tarkovsky, 'Time, Rhythm, Editing' in *Post-War Cinema and Modernity: A Film Reader*, ed. John Orr and Olga Taxidou, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, pp. 186-187.
- ¹⁴ This opposition can be clearly discerned in his film *Solaris* (1972) where the life of a crew working on a space station and reaching the borders of their sanity is juxtaposed with the landscape surrounding the country house of the protagonist's father on earth, where the elements of nature acquire an autonomous signification. Rain sprouts out of nowhere and the wind seems constantly recurrent. Furthermore, in his film *Sacrifice* (1986), which was set entirely in rural Sweden, Tarkovsky is contemplating a forthcoming nuclear destruction that would efface humanity from the face of the earth.
- ¹⁵ See Ειρήνη Στάθη, *Χώρος και Χρόνος στο Κινηματογράφο του Θόδωρου Αγγελόπουλου*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα 1999, p. 175. See also John Orr, *The Art and Politics of Film*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, p. 52.
- ¹⁶ Theo Angelopoulos in an interview with Konstantinos Themelis in Κωνσταντίνος Θέμελης, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος: Το παρελθόν ως Φόρμα, Το Μέλλον ως Ιστορία*, Ύψιλον/βιβλία, Αθήνα, 1998, p. 85.
- ¹⁷ Theo Angelopoulos in an interview with Tony Mitchell. Extracts of the interview are included in Michael Wilmington, 'Η Δύναμις και η Δόξα' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, p. 85.
- ¹⁸ See Fredric Jameson, 'Theo Angelopoulos: The Past as History the Future as Form' in *The Last Modernist: The Films of Theo Angelopoulos*, ed. Andrew Horton, Flick Books, Trowbridge, 1997, p. 88-89.
- ¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of the debates raised in the Estates General of Cinema in 1968 relating to politics and film form see the chapter *Politics* in Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake, *Film Theory: An Introduction*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1988, pp. 1-12.
- ²⁰ Personal interview with the director, June 2005, unpublished. See also interview with Konstantinos Themelis in Κωνσταντίνος Θέμελης, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος: Το παρελθόν ως Φόρμα, Το Μέλλον ως Ιστορία*, Ύψιλον/βιβλία, Αθήνα, 1998, p.142
- ²¹ See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida - Reflections on Photography*, Vintage Books, London, (1981) 2000, p. 95.
- ²² See John Holloway, *Change the World without taking Power- The Meaning of Revolution today*, Pluto Press, London – Sterling Virginia, 2002, pp.43-45.
- ²³ See Fredric Jameson, 'Theo Angelopoulos: The Past as History the Future as Form' in *The Last Modernist: The Films of Theo Angelopoulos*, ed. Andrew Horton, Flick Books, Trowbridge, 1997, p.89.
- ²⁴ See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2- The Time Image* The Athlone Press, London 1989, pp. 2-3.
- ²⁵ See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2- The Time Image* The Athlone Press, London 1989, p. 22.
- ²⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2- The Time Image*, *ibid.*, p. 3.

RECONSTRUCTION / ΑΝΑΠΑΡΑΣΤΑΣΗ

An immigrant returns to his home village from Germany where he had been a factory worker for years. The village which is called Tympheia lies in the region of Epirus in the north of Greece and consists of a group of stone houses at the sides of a barren hill. Because of increasing waves of immigration, the village's few inhabitants consist mainly of small children, women and old men. The emigrant returns unexpectedly. Within a few days of his return he is strangled to death by his wife and her lover.

The crime is not depicted on screen. The narrative cuts from the freeze frame of the first family reunion to a reconstruction of the crime. The police perform a series of reconstructions of the crime where each one of the accused is blaming the other for the actual deed of strangling. Each reconstruction is succeeded by a flashback of the couple in their attempt to set up an alibi, all the way to their arrest.

On a parallel axis, a group of journalists covering the story is interviewing the people in the village. In the course of the interviews the social milieu comes to the foreground. At the end of the bureaucratic reconstructions the arrested couple is taken away in a police van. On the way to the van the women of the village try to lynch the wife. The film ends with the scene of the murder. The emigrant walks into his house and closes the door behind him. The camera remains immobile outside the house while a traditional lament leads to the final cut.

Reconstruction: the herald of N.E.K. (New Greek Cinema)

Shot in 1970, in the middle of the Greek 'Junta of the Colonels', *Reconstruction* was Angelopoulos' first long feature. The film was voted one of the ten best features in the history of Greek cinema by the Pan-Hellenic Association of Film Critics (Π.Ε.Κ.Κ.) in 1985.¹ It is the film that heightened the tension between the old

commercial cinema and the new generation of directors that formed the Greek New Wave. This tension gradually led to the domination of the new directors in the Thessaloniki Film Festival during the second part of the seventies and after the fall of the junta.²

In 1970 the cinema of the private studios that had reached its heyday in the previous two decades was approaching its final closure. During the above-mentioned period, the local film industry succeeded in producing a great number of melodramas and an even greater number of popular comedies based on farce. The film studios established a local star system that ensured the commercial success of new releases while sustaining a continuous and, for the size of the country, enormous production of films.

Yet all the private studios refused to give way to artistic innovation with the result that national production was exhausted by endlessly repeating similar motifs in popular comedies and melodramas. The repetition of these same patterns was happily welcomed by an audience seeking the comfort of the familiar. By the same token, the production companies' huge profit inevitably led to a vicious circle of producing and consuming stereotypical stories. Any aspiration for an alternative cinema fell short.

There were only a few directors with artistic intentions who managed to fund their films during that period. Takis Kanelopoulos for instance, with his films *Ουρανός/Sky* (1962) and *Εκδρομή/Excursion* (1967), blends melodrama with a serious dedication to social realism. With both films evolving around the Greco-Italian War and the subsequent Nazi Occupation (1941-44), Kanelopoulos presents his heroes in their attempt to sustain Eros (Love) as a means to transgress a historical reality that devours them. Aided by elliptical soundtracks based on virtuoso improvisations on classical guitar, the films can be seen as the two lyrical ballads of the sixties.

Kostas Manousakis, whose third feature *Φόβος/Fear* screened at the 1966 Berlin Film Festival, was gradually marginalised because of his artistic intentions, and was

unable to shoot another film. His attempt to strike a balance between commercial motifs and modernist aesthetics was unacceptable both to the major studios and to the new directors of the subsequent Greek Wave. In 1966 Alexis Damianos presented his first feature *Μέχρι το πλοίο/To the Boat*, a triptych on Greek immigration to Australia, and laid the foundation for his subsequent masterpiece, *Ευδοκία/Evdokia* (1970). He was also marginalised, and was unable to make another film for the next twenty-five years.

Few were the films that moved beyond the local market. The films of Michalis Kakoyannis, director of *Stella* (1955), *Zorba the Greek* (1964) and *Elektra* (1962), were funded by the major studio of Finos Films. However, apart from him, there was only one director seeking international attention who did not belong to the studio system: Nikos Koundouros, who produced his first feature *Μαγική Πόλις/Magic City* (1955) by himself, and directed *Ο Δράκος/The Ogre of Athens*, a landmark in the history of Greek film, in 1956. Koundouros drew a line of authorship from the early fifties, which was internationally acknowledged, and he was later on awarded the Golden Lion in the Venice Film Festival in 1962 for his film *Little Aphrodites*.

Average annual production of films in Greece after the end of the fifties never dropped below 50. In 1969, more films were made in Greece than in Germany or France. The average number of films produced in the United States for the second half of the sixties was 230, while in Greece it varied from 100 to 150.³ For many features, the actual film shoot became a matter of a few days. Needless to say, scripts were written in great haste and the technical quality of the films was extremely poor.⁴

The recurrent themes dealt almost exclusively with petit bourgeois characters trying to make ends meet. Traditional values like family, marriage, religion and dignity formed the agenda for characters almost always seen as positive. The portrayal of social groups was crudely represented through a dichotomy of rich and poor, where the former appears sinful and envious of the integrity of the poor who, in turn, always triumph over material concerns. A strong sense of Christian Orthodox values

blended with the desire to move upwards on the social scale lies at the core of those films. As Chrisanthi Sotiropoulou points out:

The pressure to climb up the social ladder as a permanent characteristic of the petit-bourgeois is at the core of every activity for the Greek film hero. The small-time racketeers, the bold, the audacious always manage to win and to survive. Exaggerated emotions and the apotheosis of the element of chance smooth out hardships and differences creating thus a situation beyond any social collision and critical stance. Social consent is treated as something natural and self-evident rather than imperative. Poverty, injustice, oppression are things presented as natural elements that the hero has to endure...⁵

In the 1960s two major studios dominated the market, Finos Films and Clack Films. Their films continued the same commercial line of the previous decade where Finos introduced the musical genre through the films of Giannis Daliannidis, one of the most commercially successful directors of the period. The industry released its films through the annual Thessaloniki Film Festival, which was not yet international. The festival was held every autumn and was supported by a majority of the local stars who would fly in from Athens to become a major attraction.

With the rise of the Junta of the Colonels in 1967 there was an even greater emphasis on the glamorous side of the Festival, which now hosted the private shows of film producer James Paris. His action/war films, set in the period of the Second World War, and the Western-like pseudo-historical reconstructions of the Greek Revolution in 1821, favoured the newly-established military regime. Every year the festival hosted the grandiose promotional shows of Paris, accompanied by luxurious parties that would occupy the front pages of local and national newspapers.⁶

The scene changed in the second half of the sixties when a group of new filmmakers started to gain ground over the private studios. Theo Angelopoulos, Pantelis Voulgaris, Stavros Tornes, Tonia Marketaki, Kostas Sfikas and Nikos Nikolaidis

were among those directors whose short films marked the presence of the New Greek Cinema throughout the sixties, and its subsequent victory over the old commercial studio system at the end of the decade in the middle of the Junta of the Colonels. Many, including Angelopoulos, worked as film critics for the journal *Συγχρονος Κινηματογράφος* (Contemporary Cinema). The journal was launched in 1969 and was, chronologically, the second film magazine in Greece.⁷

There was an attempt in its pages to introduce the medium to an audience not accustomed to innovation in relation to film; a Sisyphean task addressing an audience who was only used to the Hollywood-inspired local star system of Finos Films and to the *all family dramas*, as the slogan went, of Clack films. In the fifties, films that are now considered classics were big commercial failures. The *Ogre of Athens*, which now figures among the best Greek films of all time, was a commercial failure at the time of its release in 1956. Even film critics like Kostas Stamatiou, who belonged to the Left and who later hailed the release of Angelopoulos' *The Travelling Players*, blacklisted the film for its focus on the sub-proletariat as an allegorical image of Greece.⁸

Despite all this, as early as 1962 the Thessaloniki film festival had featured the short films of the new filmmakers. In that year, although it was still introduced as *Cinema Week* in the *International Exhibition of Thessaloniki*, an event for the promotion of the industry, the Festival hosted the first short film of the avant-garde director Kostas Sfikas.

In 1965 Koundouros shot *Vortex* in the context of a cinematic European Modernism that erupted at the end of the fifties with the advent of the French New Wave. *Vortex* was made in Paris. Nevertheless the film was censored in Greece and destined to be released only after the fall of the junta in 1974. In 1967 Dimos Theos directed *Kierion*, the film that revealed the presence of the New Greek Cinema. The film featured most of the directors of the new generation in cameo appearances. *Kierion*, similarly fell prey to censorship because of its political content and was likewise screened at the Thessaloniki Festival as late as 1975.

The rise of the junta put a stop to what seemed to be an upcoming wave of modernisation already made present in the Festival of 1966. Still, with the launch of the film journal *Contemporary Cinema* in 1969, the second film journal in Greek history as I have already noted, and with the growing acceptance of the short film directors by an audience ready for a new vision, a radical change in Greek cinema became imperative.

Reconstruction was screened in an overcrowded auditorium in the Thessaloniki Film Festival in 1970.⁹ The New Wave had officially produced its first feature. In 1971 the film critic Vassilis Rafailidis published an article called “The Prerequisites for the Development of a New Greek Cinema” which aimed at revealing the presence of new filmmakers. Rafailidis declared the independence of the medium from the imperative to produce films that were technically perfect. The director was seen as an artist whose technical skills are not of prime importance:

The perfect lighting, the smooth movement of the camera, the faithful make-up are not necessary in order to express with images...A perfect racore is less significant than the directing of the actor’s movements inside the frame.¹⁰

Cinema should be liberated from the norm of showing things *right*, meaning the subordination of the form to a plot-driven narrative with a fixed meaning. The director should not be a skilled story-teller, but a person who strives and fights for the destiny of the world. He must not produce fairytales. The audience should grow accustomed to dealing with alternative narratives that deviate from the norm of a classical dramaturgy defined by the pattern of *beginning – middle – climax – solution*. The plot should be treated as a pretext for the exposition of a problem.¹¹

Of course the above lines echoed the *Cahiers du Cinema* fifteen years earlier.¹² In the words of Rafailides, the director was seen as a visionary artist, one who needs to

have absolute control over the means of his/her production. The functions of the scriptwriter and that of the director should blend to underscore the rise of the auteur. Angelopoulos came to typify this tendency. Soon though what was intended to become a 'wave' was reduced to a small group of singular auteurs including, among others, Theo Angelopoulos, Nikos Panayiotopoulos, Pantelits Voulgaris and Lakis Papastathis.

It could also be argued that these directors never really formed a wave since their aesthetic and thematic choices were quite diverse. One thing is certain though and it should be considered seriously. These directors all saw their break from the old commercial cinema as a common denominator. Furthermore, they all helped each other in the production of their low budget short films in the sixties, and their first features in the seventies. For Angelopoulos, his first feature *Reconstruction* would signal the start of something new in the same way as *The 400 Blows* represented a turning point for French cinema and *Yesterday's Girl* for the New German Cinema.

Greece is not sunny any more

Shot in black and white, the film starts with an extreme long shot of a bus approaching from the far left of the frame until it falls into a pond of water and gets stuck in the middle of a wide dirt road. The bus is immobilised while the camera observes from a certain distance, in a manner such that the frame is not dominated by the sheer bulk of the object. The point of reference in a single shot becomes the bus with the surrounding dry landscape. The emptiness of the dirt road is surrounded by naked mountain peaks under a rainy sky.

The script describes the road leading to the village thus: "The water-ponds, the mud, the gray sky and a line of electricity poles are carving the way of this impassable road."¹³ Immediately we are introduced to the Angelopoulos' "atmosphere", framing Greece in a totally novel way from how this country has up to now been portrayed in cinema. *Reconstruction* is a film that runs against the stereotype of Greece as a

beautiful Mediterranean country bathed by the warm rays of the sun and surrounded by the majestic blue of the Aegean Sea, a formula often recreated in Hollywood.¹⁴ The story takes place in Tympheia, a small village at the sides of a mountain in Epirus in the north of Greece. The voiceover commentary of the first shot is explicit:

Tympheia: a village in the Tymphi County in the region of Ioannina in the compartment of Epirus. It is situated beyond the mountain of Tomaros where the ancient Tympheia was. The extant remains of Pelasgian walls signify that Tympheia was inhabited from ancient times.
– Population according to the 1939 census...1250 - Population according to the 1965 census...85.

The village consists of a few stone houses in a mountainous area with no real agricultural ground. Communication with the closest city is via a dirt road, as we see in the opening sequence. The emphasis in the narrative on the surrounding landscape increases the sense of isolation. Throughout the film, the village's remaining inhabitants are portrayed with a crude realism. Most of them are old and those who are still middle-aged dream of a getaway. Before the titles come up, we see the figure of a man approaching the village with a suitcase on his arm. It is the father, a symbol for the increasing wave of immigration to European countries, Australia, and Canada that took place during the fifties and the beginning of the sixties due to economic depression in Greece.

While the father walks among the stone houses, a lament is heard offscreen. The *mise-en-scène* reveals a dry landscape in the winter. It is this wintry landscape that, once established, dominates the rest of the film. The film evolves through a series of flashbacks where the clouds and the rain are dominant, contrasting with the winter sun of the narrative's present tense. The black and white photography of Giorgos Arvanitis portrays a sun that does nothing but reveal the shadows of a barren land, where black-clothed figures walk sporadically in the streets. They come together only once and then it is only the women, when they are about to lynch the 'murderess' at the end of the film.

These are images certainly not to be found in the foreign productions that were being shot in Greece at this time. Hollywood often reproduced an image of Greece as a summer paradise whose inhabitants were reduced to caricatures in the eyes of the traveller. A film like *Never on Sunday* (1960) portrays Melina Mercouri as the iconic individual who creates her own world to the point of forming a cult among the men in the port of Piraeus. As opposed to portraying Melina Mercouri's character as an agent of female emancipation, the film conforms to all the norms of a Hollywood narrative production.

In the warm bright atmosphere of the South, the star can be framed in close up and the individual pride in her gaze can overwhelm the eyes of the spectator. Aided by the musical theme of Manos Hatzidakis, which adds a folkloric undertone to the image, Mercouri becomes an iconic image of the force of nature. The foreign traveller, a man of letters, is naturally captivated by her wild female character. The film plays on the stereotype of the repressed male westerner who encounters *the other* as the agent of an organic life that lies closer to the instincts and intuition, thus someone who leads a more authentic life. The main character in the film suffers in order to gain Mercouri's love until he undergoes a cathartic experience by resurrecting his macho identity with the aid of other real Greek men. The transformation cannot but lure the object of desire and lead to a final chorus rejoicing in life.

War epics like the *Guns of Navarone* (1961), in turn, portray the Greek partisans as archetypes of heroic bravery. The landscape, in a manner of a James Bond film, is reduced to being furniture for the action or is framed as a tourist attraction. Co-productions between the Greek studios and Hollywood functioned within the same general framework. *Zorba the Greek* (1964) by Kakoyannis, although based on the book by Nikos Kazantzakis, does not escape the Hollywood stereotypes. All the main characters are played by non-Greek English-speaking actors. The existential enquiries of the author are removed in favour of a narrative that moves the action forward. Anthony Quinn exhausts his virtuosity, delivering a hyperactive

performance. But what remains of his character, through no fault of his own, is a man for whom it is sinful to decline a woman when she offers to sleep with him. Quinn finishes the film with a dance of his own invention, and heralds the attraction of millions of tourists for decades to come, becoming an icon for restaurateurs.

These are not innocent images. They portray the politics of Hollywood where the *other* is familiarised through its identification with typified characteristics and the represented is deprived of its uniqueness. This is a path that according to Roland Barthes leads to the birth of the petit bourgeois. In addition, national identity is attached to a subconscious chauvinism. As Barthes notes:

Petit Bourgeois is a man unable to imagine the Other. If he comes face to face with him, he blinds himself, ignores and denies him, or else transforms him into himself. This is because the Other is a scandal which threatens his essence...There are, in any petit-bourgeois consciousness, small simulacra of the hooligan, the parricide, the homosexual...sometimes – rarely – the Other is revealed as irreducible...there is here a figure for emergencies: exoticism. The Other becomes a pure object, a spectacle, a clown. Relegated to the confines of humanity, he no longer threatens the security of the home.¹⁵

In the world of *Reconstruction* the Greeks are far from being filmic *Zorbas*. There is no hint of the innate characteristics of the heroic bravery of war-film propaganda or of the picturesque villagers that occupy the popular comedies made in Greece in the period of the junta. Eleni, the main character of the film, suffers in silence. She does not have the stature of a star. Her short and stout body, as Sergio Arecco notes, becomes part of a hyper-realistic fresco of fossils and remains.¹⁶

For the Italian theorist the black and white photography, the neo-realistic settings, the use of actual villagers are all dictated by the subject of the film. The film becomes an allegory for the disintegration of the cradle of an indigenous culture brought about by the ruthless capitalisation and urbanisation of a country where violence erupts in a

reactionary crescendo in the face of rationalism.¹⁷ The crime occurs beyond reason. Yet we should note here that the cradle of the indigenous culture that Arecco sees in the life of a village is also sited in a small patriarchal society where human emotions are constantly repressed.

The stone houses become the other face of Greece. It is a face that makes its way to the big screen as an open wound together with the barren mountains echoing the mourning songs that run throughout the film. Angelopoulos portrays a part of rural Greece that was forgotten even by Greeks themselves while they were caught up in their petit bourgeois dreams. As he himself so often emphasises, the film is an attempt to film this Other Greece.¹⁸ The sea, often used as a sign of redemption in films, is nowhere to be seen.

This other Greece, the interior rural Greece, was not part of the environment in which Angelopoulos grew up. He was born in Athens in 1935. His father was the owner of a mini-market. Angelopoulos studied law: he finished his exams but never received his diploma. In 1959 he joined the army for his two years of compulsory service, and due to his higher education he was placed on a committee for the recruitment of infantry men. This position offered him the opportunity to travel around Greece, and it is here that he had his first encounter with the rural mainland.¹⁹ In an interview with Konstantinos Themelis, Angelopoulos noted that he belongs to a generation that grew up in a growing urban environment.²⁰ It is an environment that paid little or no tribute to rural areas of the country. It is this rural Greece that would host the action of most of his films.

After completing his first short film, *Η Εκπομπή/The Broadcast* (1968), Angelopoulos was approached by Giorgos Samiotis, a film technician, who offered to produce his next film. Angelopoulos accepted. He had conceived the script for *Reconstruction* as early as 1965. The story is based on a real incident that took place in the north of Greece, where a woman murdered her husband with the aid of her lover.²¹ It was a story which received little press coverage, but, as the director

remarks, there was an exquisite detail that made the case something out of the ordinary.

After strangling the husband, the woman had buried the body in her front garden and had then planted onions on top.²² It is this detail that triggered the director's interest. As Konstantinos Themelis writes in his account of the production history of *Reconstruction*, Angelopoulos asked the writer Thanassis Valtinos to help him with the script.²³ Both men, together with Giorgos Samiotis as the producer, traveled to Corfu, where the case had been tried, in order to gain access to the judicial deeds. What followed was a trip to the village where the crime actually took place. The arrival of the group brought turmoil to the villagers as they felt ashamed at what had happened to their community. On returning to Athens, Valtinos backed out of the project and Angelopoulos turned to theatre writer Stratis Karras, but, as he notes, the story was already structured, it was complete.²⁴

Angelopoulos set the action in the village of Tympea, which lies close to the village where the crime was committed. He had searched for locations on his own while traveling on public buses. The film was shot on a very low budget of 350,000 drachmas in 1970, which would be the equivalent of £750 today. Giorgos Arvanitis, the cinematographer, and Christos Paligianopoulos, the executive producer, were equally involved in the production of the film, together with Angelopoulos and Samiotis. The latter financed the film from his weekly salary as technician in a James Paris production. During the shoot he stayed in Athens, sending his weekly paychecks to the shooting crew in Tympea.

The crew was no more than the above-mentioned, plus Mikes Karapiperis, the set designer. Angelopoulos cast Toula Stathopoulou, a non-actor and a dressmaker, in the main role. Christos Totsikas was selected to play her lover. Angelopoulos specifically did not want a professional actress for the main role: his impression was that "they all seemed to wear make up from their previous parts in the theatre."²⁵ Stathopoulou was herself an emigrant from a village who had come to Athens for a better future like many of her generation. Angelopoulos remarked that she did have

the air and the manners of a city dweller.²⁶ But as soon as she put on the villager's clothes and, finally, when she dyed her hair back to her natural black colour it was as if another self emerged. The girl from the village reappeared. The shoot lasted for twenty-seven days with the crew working eighteen hours a day. Nobody has ever made a profit from *Reconstruction*.

The narrative of *Reconstruction*: Against the system of suture

As noted above, *Reconstruction* heralds the start of a new cinema in Greece. Angelopoulos has one foot in Timphea and the other in the Cinémathèque in Paris.²⁷ It was in Paris that he was introduced to the works of cinematic movements such as the French New Wave, but also to the work of director-auteurs such as Michelangelo Antonioni, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Jean Luc Goddard. He was also acquainted with the works of the Japanese director Kenji Mizoguchi, whose influence is more apparent in his next film *Days of '36*.

Angelopoulos was also impressed by the films of the German auteur of the silent era, Friedrich Murnau, for his use of long takes. It is through this context that the Greek director's work appears in the history of cinema. To the foregoing we should add the historical context of an existing junta that made it imperative for Greek filmmakers to become inventive in order to avoid the imposed state of censorship. In addition, the low production budget also had a direct influence on stylistic choices. The tracking shots that were present in *The Broadcast* are absent in *Reconstruction*. The cost of carrying tracks would have exceeded the budget of the production. Instead, Angelopoulos builds the film through a series of static frames alternating with panoramic shots and hand-held camera movements.

Angelopoulos uses black and white photography and it is as if *Reconstruction* delivers an image of rupture. It is as if the absence of colour tears down the veil of mimesis of an external reality and brings forth the reality of the photographic image. It was Roland Barthes who remarked that black and white photography goes hand in

hand with the modern since the intervention of the mechanical eye is inscribed in the image.²⁸ The image becomes thus self-reflexive. Colour in a way is more mimetic, disavowing the act of the camera's presence.

The black and white photography no longer hosts an idyllic rural landscape as a pretext for a popular comedy or a sentimental melodrama. Now it becomes a documentary index of the ruins of a local community. The image delivers a contrast which is embedded in the form of the film. The mechanical eye of the camera as a technological product meets the poverty-stricken village which is itself unused to any sense of progress and technological advancement. It is this contrast that will speak the truth of this community: an impending death in the face of modernity. Even if it is abandoned in the later films of Angelopoulos, the black and white image now becomes a tool for an inquiry into the other Greece: a tool that tears down the veil of universal progress with the advent of technology.

The opening shot of *Reconstruction* shows a bus getting stuck in the mud as it goes up a rural road. The passengers go out into the rain. We see them as they start walking aimlessly around the bus observing their surroundings while some of them are engaging in small talk. Two of the passengers open their umbrellas; others raise their coats over their heads to take cover from the rain. The narrative cuts to a small group that begins pushing the bus while the driver starts the engine until they finally set the bus in motion.

A cut takes the narrative to the streets of a village where a man with a suitcase is seen walking up an alley. This is obviously one of the passengers. Nevertheless, the opening sequence is not a functional cue for the establishment of the action. The film could have just as well started with the man's walk in the alley or with the arrival of the bus. The suitcase that he carries would be enough of a signifier for him being a traveller.

The sequence of the bus has no particular narrative function. It becomes what Gilles Deleuze has called an optical image:²⁹ The optical image is not a pictorial image. It

goes beyond the rendering of a historical 'real' that is captured by the lens of the camera. It goes beyond the '*look at the buses they were using in those days*'. Angelopoulos immediately makes a connection with a free narrative realism that appears through Italian Neorealism and would be reinvented by the French New Wave, and by directors like Antonioni and, later on, by the directors of the New German Cinema. Still, we are not claiming here the universality of a free plot narrative that brings about the same effects when applied in film. In the opening sequence of *Reconstruction*, the distance of the photographic lens from the diegetic characters and the absence of drama (the passengers are pushing the bus through the mud while others move further to stretch) focuses the attention onto the photographic image. Yet the image deprived of the action is not merely a beautiful composition of light and shadow. The passengers on the bus are far from beautiful. They are poorly dressed in dark clothing and their stature is quite small.

According to Gilles Deleuze, what separates a pure optical image from a pictorial image is the subordination of the former to the rendering of time.³⁰ The image opens up to a new reading that includes the time of the viewer's perception of the image. What is this that I am seeing now? The experience of watching a film abandons the linearity of a cause and effect system. Something goes along a dirt road and chances are it will get stuck in the mud. The director no longer offers a clear story for consumption. The pure optical image is open for a multitude of readings. The director embarks on a bus, and the viewers are asked to contribute to set the meaning of the film in motion as Jameson points out.³¹

The train of the Lumière brothers shocked the audience out of the projection room. The train of the Western film, a sign for the advent of modernity captures the triumph of the pioneer over the Wild West, the glory of Man as the bearer of the action. Now the train is an old bus. The images lose their subordination to the movement that holds the narrative. The viewer is asked not to follow but to dialectically relate to the image that includes his/her time of perception. This is a notion that returns in all of Angelopoulos' films, as if every film is a reopening of the

same angst, a rendering of time that seeks to incorporate the viewer's investment for the extraction of meaning.

The murder case could run as a pretext for the unravelling of a crime story but the director uses it to make an inquiry which is different in nature. The most typical feature of crime films is the build-up of tension through either a chase or the solving of a riddle. The riddle is crucial to a narrative that concentrates on an investigation, which in turn unfolds bits and pieces of the enigma until the truth is exposed. The order that was ruptured in the beginning of the film is restored in the end through the revelation of the truth.

In Angelopoulos' film, however, the guilty are identified from the very start. With the apprehension of the murderers, the director immediately abandons a crucial technique to keep the audience alert. *Reconstruction* starts off with the return of the emigrant. After his encounter with his wife and his three children the narrative frames the first supper they have as a family after five years. The frame freezes and the titles are superimposed on the screen. The first shot after the titles is an interior shot of a man walking into the house of the emigrant. As he makes his way into the second room from where the shot is taken, a rope is suddenly passed around his neck.

The movement is not completed. The voice of the police captain is heard offscreen. What the audience is watching is not the actual crime. It is a reconstruction made by the police. The shot after the titles carries a twist that is analogous to those of Alfred Hitchcock. The viewer's terror is aroused, as he/she is surprised at the sudden appearance of the rope, only to be disillusioned by the voice of the police captain. It is a play on the viewer's expectations to downplay the rise of suspense. As Giannis Bakogianopoulos points out:

This artifice is used only once in the beginning of the first reconstruction, just in order to preclude every sense of identification, using a shock that is the foundation of convention, to the fraud of the scene. It is impossible to have suspense through reconstructions.³²

The time sequence of murder – investigation – arrest is reversed. The arrest has already occurred. The present tense of the narrative is that of the reconstructions, where the police are trying to identify the strangler between the two suspects. On a parallel level, we see a group of three journalists covering the story. Their inquiry consists of interviewing other villagers and taking images of the dead man's children and of the murdering couple.

The present tense of the narrative is broken by the intervention of flashbacks where we see the couple in their attempt to set up an alibi until the moment of their arrest. The audience has been deprived of their agony for the future of the main characters. The flashbacks are presented in the form of autonomous episodes. First we see the attempt to hide the body (Eleni buries it in the garden of her house), and then we witness the attempt to set up an alibi. The two lovers travel to Ioannina, the rural guard pretending to be the husband who has decided to go back to Germany.

The third episode involves the rise of suspicions and the arrival of the police until Eleni's brother gives her away to the police. Then the narrative returns to the present from where we witness the last reconstruction. After the couple has been put inside the police van, the narrative makes a loop into the past and ends with the scene of the murder taking place offscreen. We see the father entering his house and then the lover comes and enters the house with Eleni. We are left outside watching the children playing in the front yard.

As is apparent from the above, the narrative proceeds back and forth in time in an unconventional manner. The inverted commas used in order to establish the present as a point of reference and signifying the flashback as part of a subjective discourse are absent. In mainstream film practice, the recounting of a story by a film character is the act that justifies the time travel. The flashback is inserted between the same spaces, so that the spectator knows when the flashback has ended. Conventionally, the narrative returns to the same shot that triggered the flashback. The transition in

and out of the flashback is most typically depicted through the use of superimposition or the use of fade-out.

The transitions in *Reconstruction* are very different. The first reconstruction ends with the shot of the chalk template on the floor, while the voice of Eleni is heard offscreen, recounting the act of strangling and naming her lover as the actual strangler. This is the end of the second sequence. The third sequence opens with a night shot of the house from outside. Footsteps are heard off screen as a man enters the frame from the right, making quickly his way into the yard. There is a cut in an interior shot of Eleni in the kitchen when she hears a knock on the door. She opens and the rural guard appears.

The narrative does not establish the sequence in relation to the action that precedes it. Does it make sense if the two lovers meet after their arrest? The answer comes in the next two shots, where the couple climbs down to the basement to find the body. The narrative has moved backwards in time. After Eleni buries the body in the front yard, she announces to her daughter that her father has returned to Germany. This is the end of the first flashback.

The beginning of the fifth sequence returns to the present just by cutting into the outside space of the house where the second reconstruction is about to start. Again the viewer is deprived of the sense of authority of the image. The resulting order of the shots is puzzling. On the first viewing of the film, it is almost impossible to trace the time transitions from the very start. The only hint given is the change in the lighting of the scenes. All sequences that take place in the present are shot in strong daylight, while the episodes of the past are either shot at night or in cloudy weather.

As mentioned above, a typical crime story focuses on the forward progression of the action towards a final climax. The arrangement of the shots composes a system that aims at setting the narrative in motion. Starting off from the use of shot reverse shot and following a linear pattern of causality where the main characters are the prime agents of the action, the narrative progresses and the spectator is entangled in a

system that increases his/her sense of lack of the hidden Other. This is the narrative style of the classical Hollywood drama of the 1930s that theorists like Jean Pierre Oudart, Steven Heath and Kaja Silverman described as *the system of suture*.³³

According to Silverman, the system of suture is a semiotics of objective shots alternating with subjective points of view in order to produce a linear realistic narrative: a linear pattern of successive shots that justify each other. A seemingly objective shot is attributed as the point of view of a character who in turn appears in as the carrier of the gaze in the next shot. Alternatively, in the case of the shot reverse shot, each shot is attributed to the point of view of a diegetic character. As the argument goes, the enunciative act of the camera is thus attributed to a diegetic character. It is falsely enclosed within the diegetic world that appears autonomous and complete in the eyes of the spectator.³⁴

The presence of a shot as free from the point of view diegetic character threatens the identity of the world of fiction as a natural closed system. By facing an objective shot, the viewer realises his limitation as viewer. He/she is allowed to see only what is on frame. By placing the shot as the point of view of a character that is in turn revealed in the next shot, the threat of the floating gaze is disavowed. The presence of the camera is concealed. The viewer is always in search for more visual space. According to Kaja Silverman the system of suture is where “desire is always in a lack and so always lacking. The play of desire is a ceaseless lack of satisfaction of desire’.⁸

The shot never focuses on the present. It is either a referent for the next shot or a fragment of the restoration of a final order. The arrangement of the shots conceals the space that surrounds them only to reveal it in consecutive order. One shot refers to the next and the spectator sees it as a point of reference for the next. The cut guarantees the function of a cause and effect syntax.

The philosopher Slavoj Žižek, however, claims quite rightly that there has never been a film built purely on the shot reverse shot. He maintains that what classical

Hollywood narrative is doing is actually an attempt not to have each objective shot reinscribed as the subjective point of view of a character, but to firmly allocate each subjective shot to some subject within diegetic reality. The threat is of a point-of-view shot that will not be subjectivised. The threat lies in a point-of-view shot that has no subject like the close-up of the investigator's face in Hitchcock's *Psycho* where the man is framed from above falling down a staircase after being stabbed by Norman Bates dressed as his mother. This is not an objective shot. It is a shot that evokes the spectre of a free-floating gaze.³⁵

During the second reconstruction, the rural guard blames Eleni for the act of strangling. He claims only to have been holding the victim still. The reconstruction finds him and a police officer looking down the shaft which the two murderers used to get the body into the basement. After they are framed in an objective medium shot from the right looking down, the film cuts to a shot taken from below, from where they are staring up only to return their own gaze. Instead of us looking through their eyes down the shaft at what they see, we meet their gaze directly from below. The confines of the shaft double frames the figures and the uncanny effect is that of looking from within a grave. It is as if the dead man were looking up from where he was disposed.

This is an impossible subjectivity, the point of view of the dead, as in Carl Dreyer's early sound film *Vampyr* (1932), where a tracking shot simulates the point of view of the dead carried in a wagon. In *Reconstruction* the camera, after returning the gaze, retreats to the right only to reveal that the gaze belongs to another policeman, looking from where the camera was initially standing. Yet he is still within the same shot. The uncanny effect has been downplayed only to be intensified by another. The camera has thus acquired an autonomous subjectivity that inquires and can move around at will. The system of a safe concrete world that unravels before our eyes is shattered.

This is evident already from the first reconstruction when without a cut the point of view is inscribed in two characters only to downplay their authority. A shot from

within the house reveals someone approaching from outside. The camera is not fixed on a tripod and we can feel its shakiness. Its close framing of the window gives the impression of someone looking outside from very close to the window frame. A sudden pan of the camera to the right without a cut reveals the profile of Eleni almost in close up peeking outside as if hiding. Again what seemed to be her point of view is inscribed to another.

It turns out to be the head inquisitor. We are in the world of reconstructions. Again the uncanny feeling of a floating gaze is present. This gaze shifts from one diegetic character to another as if mapping a battle for the truth. The sequence is shot on a hand-held camera. It is not to render the movement of the inquisitor. His gaze is soon abandoned but the camera is not fixed in an objective frame. It moves about in the scene picking up its own cues: for example, it tilts and we see the chalk template on the ground without being authorised by a diegetic look.

Throughout the whole film we get the feeling that the camera does not narrate a story that once happened. We also feel that the camera is not just a mere witness as in a court case. The camera is not outside the diegesis it is describing. It is right there: intervening, staging, missing the plot, observing from a distance or from proximity, as, for example, when in the second flashback the male lover meets Eleni under her window. The arrival of a motor van draws the camera's attention from the couple to its noise. When it pans back to the scene it is only to find that the lover, Gikas, has left. It makes a further move to the right, without a cut, placing him back in the frame momentarily as he hastily leaves in the distance.

The camera thus reveals the presence of an inquiring Other that moves in and out of the diegesis. Quite often it can take on menacing connotations revealing the angst of being watched. The long-distance shots of the couple in the open landscape in their attempts to meet in secret are not just a distancing from the diegesis in order to reflect. They are also the presence of a gaze that watches.

Angelopoulos' editing technique rules out a sense of suture through its emphasis on an episodic narrative where the sequences retain a sense of autonomy. In accordance, the camera takes on an autonomous subjectivity from the world of diegesis. In the introduction to this thesis, I mentioned the word 'autonomy' in relation to the long takes in Angelopoulos. But that wasn't to signify a closed system of interpretation. It is, rather, the autonomy of the shots in relation to the progression of a plot based on a cause and effect system that brings about the start of a dialogue with the audience.

A time lapse functions as an autonomous episode that does not affect the procession of events in the present by its place in the narrative of the film. Any sequence that narrates events in the past could be easily displaced without any effect to the logical order. The film would still make perfect sense. In *Reconstruction* the spectator is forced to examine the process of the narrative rather than wait for the ending. Through the repetitive questioning of the time and the space of the sequences that move back and forth in time, the spectator focuses on the *now* of the shots. The question is reversed from *what is going to happen next?* to a questioning of the shots in relation to each other. It is a form of a dialectic inquiry.

The actual crime story is not of interest if presented as an action film searching for psychological motives that will close the narrative. Within a single shot the actor's movement is given space to develop in time. Instead of framing their faces in close up as a means of portraying their emotional state, the camera concentrates on the movement of the actors. However, this movement, instead of being a vessel of emotions ready to explode, becomes one element in the state of relations that constitute the image. The meaning of given acts is not spelled out.

In the final reconstruction Eleni drops the rope at the feet of the inquisitor. It is a symbolic act. Yet, although powerful and direct in its tension, it does not make for identifying a single reading. Does the act signify Eleni's refusal to speak or does she throw the guilt back to the male inquisitor? The scene is carried out in three shots. The inquisitor insists on finding out who was the one to pull the rope. After a pause, Eleni attempts to strangle him, but the police officers detain her. Back in her starting

position she is trying to catch her breath. She then throws the rope at the inquisitor's feet.

It is tempting to read this final gesture as an act of rebellion against an established figure of dominance. It is and then again it is not. A close up on the face of the actress could offer extreme dramatic tension. Angelopoulos' method, though, aims at downplaying the arousal of extreme emotions. The scene is carried out in medium long shots where the camera takes the place not of a participant but of a witness. The actress does not utter a word throughout the scene, thus adding to the dynamic of her movement. The symbolism, then, does not belong to a universal space where the signifier corresponds to a fixed signified. The sequence retains an element of free play in interpretation. Although it reveals a tension, the emphasis on the movement does not offer a direct explanation of why the woman charges against the inquisitor. Is it an impulse or is it, finally, a conscious act?

Many scenes in the film have been deprived of their dramatic tension. The extreme and medium long shots together with the absence of interior monologue and excessive dialogue between the main characters place the viewer at a distance from the characters' psychology. The scene between Eleni's mother, Lambrini, and the rural guard Gikas, the Eleni's lover, takes place in the middle of an open road while the camera is placed more than ten meters away from the characters. Furthermore, the dialogue where Lambrini is accusing Gikas and Eleni of the murder of her son-in-law is barely heard. The impression that remains is of two figures reduced to the minimum among the debris. The humans lose their dominance over the environment. They are two small subjects among the huge rocks that will devour them both.

Often the long take deviates from the evolution of the story in the form of small interludes. After the scene between Lambrini and the rural guard, the old woman is framed in a long shot from a lower angle, at a distance while she is walking aimlessly outside her house. What the camera exposes is an old woman dressed in mourning black carrying an open umbrella. This shot is a cornerstone for the Angelopoulouian

mise-en-scene. It introduces a powerful image that is to reappear in almost every Angelopoulos' films: a human being holding an umbrella.

This image has often been attributed as a direct allusion to Magritte, and maybe this is indeed what the director superimposes on the image when he frames the old woman. Yet again, this is not a symbol but more of a direct image. The old woman does nothing. She walks back and forth and stares directly into the lens of the camera. That woman is no longer Lambrini. She is an old woman of this mountain village in Epirus, captured by the lens of the camera.

If we were to use Deleuze's term this is another optical image.³⁶ The optical image contains a level of autonomy which breaks up an order based on a cause and effect. In an action-based narrative, the characters act and react. Their movement regulates the narrative. The optical image is pure seeing. The characters move but their movement brings to the foreground images that the characters observe. Deleuze gives as an example the image of a child in neo-realist films:

The role of the child in neo-realism has been pointed out...this is because, in the adult world, the child is affected by a certain motor helplessness, but one that makes him all the more capable of seeing and hearing.³⁷

The two lovers in *Reconstruction* are actually reduced to that level of helplessness. Their wandering in the streets of Ioannina reveals their angst when things seem to be catching up with them. The camera adopts the point of view of the characters. Nevertheless, the adoption of the characters' point of view does not classify the shots as purely subjective shots of the characters. In the majority of the shots the characters are included in the frame in a manner reminiscent of Antonioni's *Chronicle of A Love* (1950). What at first seems to be a point-of-view shot turns out to include the character with his/her entrance into the frame.

In *Reconstruction* the lovers are reduced to the mere act of seeing. They are unable to act. The central square where Gikas starts wandering is full of soldiers. During his stranded walk, men in uniforms dominate the space. The camera also frames faces of actual people who are interwoven into the fiction just by chance. The grainy image in the night sequence of Ioannina intensifies the sense of documentation. In a sense they deliver what André Bazin argues with respect to the images of Vittorio De Sica in the forties. Shots filmed on location although calculated beforehand, deliver a sense of realism that is also subordinated to the element of chance.³⁸

It is mostly through the French New Wave that chance appeared as a prolific element in film as it made its way through the streets of Paris. Being in the streets would either give a perfect opportunity for free play as in Godard's *Bande à Part* (1964) or it would render a sense of a maze whose noise would fill the main character with terror, as in Louis Malle's *Le Feu Follet* (1963). Yet in the French New Wave all the jump cuts and the hand-held camera movements - in short all the experimentations with form - fit perfectly with the urban environment. The discord of the plot fits perfectly with the fractured time of a European Metropolis.

In *Reconstruction*, the hand-held camera, the rough cuts, the superimposed sounds of the city, the underexposed images provide a nocturnal fresco of noise reminiscent of the French New Wave. Yet, far from being that of a European metropolis, it represents the noise of Ioannina. It is a noise that shouts its poverty, its surrender to the military and the angst from the imposed modernisation on agricultural societies. The two lovers encounter a cityscape outside the village, but it is also a world of repression. The city cannot provide redemption.

Almost all the faces that are captured by the lens of the camera are gloomy, like the weather that surrounds the city. Gikas' movement in the streets is juxtaposed with a long take of stasis back at the hotel, where Eleni creeps out the window to listen to a mourning song which is heard offscreen. The camera follows her pace until she is immobilised by the window and then it continues panning at a slow pace revealing the people who are gathered outside around a fire singing. This shot works as an

interlude with Gikas' wandering at night. It could just as well be the remains of the *στάσιμο* (*stasimo*) of the ancient Greek tragedies. The stasimo was the song or ode sung by the chorus in-between episodes in order to comment on the developing action.³⁹ The word *στάσιμο* comes from the word *stasis* which means "standing still". While performing the song, the chorus stood still. In the film the polyphonic song performed by the standing men concentrates all the dramatic tension that the characters are not carrying forward through dialogue. It delivers the dramatic tensions that are absent from the rest of the film. It voices death.

The use of Myth

Andrew Horton claims that Angelopoulos borrows a schema from the myth of Atreides.⁴⁰ In the ancient fable, the father, Agamemnon, returns to Mycenae after the end of the Trojan War only to be brutally murdered by his wife Clytemnestra and her lover Aigisthos who then becomes the king. Agamemnon's son Orestes kills them both at a later stage in the myth.

Angelopoulos gave an interview in 1988 to the French documentarist Chris Marker as part of *The Legacy of the Owl*, Marker's documentary TV series about ancient and modern Greece. In it, he claims that it was only retrospectively that he realised the motif of the Atreidian circle in the story of the return and the murder. Still, the relationship between the ancient fable and the story of *Reconstruction* is not totally arbitrary. The fact that Angelopoulos claims not to have consciously made the connection at the time of shooting only lends substance to the view that the myth functions in terms of a structure. However, even if the director did not use the myth consciously, he situates the action near the ruins of ancient Tympea so that the link with the ancient past is established. Still, Angelopoulos does not use the myth as a structure for a reductive formalism. Angelopoulos does not cancel out history, an observation we shall consider more closely in his next three films which form the *Trilogy of History*.

In *Reconstruction*, Eleni kills her husband, and in the end she is punished. The village is a patriarchal society. The voiceover at the beginning of the film locates it next to the ancient Tympea. The myth is now played out as if on top of the ruins of antiquity. Angelopoulos stages a tragedy but this is not a reference to a glorious past. The current inhabitants of the village are not part of a mythical circle. They are subjected to history and they are victims of economic depression.

The Atreidian circle is attributed to villagers in the middle of the 20th century. This automatic democratisation of symbols, far from pointing to an ancient shadow cast on modernity, uses the Atreidian motif as a break from rather than a link with the past. The link could be the land that appears as the same setting playing host to the acts of men through the centuries. Yet this setting is the same only in terms of geographical orientation.

Angelopoulos captures a moment in time. Eleni is a repressed woman in a patriarchal society. Her elevation to the state of a rebel is seen as a process caused by historical facts - the subordination of woman to man in an agricultural society, the economic depression. We might say that Eleni reaches individuation by the time she attempts to strangle the inquisitor. It is then that she becomes a ruler of her own consciousness. But even this is not given: it is implied, as is almost everything in the film. Almost nothing is provided through dialogue.

Eleni is not a fixed character throughout the film. In the beginning she blames Gikas, but then she is awakened. Her punishment is not because she committed *hubris*, because she went too far: we see this through the reconstructions that function with the perspective of identifying guilt with one individual person. For that reason they are hollow. They belong to the regime of identitarian thought. As John Holloway points out:

Power is exercised over people through their effective identification...
Law too is based on identity: the person subjected to legal process is identified, separated from all the others who might be considered as co-

responsible in some way. The identification is expressed very physically: in the treatment of a person as an identified individual, in the physical enclosure in a prison or a cell, possibly in execution, that supreme act of identification which says 'you are and have been and shall not become'. *Is-ness*, identity the denial of becoming is death.⁴¹

Eleni kills her husband and simultaneously destroys her identity as a wife. Under the humiliating and subjugating reconstructions enforced by the police, Eleni changes into an agent of negation. She denies the oppression enforced upon her by the police and throws the rope at the feet of the inquisitor. Gikas, the lover, on the other hand is subordinated to the law: he bows his head and allows Eleni to take the blame.

This shift in the characters' consciousness also triggers a shift in the narrative of the film. Gikas' presence is gradually reduced after the second half of the film and Eleni becomes the main figure. Yet in the film there is no space for becoming, for evolution. The murder has taken place from the start of the film. The libidinal force it unleashes cannot be integrated into the social flow. Eleni destroys her identity as a wife but her act means nothing to the community. The rest of the women try to lynch her. Eleni develops consciousness, but her reaction is that of a single individual who remains unable to change the course of events apart from taking her own destiny into her hands. That she certainly does when she unleashes her rage towards the inquisitor.

In the middle of all this lies the investigation of the journalists. It cannot provide the clues concerning the murder case which the journalists are searching for. On the other hand, what it does do is document the voices of the villagers and inform the viewer of their hopes to emigrate in search of a better future. As Vassilis Rafailides points out, the way the villagers talk about Germany in particular is as if it were the Promised Land.⁴² In fact, none of them knows anything about Germany, nor what to expect if and when they ever get there. The sequence with the documented voices has connotations of tragic irony, since the modern viewer knows of the misery that usually accompanies emigration.

Angelopoulos uses the documented voices of actual villagers. The voice-over commentaries become autonomous in relation to the development of the plot. The viewer realises that these are recorded voices of actual people and not of actors reading a script. They are documents of a specific historical moment that moves beyond the realm of fiction. All the villagers in the film are the actual villagers of Tympea.⁴³ The policemen are the actual policemen of the region, who investigated the real incident of the murder. The only professional actor in the film is the rural guard: even Eleni is not played by an actress. The women of the village function as an ancient chorus who are united only at the end of the film in a brilliant 360° panning shot, coming together in order to lynch Eleni as an act of erasing the reminder of their submission. They are unable to accept her rebellion because it is exactly what signifies their submission.⁴⁴

With *Reconstruction*, Angelopoulos presents a film with a critical outlook. He does not adopt the point of view of the diegetic characters. He uses the same people who had been involved in the real incident, and goes forth with his own reconstruction that runs parallel to the other two: the reconstruction staged by the police and that of the journalists. The police reconstruction is useless in its attempt to identify the killer among the two lovers. The journalists, in their turn, deal with the case as just another part of the newsreel. Like the policemen, they are outsiders, indifferent to the everyday life of the villagers. The ruthless visual recordings of Eleni's children in close up turn their faces into commodities for the promotion of a false image, that of the ephemeral shock. The audio interviews, although useless in terms of the murder case, reveal the frustrated nature of people abandoned in a small village.

The director breaks through the two investigations to make his own inquiry.⁴⁵ The crime seems to be embedded in this sterile society and the director is there to inquire, but he does not offer any solutions. The role of the filmmaker cannot be but that of the reconstruction. What effect can this film have on the history of the village? What will the filmmaker do for the destiny of Eleni? Angelopoulos questions the essence of filmmaking. The filmmaker is a stranger to this land himself.

The film ends with the camera left immobile outside the door of the house where the crime took place. The land is dying: the crime is played over and over again in endless reconstructions.

¹ See Γιάννης Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου: Τόμος Β' (1967-1990)*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1999, p. 279.

² See Γιάννης Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου: Τόμος Β' (1967-1990)*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1999, pp 59-62. See also the history of the Thessaloniki Film Festival in http://www.filmfestival.gr/film_festival/national_competition.html

³ The figures are taken from Χρυσάνθη Σωτηροπούλου, *Ελληνική Κινηματογραφία 1965 – 1975: Θεσμικό Πλαίσιο – Οικονομική Κατάσταση*, Εκδόσεις Θεμέλιο, Αθήνα, 1989, pp. 79-83.

⁴ See Χρυσάνθη Σωτηροπούλου, *Ελληνική Κινηματογραφία 1965 – 1975: Θεσμικό Πλαίσιο – Οικονομική Κατάσταση*, Εκδόσεις Θεμέλιο, Αθήνα, 1989, pp 76-88.

⁵ Χρυσάνθη Σωτηροπούλου, *Ibid.* p 93.

⁶ See the history of the Thessaloniki Film Festival in http://www.filmfestival.gr/film_festival/national_competition.html

⁷ See Γιάννης Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου: Τόμος Β' (1967-1990)*, *ibid.* p. 59.

⁸ See the interview with Nikos Koundouros by Giorgos Veltsos which is included in the DVD release of *The Ogre* in the daily newspaper Κυριακάτικη Ελευθεροτυπία (exclusive distributor: New Star).

⁹ In reality, the first feature film of the New Greek Cinema was *Kierion* by Dimos Theos in 1969, where Angelopoulos features as an actor along with many directors of the forthcoming wave. However, since *Kierion* was not screened in Greece until 1975 due to censorship, *Reconstruction* is considered to be the first feature of the new wave. Another feature that carries the aura of the Modern and does in fact predate both the above mentioned films is the *Shepherds* (1967) by Niko Papatakis. Still, like *Kierion* the film was screened in Greece only after the fall of the junta. It should also be noted that although the film was actually shot in Greece, it was in fact a French production by a Greek director who lived in France.

For an extended history of the Thessaloniki Film Festival see *the archives* link in the Thessaloniki Film Festival web page. http://www.filmfestival.gr/film_festival/national_competition.html

See also: Γιάννης Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου: Β' τόμος (1967-1990)*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1999.

¹⁰ Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης, 'Οι Προϋποθέσεις για την Ανάπτυξη του Νέου Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου στην Ελλάδα' in Γιάννης Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου: Τόμος Β' (1967-1990)*, *ibid.* pp. 60-61.

¹¹ See Γιάννης Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου: Τόμος Β' (1967-1990)*, *ibid.* p. 61.

¹² In the late '50s critics of the *Cahiers* saw the director as being solely responsible for the aesthetics of a film. Much earlier, in 1948, Alexander Astruc paved the way with his essay *Birth of a New Avant-Garde: the Camera-Pen*, where he defined the function of the director as an individual creator similar to the novelist or the painter. For a brief discussion of authorship see Robert Stam, *Film Theory – An Introduction*, Blackwell Publishers, Malden Massachusetts, 2000, pp. 83-88. For a more detailed discussion that includes individual essays from the pages of the *Cahiers du Cinema* see *Theories of Authorship: a reader*, ed. John Caughie, Routledge & Kegan Paul in association with the British Film Institute, London, 1981.

¹³ Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος, *10 ¾: Σενάρια – Πρώτος Τόμος*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1997, trns. E.M., p. 27.

¹⁴ War and adventure films like *The Guns of Navarone* (1961) and *The Executioner* (1970) with George Peppard use the bright sunlight and blue of the Aegean as a backdrop to their action-based plots. Most of the films are shot exclusively in the summer. The first Hollywood production in Greece, *The Boy and the Dolphin* (1957) followed by the above-mentioned and by *Alexis Zorbas* (1964) were the most popular Hollywood productions in Greece for the period and they all adhere to the same formula. The films of Jules Dassen, *Never on Sunday* (1960) and *Top Kapi* (1964), although they claim artistic value nevertheless portray a country with bright undertones and sunny landscapes.

¹⁵ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Vintage, London, 1993, trns. Annette Lavers, pp. 151 – 152.

¹⁶ Sergio Arecco, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, Ηράκλειτος, Αθήνα, 1985, p. 38.

¹⁷ Sergio Arecco, *ibid.* p. 36.

¹⁸ Theo Angelopoulos, interview with the author, unpublished, June 2005. See also interview with Konstantinos Themelis in Κωνσταντίνος Θέμελης, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος: Το παρελθόν ως Φόρμα, Το Μέλλον ως Ιστορία*, Ύψιλον/βιβλία, Αθήνα, 1998, p.142.

¹⁹ Theo Angelopoulos, interview with the author, unpublished, June 2005.

²⁰ Theo Angelopoulos on interview with Konstantinos Themelis in Κωνσταντίνος Θέμελης, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος: Το παρελθόν ως Φόρμα, Το Μέλλον ως Ιστορία*, Ύψιλον/βιβλία, Αθήνα, 1998, p.142.

²¹ As noted by Theo Angelopoulos in Sergio Arecco, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, *ibid.*, p. 34.

²² Theo Angelopoulos interview with Konstantinos Themelis in Κωνσταντίνος Θέμελης, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος: Το παρελθόν ως Φόρμα, Το Μέλλον ως Ιστορία*, *ibid.*, p. 146

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.147.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 148.

²⁷ Angelopoulos remarks that watching films in the Cinemateque while he was in Paris equaled the experience he would get by attending a film academy. See interview given to the head of Public Relations for Merchant Ivory in the U.S.A with the title ‘Οι εικόνες Γεννιούνται στα ταξίδια’ in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, p. 191.

²⁸ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage Books, London, (1980) 2000. pp. 113-114.

²⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2- The Time Image* The Athlone Press, London 1989, p 2.

³⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *ibid.*, p. 16-17.

³¹ Fredric Jameson, ‘Theo Angelopoulos: The Past as History the Future as Form’ in *The Last Modernist: The Films of Theo Angelopoulos*, ed. Andrew Horton, Flick Books, Trowbridge, 1997, p 84-85.

³² Γιάννης Μπακογιαννόπουλος, ‘Το Πρόσωπο της Επιστροφής’ in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 214 - 215

³³ See Kaja Silverman, ‘From The Subject of Semiotics [On Suture]’ in *Film Theory and Criticism* ed. by Leo Braudy Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, 1999 pp. 137-140.

³⁴ See Kaja Silverman, *ibid.*, pp.138-139.

⁸ Edward R. Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema*, Mouton Publishers, 1984, p 12.

³⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *The Fright of Real Tears-Krzysztof Kieślowski- Between Theory and Post-Theory*, BFI, 2001, pp. 34-36.

³⁶ Gilles Deleuze *Cinema 2- The Time Image* The Athlone Press, London 1989, pp 2 – 4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁸ Andre Bazin, ‘De Sica: Metteur-en-scene’ in *Film Theory and Criticism* ed by Leo Braudy Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press 1999 pp. 203 – 211.

³⁹ Κώστας Γεωργουσόπουλος από την εισαγωγή του στη *Δραματική Ποίηση*, Οργανισμός Εκδόσεων διδακτικών Βιβλίων, Αθήνα, 1985, pp 20 - 21

⁴⁰ See also Andrew Horton, *The Films of Theo Angelopoulos-a Cinema of Contemplation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1997, p. 45.

⁴¹ John Holloway, *Change The World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*, Pluto Press, London 2002, pp. 71 – 72.

⁴² See Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης, ‘Αναπαράσταση’ in *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος - Κριτική 1965-1995*, Αιγόκερως, 1995 p.24

⁴³ Γιάννης Μπακογιαννόπουλος, ‘Το Πρόσωπο της Επιστροφής’ in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, *ibid* p 209

⁴⁴ See Angelopoulos’ comments in Sergio Arecco, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, Ηράκλειτος, Αθήνα, 1985, p. 34.

⁴⁵ This is what the director himself claims on interview with the author, June 2005, unpublished. This is also noted by Sergio Arreco in Sergio Arecco, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, Ηράκλειτος, Αθήνα, 1985, p. 37.

DAYS OF '36 / ΜΕΡΕΣ ΤΟΥ '36

It is the period before the national elections of 1936. In a square full of workers a trade unionist is shot. A person by the name of Sofianos, a former police collaborator, is arrested. While in captivity he takes his lawyer hostage when the latter visits him in his cell and demands to be released immediately. The hostage is a rightwing MP. Soon the whole political world is involved. A number of state representatives arrive at the prison where Sofianos is being held and start negotiations. Almost immediately the political prisoners in the prison start a riot. Three prisoners manage to climb over the prison wall but the riot is brought under control and the escapees are captured. The government desperately seeks a resolution. It is only in power thanks to a fragile arrangement between the rightwing and the liberal centre. They are aware that the death of the lawyer would lead to the loss of rightwing support. On the other hand, if the prisoner were to be released, the central coalition would withdraw their vote from the government. At the end of the film, Sofianos is assassinated and the three political prisoners who had escaped during the riots are executed, thus signaling the establishment of the military dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas.

Released in 1972, *The Days of '36* is the first part of what Angelopoulos calls *The Trilogy of History*. In a film produced by Giorgos Papalios, the director succeeds in creating a political allegory for the existing junta. As we have already seen, Greece was under the rule of a military coup known as *the junta of the colonels* from 1967 until 1974. The coup was organised against a backdrop of strong political turmoil. In 1965 Georgios Papandreou and his party Ένωσις Κέντρου (Centrist Union) fell from power as a result of a number of ministers and MPs defecting to the Right. The country then witnessed a number of successive governments that failed to establish autonomy and thus consecutively resigned. At the same time there were fears that a possible coup might be organised by the King of Greece, Konstantinos, and a group of MPs belonging to the rightwing E.P.E. (Greek Radical Union). The United States,

whose involvement in Greek internal affairs had been intense since the start of the Civil War in 1946, were in favour of a liberal democratic regime that would act in their favour but they were also prepared to accept a coup by the Palace.

After 1965 there was a strong number of public demonstrations demanding the resignation of the consecutive governments that came after Papandreou, in order for the country to hold elections from which Papandreou would almost certainly emerge as a victor. Many demonstrations led to major clashes with the police. During the same period the communists faced new prosecutions. Their party had been illegal since the start of the Civil War in 1946 although they did manage to have a shadowy representation through the party of E.Δ.Α. (Greek Democratic Left) which was founded in the late fifties. On the 21st of April 1967 a group of colonels under the leadership of Georgios Papadopoulos seized power with the pretence of preventing a communist revolution. Apparently the coup had not been foreseen by any Greek political agent or the King, all of whom were unaware of the Papadopoulos faction. The U.S.A authorities also claimed not to have known of the existence of the group. Nevertheless after a short period they recognised and collaborated with the new regime. According to many journalists and historians like Alexis Papahelas and Vassilis Rafailides, the coup was aided and supported by C.I.A. agents operating in Greece.¹

The new regime launched harsher prosecutions of the Left. Many leftwing supporters were imprisoned and others were sent into exile to rocky islands in the Aegean or sent abroad as “unwanted”. The intelligentsia in Greece chose to remain silent as a way of protesting against the junta.² Many others fled abroad, mainly to France, where they became engaged in anti-junta activities. Among them was the actress Melina Mercouri and the author Vassilis Vassilikos, whose book *Z*, about the 1963 assassination of the leftwing MP Grigoris Lambrakis by members of a fascist fraction collaborating with the police, was adapted for the screen by another Greek emigrant, Costas Gavras. The regime fostered a policy of pre-censorship.³ Under slogans such as *Nation, Religion, Family*, and *The Patient* (i.e. Greece) *Requires Surgical Treatment*, the junta censored any public work that hinted at communist

ideas. The attempt to use the media in order to support the new regime in addition to the public rituals organised by the military created an image which was both comic and tragic and showed that the colonels were absolutely a local product, as suggested by Vassilikos in Chris Marker's documentary *The Legacy of the Owl*. In 1972 however, media censorship became more lenient. The previous year the regime had reinstated parliament as part of *the transition policy* that would lead to the gradual withdrawal of the military from the political foreground.⁴ The function of the parliament was however merely iconic and the regime would probably not have collapsed had it not been for the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. Nevertheless, this policy made it possible for the filmmakers of N.E.K (New Greek Cinema) to deal with issues that would otherwise have been subjected to censorship.

For his second film, Angelopoulos cooperated with producer Giorgos Papalios who had seen *Reconstruction* and was willing to produce his next film. It is worth noting that it was the producer who first approached the director.⁵ Angelopoulos worked on the script with Petros Markaris, Thanassis Valtinos and Stratis Karras - the last two had also worked on *Reconstruction*. As in the previous film, Angelopoulos based his story on a true event. On the eve of the dictatorship of General Metaxas, a prisoner took his lawyer hostage, an event that caused major turmoil in the political world of the period. In order for the film to be approved it was necessary for the script to pass the pre-censorship committee. Angelopoulos notes that it was due to the help of a former friend of his from law school who had once belonged to the Left and was currently working with the junta that the script was approved.⁶ Another reason though was that the colonels did not want to be associated with the dictatorship of Metaxas.

Angelopoulos moves from the cloudy skies of the north and sets the action of the film in a prison in the western part of Crete. The interior shots were filmed in Athens. Angelopoulos continued his collaboration with Giorgos Arvanitis on cinematography and Mikes Karapiperis on set design. *Days of '36* is an exceptional film in the director's filmography since it is the only work that is shot in bright sunlight; the predominant colours are brown and yellow. Angelopoulos' first attempt

with colour recreates the oeuvre of the thirties using the predominant architectural yellow. Far from being a mere reality trope, the choice of yellow inscribes a sense of desolation and dryness in the image. Furthermore the days before the fall of democracy represent a dive into the past that introduces the sequence shot as a predominant narrative tool.

Days of '36 takes us back to the last days before the fall of the democratic regime and the rise of the dictatorship of General Metaxas that lasted until the Nazi invasion in 1941. The film ends chronologically with the establishment of the dictatorship, an act which is implied through the execution of the prison fugitives. Although based on an actual event -the hostage-taking of a parliamentary member - the film does not attempt to dramatise any of the major historical events of the era. The focus is shifted instead to the microcosm of the prison. The social upheavals and the demonstrations of 1935 are reduced to the documented stills in the opening credits. The successive change of governments before the fall of the democracy along with any attempt to reconstruct historical documents of the fall are not dealt with in the film. The historical political figures who played major parts at the time are reduced to models or caricatures of power and authority. Franco Cordelli writes about the film:

The core of the film is to be located in the prologue. Everything has already been said before the opening credits, as in a Greek tragedy. Everything has already occurred. The rest is nothing but the consequences of the unexplained. 'The rest' though is the film. The essence of the film is the film itself.⁷

Cordelli here touches upon a crucial issue: the subject matter of the film is inseparable from its form. The event of the introduction, which was a real historical event, is the assassination of the unionist just as he is about to deliver a speech in the middle of a factory square full of workers. As he walks onto the podium together with one of the workers, a gunshot comes from off-screen. The spokesman falls dead and the crowd scatters. The camera keeps recording until the space of the square is emptied of every worker. The bullet preconditions the future of the land, suggesting

that yet again it might host a modern tragedy but now it is the acts of human beings which will define its course. It is not clear if Cordelli has in mind a definition of tragedy as the struggle of reason against a preconditioned fate. Yet what we have in the film is not a circular fatalism because of the absence of major historical personae and the reduction of social upheavals to the stills of the opening credits, the film cannot be said to show the return of a cyclical structure that is embedded in humanity, nor does it suggest an ahistorical power game between masters and servants. It is rather, according to Sergio Arreco, an allegory that retains its dialectic with the present.⁸ The assassination of the spokesman signifies the death of dialogue. The end of dialogue through violence is the end of democracy. The film is making visible what cannot be said. Angelopoulos conveys the state of censorship he was living and working under at the time in the form of the film. The violence of the first sequence was present in real life at the time of the film's production. Angelopoulos often notes that his decision to stay in Greece during the period of the junta was reinforced by a beating he received from a police officer during a demonstration he happened to encounter.⁹ Angelopoulos places the action in the thirties but the film is a comment on the contemporary junta.

Framing the unsaid

The film proceeds in a linear temporal pattern. After the assassination comes the arrest of the suspect, Sofianos. His lawyer is brought to his cell in the prison where he is being held. Sofianos takes him hostage and the rest of the film deals with the attempts to find a resolution until the final execution. The chronological linearity of the story however does not coincide with a linear narrative of cause and effect. In *Reconstruction* the time transitions between sequences were done with a simple cut so that it was impossible for the audience to immediately comprehend the time lapses. The film established a dialectical system between thematic episodes where each episode stood for a different point in time. In *Days of '36*, although the narrative does not move back and forth in time, each sequence transfers the narrative to a different locale whose relevance with what came before or what comes next is

likewise not directly shown through a system of cause and effect. The viewer has to constantly question the logic of the transitions from one space to the next, while the images unfold, in order to make sense of them. Furthermore, the narrative places a stronger emphasis on the relationship between two single shots rather than complete thematic episodes.

The fourth sequence, which comes after the opening credits, consists of two shots. In the first the camera tracks slowly into the bedroom of what seems to be an upper-class residency. A man is sleeping. A maid brings him the telephone. The man is a lawyer and rightwing MP called Kriezis but his identity is not revealed until the middle of the fifth sequence where he is brought to Sofianos' cell. The second sequence is one long crane shot. Two men are waiting at the sides of a dirt road in the middle of a forest. It is only at the end of the sequence shot that the audience becomes aware of what is taking place. It is the arrest of the man who we will later recognize as Sofianos. As the narrative progresses, the spectators' anticipation increases. What seems to be the unfolding of a crime story becomes an inquiry into the silences that mask a backstage game of power. The eleventh sequence shows Kriezis' mother visiting the office of the head of the Conservative Party, once her son has been taken hostage by Sofianos. Kriezis' mother is related to the head of the Conservatives but that is as much as is revealed. The two of them are probably going to analyze the political implications of Kriezis' captivity in full detail. However, the viewer is deprived of the power to know. The sequence ends with the two of them singing an old romantic song. The next sequence takes place in the prison.

The narrative skeleton is built on the juxtaposition of sequences. The sequence as defined by Jean Mitry is "the summation of images that refer to the same space and the same decorum, whatever the changes are in the optical field – meaning the change of shots – at the time of the creation of that summation."¹⁰ Different spaces can be related through movement and be thus part of the summation. As Eirini Stathi points out:

The sequence is a series of events (acts) that when put together create the spatio-temporal frame of an event or a behavior, thus underlining the bond that keeps these events together as well as the effect of this bond, the compact summation.¹¹

As David Bordwell remarks, the sequence in *Days of '36* is yet to be identified with one single long take as a dominant device as in *The Travelling Players*.¹² Yet even when it is not a single take the number of shots in each sequence is limited to the minimum. Four sequences stand out in the film, consisting of only one or two takes. These are the sequence of the arrest, the inauguration of the Olympic stadium, the attempted escape of the political prisoners and the assassination of Sofianos. It is evident that all the sequences in the film maintain a spatial uniformity. While a cut into a shot of different spatiotemporal situation might be treated as part of the same sequence, since it is directly related to the evolving action, in the above shots the cut would either signify the start of another sequence or belong to the same spatial confines. It is as if Angelopoulos were materializing a realist aesthetic where the long duration of the take, the absence of excessive editing, the use of natural settings and the absence of non-diegetic soundtrack lead to an objective inscription of reality through imitation. The absence of the cut within the confines of the same sequence reflects André Bazin's dictum of an image that renders the reconstruction of a perfect illusion of the outside world in sound, colour and relief.¹³

As early as the twenties, film theory had been divided into the mimetic representational/expressive dichotomy. In the 1930s, Rudolf Arnheim rejected the idea of the photographic representation of outside reality, in other words *mimesis* as a form of art. Arnheim argued that film had to show things in ways exclusive to the medium. Artificial lighting, lack of depth, editing, slow or fast motion among other tropes were elements that provided film with its essence; film not as a field of representation but film as artistic expressiveness.¹⁴ Ten years earlier, Bela Balázs had stressed the importance of montage as the essential element of film against a theatrical arrangement of the *mise en scène*.¹⁵ The opposite line was taken by theorists like André Bazin who in the aftermath of the Second World War argued

against an excessive fragmentation of reality from the director who through the use of montage leads the audience to preconditioned reactions, thus violating his/her sense of freedom to make sense of the image.¹⁶ In contrast he claimed that “shooting in depth brings the film closer to reality” and “implies consequently, both a more active mental attitude on the part of the spectator and a more positive contribution on his part to the action in progress...it is from his [the spectator’s] attention and his will that the meaning of the image in part derives.”¹⁷

Throughout the sixties and the rise of modern cinema the debate took on a new dimension with directors like Jean-Luc Godard who combined montage with the aesthetic realism of the long take. Angelopoulos who emerges from the aftermath of the sixties and uses the long take as a major narrative tool would automatically be placed in the realist camp. Yet what we see in *Days of '36* is that the long take functions on a second level, under a montage principle. I will argue that there is a strong affinity between Eisenstein’s montage and the aesthetic of the long take. Angelopoulos materializes a realist aesthetic that renders an extended visual field. The emphasis here lies on the recording apparatus and the space of the mise en scène. A completed action is often carried out without a single cut. Yet on a second level the film conveys a staging of the mise en scène that follows a formalist principle begun in the sixties through the reinvention of a montage aesthetic by film directors like Jean-Luc Godard or Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet. This staging renders a semiotic handling of the image where the elements on the screen become carriers of meaning rather than functioning as mere décor for the realistic representation of the era in which the action is set.

When two sequences collide

In the sixth and seventh sequences, namely the inauguration of the Olympic stadium and the escape of the Leftists, we have the description of two disparate actions. Both are shot on location. Both sequences use extreme long shots and both takes involve

crowds. The open space in the first sequence is followed by the confined space of the prison yard in the second, while the shots match perfectly in terms of light and colour. We could argue that these two sequences are on one level complete, in that they describe two disparate events in their entirety. There is no apparent connection in terms of plot evolution. The narrative drive of the first is to show that the minister is informed about Kriezis having been taken hostage, yet this is not explicitly stated. Furthermore we are not given any clues as to whether the action in the second sequence is related to the story involving Kriezis' captivity.

The first sequence shows the state representatives in a carnivalesque manner. We see them on top of a stage while a group of young athletes is standing in line formation in front of the stage. The inaugurating ritual, in itself an allusion and a parody of the junta and its ancestors' worship rituals, is filmed in long takes. The time inscribed in the image through the duration of the shots provides the sequence with a sense of autonomy. Angelopoulos cuts just once within the sequence, shifting the point of view from ground level to a panoramic circular crane shot. The first shot is taken from where the athletes are standing while the second is taken from behind the stage. We as viewers are left witnessing the ritual which ends with the minister entering a limousine which is then driven in circles around the standing ensemble of youths. But when another car approaches and the minister is presumably informed about Kriezis' captivity, the camera does not go near the cars in order to record the discussions. It is as if the camera witnesses from a distance and is unable to offer more clarity. In the next episode of the attempted escape the camera maintains the same distance from the crowd in the prison yard. It does not trespass among the prisoners.

Although the sequences both carry two completed actions that happen in different spatiotemporal confines their place in the narrative is neither accidental nor does it merely convey two actions that happen either simultaneously or in chronological succession. The juxtaposition of the two sequences moves the narrative from the sphere of the action to the sphere of the concept. I will claim that the sequences in fact convey a feeling of montage in retrospect. This results from the juxtaposition of

two crowds who belong in different ideological spaces. It is their position as thesis–antithesis that represents a social and political collision and creates a third meaning. The Left is imprisoned and the state advances into progress through violence and suppression. As the director himself notes, history is thus embedded in the form of the film.¹⁸ A crane shot from the first sequence is contrasted with the ground level sequence shot in the prison yard. The hierarchy of the social order is signified through the perspective of the camera lens but also through the arrangement of the *mise en scène*. The organized youth stand immobile in front of a stage where the minister is reciting a manuscript from the '*Epinikeia*' of Pindaros. Behind him are representatives of the church. The sequence implies the affinity the authorities have with whatever is ancient. The regime supports a direct link between modern and Ancient Greece where the former is seen as the carrier of the heritage of antiquity. The circular route of the minister's car becomes a spectacle to raise the prestige of the government. The youth stand immobile and speechless, unable to understand their role in the staging of the act. They act in terms of a passive chorus and their stillness contrasts with the riot in the prison. There, in contrast, a group of political prisoners as bearers of consciousness try to escape but their attempt is thwarted. The camera in turn observes the staging of two acts from a certain distance rather than being invited to come closer to the field of action. It is an effect that works against an emotional reading of the image and a psychological investment of events, but also works towards an effect of self-censorship that the director imposes on the form of the film. We never hear what is actually said to the minister.

The prison yard sequence is staged under the same principle. We as viewers see a man at a distance walking from the right of the frame to the centre, where he meets a fellow prisoner and whispers something in his ear. He passes it on to the rest of the prisoners as the camera tracks to the left. Again, we never hear what is said. We are deprived of the authority to know when the escape was planned for, who organized it or what is said.

According to Sergei Eisenstein's theory of montage, two images can be juxtaposed in order to stimulate a particular reaction in the spectator's psyche.¹⁹ The images are

not connected through a cause and effect system. Their juxtaposition functions against the dramatisation of an event in a space-time continuum but rather moves towards fragmentation of the action. The images are placed in direct conflict to each other in order to appeal either to the senses or the intellect of the audience. In Eisenstein's words, "montage is not an idea composed of successive shots stuck together but an idea that DERIVES from the collision between two shots that are independent of one another...As in Japanese hieroglyphics in which two independent ideographic characters ('shots') are juxtaposed and explode into a concept."²⁰ Two images from different spatio-temporal situations can be set against each other and their confrontation will give rise to a concept in the mind of the viewer. Eisenstein continues:

In our film '*October*' we inserted images of harps and balalaikas in between the scene of the Mensheviks' speech. These harps were not harps; they were symbolic representations of the opportunistic speeches of the Mensheviks during the second convention of the Soviet in 1917...By placing side by side a Menshevik and a harp, a Menshevik and a balalaika we broaden the limits of the parallel montage, we open a new space: The montage moves from the sphere of the action to the sphere of the concept.²¹

Instead of juxtaposing images (shots) within the sequence, Angelopoulos builds up autonomous *sequences* that are in direct conflict with each other. Each sequence retains spatial uniformity and a completed action. The fact that they are placed one after the other creates a third meaning as demonstrated with the sixth and seventh sequences - the collision between the Conservative powers and the Left. Yet the involvement is not purely intellectual. In the seventh sequence, the long duration of the shots emphasises the presence of colour and the geometry of the confined spaces of the prison. The desert-like space of the prison yard and the surrounding fields, in relation to the worn-out grey walls of the prison corridors, take on an autonomous sense through the slow tracking shots. It is as if the time inscribed is a time of desolation and decadence. The absence of non-diegetic music reinforces the material

force of the sequence, which stands on a parallel level with that of its narrative drive. The mise en scène that Bazin envisioned as providing the spectator with space to reach his/her conclusion, where everything appears in spatial uniformity, is combined here with a montage aesthetic where the elements of the mise en scène collide in order for a new concept to be born. The two sequences deliver the ideological battle of the period. Instead of being part of an ahistorical existential angst, the silence becomes a material protest carried forward through the form of the film. The silence is not a statement on the ambiguous nature of things, such as that which Bordwell sees in the art films of authors like Ingmar Bergman and Michelangelo Antonioni at the end of the sixties.²² It is an attempt at the revelation of the truth but not through Eisenstein's *cinema fist* propagating the advent of the working class as the agent of truth or the party as the carrier of true consciousness in the manner of Georg Lukács.²³ The collision here we could claim has a longer duration, it is not immediate. It is presented in a manner which leaves it up to the viewer to sense.

The sequence with the phonograph at the prison yard is another prime example of how Angelopoulos delivers the aesthetics of montage within the long take. Sofianos has demanded to be able to listen to music in his cell. In response, a phonograph is placed in the yard under his cell. The song played is a love song typical of the thirties and usually identified as music for the upper middle classes. The song is in contrast with the environment. It also runs contrast with the tune of the folk song that is whistled in a previous sequence by one of the prisoners in the yard right before the attempted escape. In reaction to the song played on the phonograph, the prisoners bang on their cell windows to protest. The noise of the bars being continuously struck is stopped by the guards firing in the air after being summoned to the yard during the protest. The soundscape here becomes a carrier of an ideological battle. The gunfire provides the resolution. It is the sound of authority. This diegetic audio montage becomes the carrier of the action instead of functioning as a carpet to the action. This does not fracture the unity of the long sequence shots whose power depends on the building up of these contrasts in a unified space. But instead of evoking a predetermined ecstasy, they contribute towards a feeling of speculation.

The camera in turn does not merely record movement inside the frame: it is a source of movement. In the phonograph sequence, the shot presents a wide and continuous visual field that can narrow or expand through the slow pace of the camera that moves as if at will. The movement is not that of a steadicam travelling among the evolving action following the characters' movements. It is the slow movement of the tracking shot that while lingering on a parallel axis to the field of action becomes mobile, acquiring autonomous subjectivity. The camera acquires autonomy yet does not offer omniscience. The overhead tracking shots in the prison corridors convey a sense of an onlooker but the camera is often left behind when the characters enter a room and left facing a closed door. These are not objective shots per se. The high angle and the parallel movement of the camera when the guards are summoned during the riot in the prison might reflect the framings of Kenji Mizoguchi, but here they denote an impersonal subjectivity that looks back in history marking the trail of opposing forces without the ability to intervene. The recording of space during the waiting in the first sequence and the wandering of the camera inside the prison walls also create breathing space for the viewer, who in search of a point of reference is evaluating the acts that have been shown to him up to that particular point in the narrative. The spectator is thus forced to abandon the privilege of a comfortable journey through time and space and must take on an active viewing role in order to dialectically relate to the image.

A further effect of the camera is that instead of providing psychological depth to the characters, it treats them as types. The absence of non-diegetic soundtrack, the use of panoramic shots combined with takes where the camera stands immobile at a 90° position from a flat surface, erasing depth, are formal means to avoid a psychological investment in the image. At times the movement of the actors becomes denaturalised and mechanical.

The sequence with the foreign ambassadors standing at the seashore is one where the naturalisation of the scene is reduced not only by the fact that all the ambassadors are dressed in white but also mainly through the use of song and the type of movement.

The grotesque face of the Greek ambassador intensified by his short stature – an evident allusion to Metaxas – carry the complexes of inferiority shared by a regime that as we see in this particular sequence functions as a state ran by errand boys. The director's view of state representatives is not far from comical. As he himself notes, the film for him is a black comedy.²⁴ The Greek ambassador carries a rifle over his shoulder, but his presence does not convey any sense of fear. The foreign middle-aged aristocrats resemble more middle-class bourgeois and this is not accidental. Their wives stand aside as the men talk and are reduced to decorative items. The wives and the husbands form groups that do not intermingle. The image of the bourgeoisie is one of degeneration. The Greek ambassador is singing a tune with political connotations. It is a song in favour of the king which was sung during the first Balkan wars by the royal troops on their way to claim Thessalonica. The old division between those in favour of the king and the democrats is brought to the present. The division is still existent in 1936, as was the war between conservative and liberal powers at the time of the film's production.

All the people in the shore sequence are dressed in white. The colour becomes the emblem of the political elite who are playing a game of death. It is they who move about in the film. The minister, the leader of the Conservative Party, the English ambassador, his Greek equivalent and Kriezis' mother are also all dressed in white. As Eirini Stathi points out:

The costume is not a simple decoration/not simply decorative, but rather an element of the form that builds the narrative of the film... In Angelopoulos the costume is an identity, a testimony for a period in time, for an environment. This doesn't come forward through a simple sentimental story. The costume is interrelated with the architectural space that the hero is traversing. It is that space (together with the costume) that informs the audience about the hero's identity even if he appears 'on stage' without uttering a word, just by being there.²⁵

The space is occupied by an authoritative power. Every shot of the film includes this sense of oppression. The oppressed are reduced to background figures. The political prisoners fail to escape; the worker who was standing next to the assassinated spokesman hides; the crowd scatters right after the lethal shot and the left wing is reduced to children throwing white objects on empty streets and prisoners being silenced by guards firing. The time they occupy in the narrative is also very limited. The action is occupied by the personae of authority and the space is predominated by the major space of oppression, the prison. Men in white suits move in, out and around it. They resemble ringmasters of a burlesque show, with men in uniform helping them to carry out their show.

In terms of diegesis the spectator does not get closer to any resolution, which would normally be expected from a political thriller. As Makis Trikoypis points out the audience is left in front of a closed door:

In contrast to the classical norm, every sequence that follows another, instead of giving way to a resolution to questions raised in previous sequences, raises new questions. Who was the one who really killed the unionist? Who gave Sofianos to the police? What were his real relations with Kriezis? Who gave him the gun? How was the professor convinced to take full responsibility for the attempted poisoning of Sofianos? The director refuses to talk about all these simply because he denies the attitude of the omniscient author.²⁶

The narrative presents a framing of the unsaid where every important decision is taken away from the eyes of the viewer. He/she remains in the dark. An absolute censorship has been imposed on the form of the film. What is the secret being murmured from prisoner to prisoner before the attempted escape of the prisoners? Who is Sofianos? What does the lawyer Mavroides find out during his visit to the refuge of Sofianos' friend? Everything has already occurred before the spectator has a hint of what is going on. Things happen, the camera records them but the inability to act is ever-present. The facts become details of a dramatisation never to be

performed. Furthermore, there is no main character in the film for the audience to identify with as the agent of the action. Even if we assume that Sofianos is the main character, the audience only sees him at the moment of his arrest. Even then he is too far from the lens of the camera for a spectator to feel close to him/identify with him emotionally. From then on the camera will only frame the outside door of his prison cell. Although his cell functions as a point of reference for the unraveling of the action, he does nothing to initiate it. He is confined. Everything functions around him without his interference. Angelopoulos presents a very complex structure of power relations where direct action becomes almost unfathomable.

Days of '36 owes greatly to *Round Up* (1966) by Miklos Jancsó. In the film of the Hungarian director the action takes place in a prison where Hungarian revolutionaries are being held during the Hungarian revolution against Romania at the end of the 19th century. As in *Days of '36*, the treatment of the architectural space evokes a feeling of desolation, especially since the prison is located in the middle of a dry, open valley. Long takes and slow camera movement are present in both films. Yet in Jancsó the dialectic between master and slave becomes a master signifier where the characters shift from the identity of the master to that of the slave in a circular order. The master of one becomes slave to another in a circular universe of domination, a universe that makes struggle impossible, creating a pessimistic circle where the viewer is left watching helpless and unable to identify who is who. It is as if every sequence repeats the absorbing space of a stagnant dialectic, of a violent structure that defines every action.

In Angelopoulos likewise there is no identification with prime agents in the narrative. The distance of the camera evokes a structural field where human agents are employed in an impersonal game of power. Yet this power game does not permeate every social field as it does in Jancsó. Angelopoulos' film is about a particular historical moment as an allegory for contemporary political affairs in Greece. The film cannot be seen in the light of an ahistorical superstructure that cancels out history. The circular motif of the film is not an attempt to characterise a human condition. The degeneration belongs to a particular political system. Social

groups are not equated under the same function. The agents of dissent are marginalised but do not follow the same patterns of behaviour as the ruling class. Angelopoulos' film is about censorship. This does not prevent him from employing a polemic attitude. We might be standing in front of a closed door but the act of making this visible is in itself a call to action.

¹ See Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης, *Ιστορία (Κωμικοτραγική) του Νεοελληνικού Κράτους 1830-1974*, Εκδόσεις Εικοστού Πρώτου, Αθήνα, 1993, p.411-412.

For a more detailed discussion on the role of the C.I.A. in the coup see Αλέξης Παπαχελάς, *Ο Βιασμός της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας: Ο Αμερικάνικος Παράγων 1947-1967*, Εκδόσεις Εστία, Αθήνα, 1997.

² See Rodis Roufos, *Culture and the Military*, in *Greece Under Military Rule*, ed. Richard Clogg and George Yannopoulos, Secker and Warburg, London, p. 147. See also Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης, *Ιστορία (Κωμικοτραγική) του Νεοελληνικού Κράτους 1830-1974*, Εκδόσεις Εικοστού Πρώτου, Αθήνα, 1993, p. 424.

³ Rodis Roufos, *ibid.* p. 146-159.

⁴ Rodis Roufos, *ibid.* p.151.

⁵ See Κωνσταντίνος Θέμελης, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος-το Παρελθόν σαν Ιστορία το μέλλον ως Φόρμα*, Ύψιλον/βιβλία, Αθήνα, 1998, p.122.

⁶ Interview with the author, June 2005, unpublished.

⁷ Franco Cordelli, 'Η Σκηνοθεσία του Αγγελόπουλου' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, p 37.

⁸ Sergio Arreco, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, Εκδόσεις Ηράκλειτος, Αθήνα, 1985, p.56.

⁹ Interview with Κωνσταντίνος Θέμελης, *ibid.* p. 149-150.

¹⁰ Jean Mitry, quoted in Ειρήνη Στάθη, *Χώρος και Χρόνος στο Κινηματογράφο του Θόδωρου Αγγελόπουλου*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα 1999, p.160-161.

¹¹ Ειρήνη Στάθη, *Χώρος και Χρόνος στο Κινηματογράφο του Θόδωρου Αγγελόπουλου*, *ibid.* p. 161.

¹² David Bordwell, *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging*, University of California Press, Berkley Los Angeles London, 2005, p.147.

¹³ Andre Bazin, 'The Myth of Total Cinema', in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy & Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 201.

¹⁴ See Rudolph Arnheim, *Film as Art*, London, Faber, 1958 (first published 1932), p. 54.

¹⁵ See Robert Stam, *Film Theory – An Introduction*, Blackwell Publishers, Maiden Massachusetts, pp. 60-61.

¹⁶ See André Bazin, 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema' in *What is Cinema?*, University of California Press, Berkley and Los Angeles, 1967, p.26.

¹⁷ André Bazin, 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema' in *What is Cinema*, *ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

¹⁸ Theo Angelopoulos, interview with the author, unpublished, June 2005.

¹⁹ See Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Film Attractions' in *Eisenstein Writings Volume 1: 1922-34*, BFI Publishing / Indiana University Press, London Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988, pp. 41-42.

²⁰ Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Dramaturgy of Film Form' in *Eisenstein Writings Volume 1: 1922- 34*, *ibid.*, pp. 163-164.

²¹ Sergei Eisenstein quoted in Τάκης Αντωνόπουλος, *Κινηματογράφος-Επιστήμη-Ιδεολογία*, Αντίλογος, Αθήνα, 1972, p. 124.

²² David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Routledge, London, 1998, pp.232-233.

²³ Georg Lukács in his *History and Class Consciousness* questions the nature of a true revolutionary subject. Seeing the world as class divided between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, Lukács sees in the proletariat the potential for revolutionary action. The question then becomes how the proletariat acquires a proper class consciousness in order to act. Lukács declares that the Communist Party, being the organised form of the proletariat, is the bearer of the correct class consciousness. For a detailed analysis of the issue of class consciousness along with a critique on Lukács' model see John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power – The Meaning of Revolution Today*, Pluto Press, London Sterling Virginia, 2002, pp. 80-88.

²⁴ Interview with the author, unpublished, June 2005.

²⁵ Ειρήνη Στάθη, *Χώρος και Χρόνος στο Κινηματογράφο του Θόδωρου Αγγελόπουλου*, *ibid.* p. 59.

²⁶ Μάκης Τρικούπης, 'Μπροστά σε μια κλειστή Πόρτα' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, *Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη*, Αθήνα, 2000, p.228.

THE TRAVELLING PLAYERS / Ο ΘΙΑΣΟΣ

The film starts in 1952 when a troupe of actors arrives in the town of Aigio. The narrative almost immediately shifts to 1939 when we see the troupe arriving at the same town. They are moving around Greece staging a rural play called 'Golfo the Shepherdess'. The travelling players, schematised as figures from the Atreides fable, become a vessel in a voyage through recent Greek history. They both witness and take part in the major historical events that shaped modern Greece, from the end of the Metaxas dictatorship until the end of the civil war and the establishment of the right wing government of Papagos in 1951.

The Travelling Players is the second film in the *Trilogy of History*. Shooting started in the autumn of 1973 and was completed in 1975 after the restoration of the democratic regime. The film was screened the same year at the Cannes International Film Festival but only as part of the *Director's Week* and not in competition. The rightwing government of Konstantinos Karamanlis which had come to power after the fall of the junta refused to let the film be entered into competition due to its political content, an act that deprived Angelopoulos the chance of winning the Palme D'Or for the film that became his landmark. It should also be noted that the film was not eligible for competition because Angelopoulos registered the film exclusively as a private production.¹ *Thiassos* was the last film he made with Georgios Papalios as producer.

The director started the main part of the shoot a few months before the fall of the junta, now led by Dimitris Ioannidis who had overthrown Colonel Papadopoulos at the end of 1973. The second phase of the junta was more severe in terms of public prosecutions of leftwing supporters. In the previous year the country witnessed the invasion by the army of the university campus of Athens Polytechnic on the 17th of November. Students had occupied the premises to protest against the military regime. Angelopoulos had just finished filming the first exterior shots of the film in which

Electra lures a fascist youth in a hotel room only to ridicule him by letting him stand naked in front of the camera, as she suddenly leaves the room. The interiors were shot a year later when the film shoot started again. When events at the Polytechnic started, the director stopped filming and joined the students on the very same day the army went in. At the Polytechnic he signed a petition against the junta together with other filmmakers. The petition was transmitted on the radio station that the students had set up on the campus. The night that the army went in, Angelopoulos escaped from the campus and finally took refuge at Papalios' house, who as Themelis notes was above suspicion.² While the police were looking for him to bring him in for interrogation, Angelopoulos fled to Paris for twenty days.

On his return the director had to face the obstacle of the pre-censorship committee in order to restart the shoot. He avoided pre-censorship thanks to a minister of the junta who was an ex-schoolmate and gave his approval to the script without anybody having read it. In addition Angelopoulos gained permission to use the police and the army for the requirements of the film. The absurdist effect was that Angelopoulos had access to state infrastructure in order to make a film accusation against fascist elements that had been lurking in Greece in the last thirty-five years.

The first phase of the shoot lasted from the 12th of February until the 30th of March 1974. When local authorities asked the director what he was shooting, he claimed that he was shooting either a rural love story *Golfo*, or an appropriation of the myth of the Atreides. Angelopoulos shot the film on location. In many cases during the shoot, the crew had to remove political graffiti from walls before they could shoot.³ During an exterior shoot, the crowds had to sing the national anthem instead of the partisan song they were supposed to sing. The correct song was later dubbed in postproduction. During the 1946 New Year's Eve sequence which was shot in a night club in the northern suburbs of Athens, the army stormed onto the set after the owner of the club informed them that he overheard anti-royalist songs coming from the set. Angelopoulos was forced to demonstrate a fake film rehearsal where the band on stage played exclusively royalist songs.

The second phase of the shoot lasted from the 5th of November until the 15th of December 1975. The junta had collapsed, so Angelopoulos was able to shoot the exterior takes of the Leftist groups clashing with the Royalists as well as all the scenes that included demonstrations and red flags. It would have been impossible to film these scenes during the rule of the junta. Needless to say the film would never have made it into Greek cinemas if the military regime had not collapsed.

Thiassos was awarded nine prizes at the Thessaloniki Film Festival the following year. It was the first festival after the fall of the junta and had a strong political impetus. The mass audiences declared it the first Greek Film Festival of the People. During previous years, festivalgoers had seen the festival as a forum in which they could protest against the junta. Audiences often booed the commercial melodramas that were promoted by major studios for their lack of artistic and political impetus. It was the festivalgoers themselves who launched the award of the Audience Prize without any previous arrangement with the organizers of the festival and it was one of their representatives who stepped onto the stage during the closing ceremony and gave the award to Angelopoulos. In previous years, all the screenings were held with the presence of policemen inside the theatre. Now there was a strong demand for their removal. Public demonstrations were often held in the cinema. The festival was characterized by a strong euphoric atmosphere and it was the first time in its short history that the audience approved all the awards that were given.⁴ *Thiassos* went on to receive wide international attention and was awarded the Grand Prize for the Arts in Japan in 1979. The film also features among the best hundred films in the history of film according to the International Association of Film Critics (FIPRESCI).

The narrative of *The Travelling Players*

There is nothing that commends a story to memory more effectively than that chaste compactness which precludes psychological analyses. And the more natural the process by which the storyteller forgoes psychological

shading, the greater becomes the story's claim to place in the memory of the listener.⁵

The extract is from Walter Benjamin's essay the *Storyteller – Reflections on The Work of Nikolai Leskov*. In *The Storyteller* Benjamin draws on the workings of Leskov to give the image of the modern *aoidos* (Αοιδός). According to Giannis K. Kordatos, an *aoidos* was a narrator of epic poetry in antiquity whose presence is not confined to preclassical Greece but extends back to the pre-Greek civilizations of the Mediterranean and the Middle East.⁶ He was part of an oral tradition and was seen as a combination of a chanter and a holy man, a person who was inspired by the Muses to sing the glory of the heroes whose acts were the subject of epic poetry. That by extension should be seen as the praise of the Genus. The Genus describes the groups of people who gathered around a king and barricaded themselves around a castle wall for protection from bandit raids in a period anterior to rise of the State in the 9th century B.C. The kings during that period which goes back to 2200 B.C. did not have rule of domination over their subjects as they did after the 9th century B.C., nor did they enjoy hereditary rights to the throne. Epic poetry reflects a pre-individualistic society whose basic communal monad is the Genus. It is a period anterior to the first private ownerships out of which the individual emerges in the 9th century B.C. Despite this, the two Homeric poems of Greek antiquity, namely the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, centering on events during and after the Trojan War, which occurred around 1200 B.C. according to most historians, reflect social relations that came after the dissolution of the Genus. For Giannis K. Kordatos this is the proof that the Homeric epics were not written in one linear narrative at one moment in time.⁷ What they reflect instead are the variations that the poems were subjected to through the oral tradition of the *aoidos*. The narrator of epic poetry should be seen as a transmitter. He relies on the Muses for inspiration and his stories are those of the acts of heroes who are often the leaders of the Genus.

In the *Storyteller* Benjamin draws on the first principle of epic poetry: the oral tradition. Benjamin sees in Leskov the image of a collector rather than an

individual creator. The ancient *aoidos* recites the great poems of antiquity. Yet each recounting is different from the previous one, since it is based on an oral tradition, rather than a given text that can be memorised and passed on from generation to generation. What is crucial for the idea of the storyteller is the encounter between the storyteller and the listener. It is an act that establishes communion, in contrast to a solitary reading of a novel. Benjamin sees recurrent motifs in Leskov that reflect an image of communal life in the passage of time. The storyteller now is not anonymous like the *aoidos* and his function is not that of a channel of divine inspiration. Now the images of the past are filtered through his subjectivity and the effect is one of mythopoeic resonance where reality and fiction merge.

Similarly my reading of Angelopoulos' film is of a work whose function lies close to the principle of a collector of images. Angelopoulos becomes a storyteller as he attempts to draw a map of modern Greece giving shape to images retrieved from history and not from his own psyche. The image aims to sustain an open dialogue with the spectator. As in his previous films, the image shows rather than narrates. The parallelism with the notion of the storyteller does not imply that Angelopoulos uses the images as a means to visualise a written story. It denotes rather the dialectic function of an image that asks for the viewer's participation. It is a function that invites the viewer to return to the film more than once, possibly for a different reading.

Angelopoulos employs the myth of the Atreides and places it in the recent historical context of Greece. It is a grand project. Yet this is not a chauvinistic attempt to sketch a homogenous national history where the community endures the passing of time. On the one hand, the myth is a product of communal life. It belongs to no individual author and its origins are lost in the depths of time. The use of myth in the film carries this resonance. At the same time the film maintains a critical distance. As a narrative structure the myth does not imply a heroic mythic past that resonates in Greece through the centuries. It denotes the presence of particular principles with antiquity but it also lays bare the differences between historical

times. The myth here is not used as a model that explains history. It is used first and foremost as a vehicle for the unraveling of the story. On a second level as noted above it denotes the presence of principles whose historical origins are lost in time leaving a myth as their remains.

In *Thiassos*, myth and history collide, creating a plane where the fictional characters are carried away by historical events that entangle them both as agents and spectators. The film is an account of the microcosm of the troupe. Yet this is not the recounting of personal dramas with historical events serving as a background for the unraveling of individual pathos. Many sequences leave the troupe out of the picture and history comes to the forefront. The characters also lack psychological depth. What is of interest is their subjectivity as shaped by the function of a group.

The film centres on the journey of the troupe as they move about rural Greece performing the folk play *Golfo the Shepherdess* throughout a time span of twelve years: from 1939 to 1951. The film follows the troupe from the last years of the dictatorship of Metaxas to the outbreak of the Greco-Italian war in 1940 (signifying Greece's entry into World War Two), the Nazi Occupation in 1941 and the Greek Resistance, the Liberation in 1944 and the British Occupation, the Battle of Athens in December 1944 where the Democrats fought the Royalists who were aided by the British and finally through the civil war that ended in 1949. The narrative moves back and forth in time between 1951, which marks the re-establishment of the Right, and 1939, just before the start of the Greco-Italian war.

The characters in the film function on three levels. They are the historically situated subjects who are trying to perform a play; they are metaphors for the characters of the ancient myth and finally they are also the characters of the rural play *Golfo*. *Thiassos* becomes a field in which myth is subjected to history, as the director puts it.⁸ The whole troupe becomes a microcosm of Greece, reflecting the major ideological clashes that shaped modern Greek history. The head of the troupe, the father, represents Agamemnon. He arrived as an immigrant from Asia Minor

having lost all his relatives. His life will end in front of a Nazi firing squad during the Occupation that lasted from 1941 to 1944. He functions both as an individual and as a representative of immigrants who fled to Greece after the Asia Minor catastrophe in 1922. The father coming to Greece as a refugee supported Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos who was responsible for the Asia Minor expedition at the end of the Second Balkan War: an expedition where Greece sought to annex the area around Smyrna in the Asia Minor coast. Venizelos, however, lost the elections to the Royalists during the expedition and his supporters held the King and his administration to be responsible for the failure of the expedition that ended with the revolution of the Neo Turks, who not only rebuffed the Greek army but also drove out or exterminated the entire Greek population that lived in the Asia Minor coast. Venizelos clashed with the palace, a conflict that was passed on to his supporters. The train sequence where the father gives an account of the historical event known as the *Asia Minor Catastrophe* in front of the camera, provides the schema between the Royalists and the Democrats. The characters of Orestes, Pylades and the Poet represent the active radical forces that sided with the Communist Party. Quite early in the film we see all three reading Lenin's *Bankruptcy of the 2nd International* from a brochure. All three of them will join the Resistance during the Nazi Occupation and will later fight against the Royalist troops that were allied first to the British and then the American army during the civil war that erupted in 1946 and ended in 1949 with the defeat of the Democrats. At the end of the film, Orestes is executed by the fascists, Pylades is arrested, tortured and forced to sign a petition of repentance and the Poet after being arrested too is driven to madness.

We can say that Electra is the main character of the film. Following the line of the two tragedies in the Atreidian cycle, the two *Electras* by Euripides and Aeschylus respectively, Angelopoulos places Elektra at the centre of the story. Her function though as I will demonstrate is very different both from the staging of a character from an ancient tragedy and from a hero in a modern psychological drama. She represents the people who remained in the cities and endured the Nazi Occupation and oppression by the fascist collaborators, who in turn found shelter under the

Royalists during the civil war. Her role is not passive. During the Occupation we see her luring an Italian officer to a hotel room leaving him naked in front of the camera. She openly opposes Aigisthos and aids the Resistance.

Chrysothemis is Electra's sister. Her role is contrasted to the ethical status of her sibling. She stands indifferent to the popular struggles that mark the period and eventually marries an American soldier after the American troops become directly involved in the civil war having taken over from the British.

Aigisthos is a supporter of Fascism. He supports the pre-war dictatorship of Metaxas and then collaborates with the occupying Nazi forces. It is he who goes to the Nazis to accuse the father of helping the Resistance. The father is executed and Aigisthos then becomes head of the troupe. At his side at the head of the troupe is Clytemnestra, Agamemnon's wife. She is later executed onstage together with her lover by her son Orestes during a performance of *Golfo*.

The narrative is not presented from the point of view of any of the characters. Everything appears through the distant gaze of the camera that traverses a visual plane in a slow, almost ritualistic trek. Like in Angelopoulos' previous film, the camera observes rather than shedding light on the inner condition of the characters. The characters do not evolve as psychological individuals. In *Citizen Kane* for example the identity of the word "Rosebud" is related to the main character and its signification obscured and bifurcated. The transparent object that falls from the hands of the dying Kane becomes an image of ambiguous signification, not a symbol but a pointer to his subjectivity. Žižek refers to the glass object as the Lacanian *objet petit a*, an object in which the subjectivity of the person is invested and through which the objective world holds its order.⁹ It is as if the world shines immersed through the singular subjectivity of the beholder. In *Thiassos* the world is not seen through the eyes of any of the actors. Personal trauma does not push the narrative forward. Electra is raped by Fascists in 1944 yet this moment loses its dramatic tension as it is placed dialectically before her narrative about the demonstrations of December 1944 known as the *Δεκεμβριανά* (Dekemvriana). Her

narrative is presented as a testimony delivered direct to camera. Her personal trauma opens up to reflect the violence that the Left suffered by the occupying forces. Similarly the red scarf of the poet is not a symbolic object of his individuality nor is it charged with personal connotations. It is an object that opens the character up to the idea of revolution, which then mobilises him to act.

Gilberto Perez points out that drama, in contrast to the epic narrative, requires things to be seen by the characters or from the perspective of the plot and through a present placed in relation to the past and what we as spectators anticipate will happen in the future. Dramatic tension is raised only when what appears needs the anticipation of the *other*.¹⁰ In *The Travelling Players* the *other* is reduced to the present of the shot. What appears is always in relation to the *now* of the shot. The screen duration of the film is four hours and fifteen minutes and it is divided into almost 120 shots. The film is exemplary in its use of the sequence shot. As Lino Micciché points out, there are only about twenty times where the director edits two or three shots in order to form a sequence.¹¹ The narrative can be divided into sixteen main episodes that contain smaller narrative sequences. Each episode ends with a fade out. Each sequence, often identified with a single take, points at a completed action. The narrative does not proceed in a linear cause and effect pattern. The episodes function autonomously in relation to the unraveling of the action.

In the sequence of the first rehearsal of the play *Golfo* in the hotel yard right before the first appearance of Orestes, the camera follows the gaze of the characters as if to designate the space for the rehearsal. The relation between the perspective of the camera and that of the characters is not one of cause and effect. In one sequence shot the camera follows the movement of the troupe as they enter the hotel yard and then climb up some exterior stairs onto a balcony where each member then retires to his or her room. The camera turns slightly to follow their exit and then returns to fix the frame in the centre of the balcony in what Eirini Stathi calls *reframing*.¹² The camera is correcting the frame while it is left recording the empty balcony and the closed doors. Without a cut the characters re-enter the frame and stand in line

on the balcony staring at the offscreen yard. The camera follows their gaze offscreen to the left and with a semi-circular movement frames the empty yard in a manner of a theatre stage with the background wall at a 90° angle from the camera lens. The characters enter the frame from the sides delivering their lines as characters from the play *Golfo*. The rehearsal is interrupted by the arrival of Orestes.

It seems as if the camera were examining the space in order to inquire into the characters' gazes rather than identify with them. The camera pans and then reaches an immobile state while turning the space it is recording into a theatre stage. The characters enter from the sides of the frame. The camera then abandons the action for a different space where the characters enter re-introducing the action. The absence of the cut and the continuous slow movement of the crane shot records the movement of the troupe in terms of a procession. What we have in the above sequence is pure description and generation of movement. From the perspective of the plot the sequence could be exhausted in a continuity shot lasting no more than half a minute. Yet by stretching out the duration of the shot the director brings to the foreground the process of filming as an act of spatial inquiry. Instead of passively following the movement of the actors as bearers of the action, the camera participates in the designation of the visual field. It waits for the actors to re-enter the frame and then follows their gaze offscreen. This is a movement whose cause is split between the diegetic need to follow the characters' gaze and that of an autonomous movement. It is an act of conscious choice to frame the space as a theatre stage. Perez notes that in the Homeric epics, the world described stands as it is.¹³ There are no ambiguities generated by the personal investment of the characters in the real world. Description becomes the means by which dramatic tension is put aside in favour of a narrative that avoids ambiguity. We can see one element of this description functioning in *Thiassos*. The long duration of the shot and the slow tracking movement of the camera shift the viewer's attention from the evolving drama to a spatial inquiry. It is not that everything that lies off-frame is reduced to nothingness. What appears is always in relation to what lies beyond the edges of the frame. The characters enter and re-enter the frame continuously while

the camera lingers on the same spatial field. Yet as we have already established in the introduction, the focus is always on the presence of the shot. But at the same time it is this present tense that unlike a Homeric epic declares the impersonal subjectivity of the camera, the presence of a consciousness, the consciousness of the storyteller.

The act of recording the space in a continuous visual field does not fall under the restrictions of a *genre*. It becomes an emblem of authorial signature. There is no predetermined drive or generic logic that demands that the troupe return to the balcony after having entered their rooms. Similarly there is not a predetermined narrative that designates the route of events. This is the meaning of the continuous disruptions that occur throughout the film. The troupe never manages to finish a single performance, as if the film were designating the impossibility of safety, of a teleological universe. Similarly, Orestes who in the ancient fable returns as an avenging angel in order to restore justice and order, now avenges the death of his father but he cannot offer more than a momentary victory over injustice. The revenge becomes an event. In the film Orestes kills Clytemnestra and Aigisthos onstage during a performance of *Golfo* and the audience applauds, thinking that this is part of the performance. We as spectators know the truth and we might even draw a feeling of satisfaction when Aigisthos, who has tormented the rest of the troupe so much, is finally avenged. This feeling however will soon lapse when Orestes is put to death by the fascists.

We could argue that Angelopoulos both laments and celebrates this flux. Since there is no predetermined narrative that will reach an end, we as humans are left in front of a vacuum. We can say that Angelopoulos presents us with this vacuum, this space where things assemble and disassemble. The camera lingers on the empty space of the yard until the actors return. Orestes dies; the dream of the Left evaporates, leaving the actors moving about Greece in 1952 in a seeming vacuum, but they reassemble from this vacuum and little Orestes, the son of Chrysothemis who is taken under Electra's wing, returns, maybe for the staging of another act.

The film becomes a spatial enquiry dominated by a movement based on dialectics. Angelopoulos' view of modern Greek history records the movement between two poles, the Right and the Left. This is demonstrated clearly in the sequence of the demonstrations that follow Electra's account of the 1944 December demonstrations. This is the tenth episode which consists solely of one long take. It covers the period from September to December 1944. The director edits the action of two distinct incidents that belong to a different spatio-temporal situation in one long take. We could argue that Angelopoulos performs a type of *internal montage* which allows the action to unravel in time so that the spectator can witness the process by which the movement will acquire its full meaning.

A crane long shot records the crowds as they gather in a square carrying American, British, Soviet and Greek flags and singing a song of national unity. It is right after liberation from the Nazis and the people are demanding a government of national unity with the participation of the communists. While the camera keeps recording the crowd from behind, gunshots are heard from off-screen. The crowd scatters. The camera follows their movement as they disappear into the streets around the square. It turns a full circle and then returns to the same starting point. Three bodies lie on the square. The sound of a bagpipe comes off-screen from the right. A Scottish military piper makes his way into the frame and walks parallel to the lens before exiting to the left. After the piper disappears one of the three people that lie on the square starts to move. He gets up and starts running away to the left side of the square. The camera follows his movement with a pan until the man disappears into an alley at the sides of the square. Without a pause the camera continues its circular movement and comes to meet the crowds returning to the square from another street. Now they are exclusively under red flags. The camera after having performed a second full circle is put on a standstill while framing the crowds from behind as before.

The square turns into a choreographed battlefield. The camera performs a double circular movement and records the people as an ensemble who scatter when coming under fire only to reunite under the banner of Communism. The first demonstration

is abruptly put to a stop by gunfire in a manner reminiscent of *Days of '36* where, during the opening sequence, a unionist is executed by a shot that comes from off-screen. We never see the murderers. Now the Scottish piper enters the frame and crosses the empty square parallel to the lens of the camera. The censorship that Angelopoulos imposed on his previous film now turns into a direct accusation. The sequence is a representation of events that occurred between September and December 1944. With a double circular movement, the camera marks a space where the crowds move in and out in their determination to prevail. The Scottish piper is a signifier of the British troops who opened fire against the peaceful demonstrators in December, an act that united all the anti-Royalists under the banner of the Communist Party (the return of the crowd under red flags). The movement inside the frame breaks away from the representation of empirical movement and substitutes it with a slow choreography that brings in direct contrast elements that are ideologically charged. They are edited inside the shot to form a montage that unlike Eisenstein's notion of *montage of attractions*, it does not function through shock but is formed gradually according to the rhythm of the shot that records movement in real time.¹⁴ The sequence shot is both an intellectual and emotional image. The shot delivers a fascination with group dynamics brought forward through the dialectics of movement and stasis that regulates the movement of the demonstrators as they come in and out of the frame. The same dialectic is felt in the camera movement which describes a circle before stopping still and facing the square.

This visual orchestration of the demonstrations marks a break with naturalism. I will now demonstrate how this break owes greatly to the theories of Bertolt Brecht and how Angelopoulos reads the epic in relation to Greek history.

The Epic

Epic theatre emerged in the mid-1920s and declared war on naturalism and Aristotelian drama as the latter was perceived in the German theatre of the time.

Brecht, keeping in line with the German Expressionist Movement of the 1920s that introduced the idea of the character as a social type and not an individual identity, presented a theatre that would resist the psychological rendering of characters that in turn resulted in the spectator falling into a state of empathy with the action on stage. By means of distancing, Brecht sought to make the audience apprehend the real identities of objects, events and gestures as they appear on stage. Naturalism became suspected of hiding bourgeois ideology. Brecht argued that the subject matter ought to be revealed in its true identity, as a product of social relations. The formal means by which Brecht opposed naturalism was the exposing of the means of production during the performances of his plays. The breakdown of the fourth wall convention, the direct exposure of theatre lights and the visibility of an orchestra that performed live during acts were among others a means to fight illusionism on stage. The Brechtian stage, instead of being realistic, emphasised the fact that the audience was watching a performance. Through the use of elliptical settings, the breakdown of the plot into an episodic narrative that prevented suspense and first and foremost the use of the *Gest*, Brecht attempted to counter the psychological investments that an audience would apply to a naturalist drama. Brecht, who concentrated on the social identities of the characters in his plays, saw the developing action of naturalist dramas as a means that invested in the psychological identity of a character and as a form that made audiences empathise with the characters, thus minimising their critical power. With the *Gest* Brecht described the movement of the actor as being other than itself, as commenting upon the character rather than identifying with him/her. The critical distance that the spectator ought to have from the performance should also be the subject of the actors' performance. In accordance Brecht favored montage instead of linearity. The development of the action was put to a halt through the use of film projections in the middle of acts or in between acts and through the use of music as a means to comment on rather than heighten the action. Brecht saw theatre as an extension of social life and aimed at the emancipation of the working classes from an oppressing bourgeois ideology that for him used theatre as an object for consumption and as propagation for bourgeois values.¹⁵

Brecht's ideas were widely reinvented for cinema during the 1960s through filmmakers like Godard and Straub-Huillet in France and later on Kluge in Germany. Their films carry a strong self-reflexive and political impetus. Godard, in films like *Vivre Sa Vie* (1962), *Alphaville* (1965) and *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1967), breaks down the development of a continuous action through the use of intertitles in the narrative, jump cuts and the disjoining of the soundtrack from the image. The actors often turn directly towards the camera as if addressing the viewers of the film, thus emphasising the presence of the medium.

Thiassos is not a Godardian film. Angelopoulos does not employ an anarchist breakdown of narrative forms neither does he immerse himself in extreme experimentation. Although his career as a filmmaker started after the events of 1968 and he retained a strong affinity with the student movement, he clearly belongs to an older generation with less radical tendencies. His filmic gaze remains rooted in the films of Orson Welles and Kenji Mizogushi. Yet it is the main principles of the Epic as opposed to a naturalist realist drama based on mimesis and identification that find their way into the film. Angelopoulos provides his own reading of Brecht in his attempt to portray the movement of a collective subject.¹⁶ Natural settings are often defamiliarised from their realist connotations by being framed in a manner of a theatre stage like in the sequence of the Battle of Athens.¹⁷ This sequence, which depicts the Leftists confronting the police and then the English troops, does not convey a naturalist representation of a street fight. It presents a carefully calculated choreography that alludes to the historical event known as the Battle of Athens. The battle erupted after the systematic attempts of the Royalists and the allied British forces to dismantle the forces of the Left. The British army had by then turned into an occupying force.

The sequence is based on one long take that functions as a tableau. The camera follows the movement of the troupe through the streets of Athens at night. The sequence starts with the camera framing the troupe inside an open-air market. The voice of a Leftist rebel coming from a loudspeaker is heard from offscreen. The troupe is set in motion. The camera pans to the left and follows their movement. A

group of rebels is seen coming from afar in deep focus from the left exit of the market. Throughout the sequence the camera is placed inside the market together with the troupe, while the opposing groups move in a semi-circular axis at the periphery outside. We as viewers witness the movement of the opposing groups through the three exits of the market. After we see the Leftists approaching, the troupe makes a move from the left to the middle exit. The camera surpasses them as it tracks to the right and then becomes immobile at the middle exit. The rebels pass through. After the rebels pass the middle exit to the right towards the third, the troupe moves parallel to the rebels' track and the camera is set in motion again. While it tracks to the right, the troupe hides at the left side of the third exit which is also the main exit. The camera is still, facing the main exit at a 90° angle. A group of policemen and paramilitaries in battle positions are occupying the street that crosses the third exit. We see them in profile. They are facing the left side of the frame. As soon as the camera stops moving, gunfire comes from offscreen left and starts the battle. The policemen retreat offscreen to the right. The rebels then occupy the street in front of the main exit. A man with a loudspeaker stands in front and sings a rebel song. An explosion from a hand grenade interrupts his singing. The street is cleared. The English troops make their way in from the right. Jeeps are left occupying the street while the soldiers move offscreen to the left. The camera tracks to the right abandoning the scene and meets the troupe as they try to make their way out of the market. The camera follows them until they disappear offscreen to the right and then stops still again. The voice of the rebel is heard offscreen singing the rebel song that ends the sequence.

The action in the sequence described above takes place at a certain distance from the camera lens. Even the troupe, although it is inside the market, appears at an almost equal distance with the groups outside, since its members are moving almost with their backs to the exits as they try to go unnoticed. The sequence thus emphasises the agency of groups rather than that of individual actors. Once the camera is immobilized and facing the entrance of the market, the scene turns into a theatre stage with the houses at the sides of the road functioning as the back wall of a theatre stage. Having the foreground inside the market in the shadows and the

road lit supports the theatrical arrangement of the shot and aims to focus the viewers' attention on the background where the action takes place. When the groups enter the frame we see them in profile. They move on an exact parallel axis to the houses and the camera lens. The absence of diagonals that would enforce the rendering of depth gives way to a parallel arrangement that reinforces the impression of a two-dimensional field.

Angelopoulos breaks away from a traditional naturalist representation of depth and stages a ritualistic shot that moves between theatre and shadow play. The choreography of the two opposing sides is stylised as to break away from the mimesis of empirical movement. The movement is choreographed as if the actors belonged to an ensemble staging a theatre performance. The actors move in and out of the frame as if from the sides of a stage. Each time a group makes an entrance it then stands immobile; the actors freeze like statues. Even when they fire at each other it looks mechanical. The rebels stand on the left side of the exit and the army on the right.

The sequence is a comment, a representation of the Battle of Athens in one take. The collision of ideologies is represented through the arrangement of the mise en scène. The actual battle lasted for almost a month. Here, thirty days are compressed into one take. The connoted message is conveyed without the intervention of dialogue. There is no music added in postproduction to heighten dramatic tension. The song of the rebels seals the dialectics of the image. The Battle of Athens was lost for the Left. The English artillery was something that the rebels could not cope with. When the Leftists take over the stage the explosion of a hand grenade pushes them outside the frame to the left. The English artillery enters. The sequence starts and ends with the same agitating rebel song heard offscreen. At the end of the sequence however it is heard from far away, like an echo lamenting the loss of the Left.

Speech gives way to the *Gest* which features throughout the film. The long take that is traditionally seen as the landmark of realism opens up to incorporate the

Brechtian *Gest*. The term refers primarily to the movement of the actor, which instead of portraying the psychology of the embodied character, carries the critical attitude of the actor towards the character. The movement also reflects a state of social relations. Aigisthos' fascist salute in the second sequence of the first episode does not reflect his psychology but rather becomes a gesture that supports his function as a social type. Pylades' reaction to move away from the table functions under the same principle. Similarly at a later point in the narrative, the violence of the Right is presented through a gestural movement: firing into the air at the 1946 New Year's Eve party. The Leftist youth responds by displaying his unarmed body and then the group of Leftists leaves. The disarmament of the Left under the Treaty of Varkiza had left the fascist paramilitaries free to act as they pleased. The grotesque dance that follows where the male fascists are dancing in couples turns into a disturbing image of sterility. The dance runs contrast to the dance of the Leftists who dance in girl-boy couples. The costumes likewise become symbols of social relations. The red scarf of the poet stands for the idea of revolution. The robe of Clytemnestra becomes a representative of status. Electra puts it on with great care after Orestes executes their mother and she becomes head of the troupe. In a singular shot Electra is contrasted with her sister when the two meet outside their rooms in the corridor of a hotel. Her sister Chrysothemis chooses her mother's fur coat instead. The fascist security forces are all wearing hats and suits, a grotesque allusion both to the criminals and the police officers of film noir. We can claim that the presence of the *Gest* is didactic. Brecht notes that the movements of an actor trying to ward off biting dogs are mere acting gestures. If on the other hand the actor is dressed in rags and the dogs are security dogs then his movement becomes gestive.¹⁸ It reveals the social relationships between people in a given period. The act becomes other than itself. It is not a natural movement of self-protection in a moment of danger. It denotes the presence of class division and oppression.

In yet another Brechtian echo, the film presents the breakdown of the world of diegesis as a closed system. Angelopoulos introduces into the world of fiction images that are themselves recreations of actual historical material, like the Treaty of Varkiza sequence where the partisans hand over their weapons to the authorities

one year before the outbreak of the official civil war. The staging of the sequence is based on photographs taken during the event. Likewise the arrival of the German troops in 1941 is presented with one static shot, where a group of German officers is standing on a balcony with a Nazi flag hanging from the railings. The shot is then superimposed by the original historical picture.

These are historical *texts* introduced as part of the fiction and so are the three shots where the characters deliver their lines straight to the camera. The first sequence of the fourth episode presents Agamemnon in direct confrontation with the lens recounting the Minor Asia catastrophe. The camera remains immobile as if set for an interview. Angelopoulos uses the same technique three times in the film. Electra gives an account of the demonstrations of December 1944. By the time she presents her account, the narrative has already proceeded to 1945. Electra has just been raped. Her soliloquy breaks the action to stop identification with the character, as Jordan points out¹⁹. The director does not give any space to the audience to empathise with the heroine. Wearing her mother's robe Electra stands in front of the bridge where she has been abandoned by the fascists. Her monologue becomes a testimony of a collective memory where English troops opened fire on peaceful marchers. All three monologues, Agamemnon's, Electra's and Pylades', belong to real-life testimonies that the director weaves into the narrative. The narrative becomes self-reflexive. Throughout the monologues the actors address the camera, thus breaking the illusion of a closed imaginary world that is unfolding before the eyes of the spectators. The gaze of the actor meets the spectator's eye, canceling out his/her position as master where the spectacle becomes an object. As the director puts it:

These texts are narrations from three characters of the film that at some point come out of the myth. They stand in front of the camera and they are narrating as many Brechtian characters do. These texts break up the film three times. The first (concerning the events of '22) as far as the course of the plot is concerned stands completely out of the Myth; the second (Dekemvriana) moves *in* and *out* of the myth –

in other words not only do we see but we are also listening to a vocal documentary; the third (about the exiles in Makronisos) is fully inscribed in the myth. There is also the text of the 'Varkiza Treaty' and the text of the boy reading about the revolution of 1821 from the school book.²⁰

The nature of all three narratives is didactic and their function works towards the same aesthetic that was launched in *Days of '36*, where major historical events do not become the subject of dramatisation. As the demonstrations and the strikes were reduced to stills and the political machinations were kept in the space off in that film, so it is in the present film that the arrival of the Nazis turns into a *tableau vivant* and the above mentioned events into personal recounting. This is a double register of Brechtian distanciation where the spectator is prevented from empathising with the action, but it is also an appropriation of the staging of ancient drama where the audience witnesses a space where the event may have already occurred or is taking place off stage. We can see this clearly during the sequence that shows Agamemnon on stage reading a newspaper article that announces the start of the Greco-Italian war in 1940. In a static long shot we see him onstage dressed in the national costume of the *foustanela*. This costume is for the play but now it also functions as an emblem for the call to national unity and support for the troops who are already on their way to the front. The camera is placed in the auditorium as if from the point of view of a spectator. The performance starts but is soon interrupted by the sound of planes and then by the sound of explosions coming from outside the theatre. The troupe leaves the stage and the audience abandons the auditorium. We as spectators never see the audience. We only hear them clapping and later on rushing about as they evacuate the building during the bombings. What remains on screen is the empty stage. What we encounter is the effect of the action on a particular space and not the action itself. The audio montage replaces movement in the *mise en scène* that is in turn abandoned.

The last Brechtian feature that the film adopts, as Isabelle Jordan points out, is the use of songs and music in the *mise en scène*, as bearers of the action.²¹ In the film

there is a total absence of non-diegetic music; the sound belongs exclusively to the *mise en scène*. As part of his attempt towards a non-interventionist aesthetic, the director avoids the use of a postproduction music score. Instead of underscoring the image, the music becomes one of the elements that constitute the staging of the *mise en scène*. This sense of non-interventionist realism is combined with a Brechtian aesthetic where the music does not highlight the emotions of individual characters nor does it function as a carpet for the unfolding of the action. Instead it becomes the carrier of the drama.

Throughout the whole film there are clashes involving songs. Fascist songs are set against the songs of the Left. Neutral music is also included in the opposition with both sides adapting songs whose original lyrics are not political. Their juxtaposition in a particular set of political events turns them into carriers of intense dramatic resonance. In the 1946 New Year's Eve sequence the fascists dance an old fashioned waltz while the Leftists dance a boogie. In the café sequence in the second episode the security forces parade outside the café singing a song popular among Metaxas' fascist youth movement. Aigisthos sings along from inside the café. Pylades answers with a melancholic tune. Aigisthos becomes furious and jumps onto his chair, singing loudly and moving his hands as if conducting an orchestra. It should also be noted that the dichotomy here becomes gender specific. The fascist song addresses the sun. In Greek, sun has a male gender (ο ήλιος) while the Leftist tune is addressed to a woman. During the wedding of Chrysothemis and the American soldier the American swing tune, *Mona Lisa*, is contrasted with a traditional lament from Epirus *Αχ, μωρή κοντούλα λεμονιά* (*oh my poor little lemon tree*). The American soldiers who explode into a jazz beat interrupt the traditional song, which is sung by an old woman. A single human voice is contrasted with a fusion of musical instruments; a live voice is set against a recorded song. The traditional song is the same song used for the opening and ending of *Reconstruction*. It is the same song that one of the political prisoners whistles right before the attempted escape in *Days of '36*. It makes its way into *Thiassos* and draws a connecting line between the three films.

The clash of songs reaches its peak at the 1946 New Year's Eve sequence where we witness two groups of people from opposing ideologies as they *fire* songs at each other. During the sequence, the identity of each group is presented solely through their movement, their costumes, and their use of singing. The sequence, which is filmed again in one long take, starts with Elektra entering a decorated hall that functions in terms of a ball room. At the back of the hall there is an orchestra on stage. A female singer steps on stage and the attendants start applauding while the orchestra starts playing. We see a man with a moustache in front of the stage as he is trying to catch the rhythm but fails. With a slight grin on his face he starts walking towards a table where a group of men is seated. The men in the group are all wearing hats and dark suits. In the mean time, a few couples have already started dancing. One of the men with the hats gets up and pulls a girl away from her partner while they dance. The partner is afraid to react and walks away slowly. While the dance continues, we see a mixed group of girls and boys entering the hall and dancing merrily. The man with the hat goes back to his group and whispers something in the ear of the man with the moustache, who seems to be the leader of the group. The latter gets up angrily as if ready to explode and keeps staring at the group that has just walked in and is now occupying a table right next to the stage. A waiter runs towards a bald man who seems to be the owner of the hall and tells him something that we as viewers cannot hear. The bald man signals the orchestra to stop and then approaches the newly arrived group. The dance space is now empty. The bald man whispers something to a member of the newly arrived group who then answers back with a reassuring smile. The bald man gives a signal to the orchestra to keep playing. But now no one gets up to dance.

The camera that had up to that moment followed the action starts receding towards the exit opposite the stage which is now framed from a right diagonal. While performing this recession movement the camera brings into full view the two groups with the empty dance hall in the middle. At the back of the dance space is the orchestra. The camera reaches a standstill and now we see the two groups occupying the two edges of the frame. The men in dark costumes are in the foreground to the left while the newly arrived group is further away into the

background to the right. The man with the moustache gets up, walks in the middle of the empty space, and, raising his hand, orders the orchestra to stop. His group then starts singing a chorus line from a fascist song that is in favour of the King. As soon as they finish, the young man who had been talking to the owner gets up from the other table and walks towards the man with the moustache. The young man starts singing a song against the British Occupying forces and in favour of democracy. His group then sings along with him. What follows is an exchange of songs with political content that the groups keep firing at each other. Suddenly, a girl from the newly arrived group gets up on stage and starts singing a song whose lyrics are ridiculing the British forces and General Scobie in particular. The orchestra bursts into a rhythmical boogie and her group takes over the dance hall as they start dancing in frenzy.

The momentary victory of the Left in the singing 'contest' is challenged with the use of a firearm. The man with the moustache fires a shot in the air thus interrupting the dance. One of the Leftist youths replies by opening the inside of his jacket to reveal that he is unarmed. His movement does not tell us anything about his character. Yet again the movement becomes other than itself: it is a comment on the Varkiza Treaty that was signed between the Left and the Right in 1945. The Treaty ordered the disarmament of the Left after the end of the Resistance and after the Left had lost the Battle of Athens in 1944. The main forces of the Left who mainly formed the liberating army of the Resistance were forced to disarm and in their place the security forces, aided by criminals and ex-Nazi collaborators, were given arms and carte blanche. The sequence ends with the Leftists having walked away and the fascists singing and dancing between themselves to the rhythm of a royalist song in the middle of an empty dance hall.

Time

The film starts with the introduction of a narrator who announces the start of the rural play *Golfo*. A cut introduces the troupe arriving at the city of Aigio in 1952.

The voiceover reports that the year is 1952 and that the troupe has been to this city before but the lineup is different now. As the actors move about in the streets of Aigio we see them in a long diagonal shot as they come down the main street moving from the right side of the frame at the back towards the foreground to the left. A voice from a megaphone is heard offscreen urging the people to vote for General Papagos. It is the first elections after the civil war when the Right established its power behind the mask of a democratically elected government. The Communist Party had already been declared illegal and the elections took place in the face of terrorism on behalf of the Right, who defrauded the electorate to gain absolute power. The street is full of banners supporting General Papagos. The troupe is walking down the main street when a van going the opposite way passes them. It is from the van that the amplified voice comes. The troupe then turns into a small alley. The camera stays on the street, and when the troupe returns onto the main street the composition of the group is different. Some of the members are different and the rest look younger. The voice that came from the van cannot be heard anymore and the banners are not visible. A cut introduces Pylades from behind and then follows the rest of the group as they move to the central square and into a café. At the square a man on a bike is announcing a public speech by General Metaxas that will take place some time later during the day. This is the first timelapse that occurs within the shot. The narrative has gone back to 1939.

As I have already noted the narrative moves back and forth from 1939 to 1952. The film has an episodic structure that follows a linear chronological order until a time shift occurs to 1952. From 1952 there is a return to the past but always at a later point in time from when the shift originally occurred. Furthermore the film adopts a compression of time through the use of the sequence shot. The demonstrations for national unity are compressed into one sequence together with the December Demonstrations. Similarly the Battle of Athens is represented in one sequence shot. The events that follow the opening sequence of the film that takes us back to 1939 are all set in the same period until Pylades is arrested. Then the narrative moves forward to the night of the 28th of October 1940, which is the day when Metaxas refused to surrender to the call of the Italian Fascists and the Greco-Italian war

erupted. Agamemnon then recounts the Minor Asia catastrophe of 1922 to camera. The chronological linearity is retained until the German invasion, which is represented by a still frame. The next shot reveals Electra staring out of a window in a hotel. Pylades comes into the room. They go out. Together with the rest of the group they move from the bay to the city. Pictures of General Papagos are hanging on the street walls. The megaphone we heard in the opening sequence is heard from offscreen. We as viewers realise that the narrative has moved back to 1952. The camera then follows the van until it vanishes off the far right of the screen. After a pause a black Mercedes makes its way onto the screen from the same point that the van vanished towards. When it comes closer to the panning camera its Nazi markings are visible. The camera follows the car as it passes in front of the street that the troupe went up. The pictures of Papagos along with the pamphlets that were thrown from the van have disappeared. Instead there is a sign which reads "Halt! Kontrolle" and a guard dressed in Nazi uniform holding a machine gun. The time is winter 1942.

The thirteenth episode consists of two long takes. In the second take the fascist security forces are walking down an empty street after they have established their dominance over the Leftist youths. The year is still 1946. The camera records their military march until they reach a group of people who are listening to the speech by General Papagos. The narrative has moved to 1952. A cut then takes the narrative to 1949. From that point the narrative proceeds in the form of episodes each set in a particular time and space towards 1952 in order to then make the final retreat back to 1939.

In *Days of '36* the long take was a tool used to organise the profilmic space into a representational field based on a liturgical arrangement of the mise en scène that incorporated a theory of internal montage, be it audio or visual. Each long take would maintain chronological and spatial uniformity. In *Thiassos*, as demonstrated above, the long take expands into something else. The sequence shot incorporates a time shift within a concrete space. We can claim then that the first sequence does not record the movement of the travelling players into the streets of Aigio. It

records time as the players bring the past into the present. 1939 co-exists with 1952 and with 1975, which is the year of the film's release. Different points in time are represented by different points on the street, and the camera simply needs to track to a different part of the street to show that the characters have moved back or forwards in time. In 1952 the Right established its victory. In 1939 Greece was under the rule of a dictatorship, as it was at the time when the director started shooting the film. The film starts and ends with an identical shot. The second long take of the thirteenth episode includes the third year of the civil war but it also implies the period until 1975. The fascist security forces are marching down the street singing songs in favour of the king and the army, cursing the communists as traitors who are to be wiped out. The streets are empty. The houses have their doors and windows closed. The fascists are free to roam all the way to their so-called democratic establishment in 1952. It is as if the film echoes Benjamin's dictum that:

History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [Zeitgeist]...²²

This leap into the past in *the Travelling Players* signifies the director's leap into the past of which he becomes a collector of images. The movement of the camera inscribes the subjective presence of the storyteller. The shifts in time render an open dialogue with history whose imprint remains in the present. Through the camera's movement, the long take becomes a passage of time that incorporates this presence. The static shots become history as lived experience (the testimonies before the camera) and signifiers of textual interplay. When Orestes kills Aigisthos he does it onstage as the character of Tassos in the play *Golfo*, who comes on 'frame' to kill Zissis, who is the obstacle to his love affair with Golfo. Orestes kills Aigisthos; Tassos kills Zissis. The revolutionary kills the informer. One text blends into the other in a manner in which the search for the original as the cause for the other is lost. It is more that one is a supplement for the other. The performance ceases to be an entertaining break from *real* life. It turns into an active force in the shape of events. In a similar way, historical events are staged as theatre

performances in the film, such as the Battle of Athens or the December '44 demonstrations. Angelopoulos breaks down the dichotomy between life and spectacle. The theatre performance becomes yet another image which is as real as the Battle of Athens. During Orestes' burial at the end of the civil war that saw the defeat of the Left, the remaining members of the troupe break into a round of applause as if equating a life with a performance.

Eirini Stathi points out that time in the film works under the principle of anamnesis (memory).²³ That is, the sequence shot incorporates a time shift in a continuous space, since its time is not an objective homogenous time but a time of recollection which shifts from one plane to the next. Yet we should add that this is not a subjective rendering of associative memory. There is a strong dialectic between two very specific historical moments that are either linked or contrasted. The function of the myth and traditional rituals that are incorporated into the narrative might be of a synchronic nature but the time lapse that occurs within one take always involves two distinct historical times. The camera attains an impersonal subjectivity that contrasts two moments in time in order for the one to shed light on the truth of the other. As Sergio Arreco points out:

Angelopoulos, through the examination of the sacrilegious of the now (History), with the cover up and the filter of a holy past, implies this *other* that is lacking in myth, which today answers to a familiar name: Revolution, Class struggle.²⁴

Death?

In *The Storyteller*, Benjamin says that death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell. We can say that death makes a twofold entrance into the film. The first is through the content and the second lies in the use of colour and the Brechtian distancing device, achieved by making the actors freeze.

The prevalent colours of the film are brown and yellow as if the director were using the shades which time inscribes on an old photo. For example, the director maintained the yellow stains caused by moisture on the neoclassical houses that were refurbished for the requirements of the film as a sign of abandonment and neglect. In its use of colour, the film is very similar to *Days of '36*. However, the strong sunlight of that film now makes way for the more familiar grey shades of a winter landscape that give a strong sense of detachment to the image. As Eirini Stathi points out, the use of colour in *Thiassos* also has strong affinities with the colours used in the paintings of Yiannis Tsarouhis.²⁵ In the 1944 café sequence where the troupe is advertising its show outside the café, the framing and the arrangement of the front entrance of the café is an appropriation of Tsarouhis' painting *The Neon Café* (1966). We could argue that the use of colour functions according to the same principle that characterises the time shifts within the sequence shot. Angelopoulos uses colour not for the objective rendering of the past but rather to give an image of what a collective memory has inscribed as the permeating colour of the era. The allusion to photographs and paintings becomes an evident marker of their function in the creation of a recollection image.

When Electra is kidnapped by a group of fascists we as viewers never see the act take place. In an interior static shot that frames the exit of a hotel and stairs leading upstairs, we witness the group making its way into the hotel and then going up the stairs. We are then left staring at the empty hallway while the act takes place off screen. The derelict walls and the dampness in the hallway become an image of death, one that anticipates another interior shot of a similarly empty damp room at a later point in the narrative, when Electra goes to see her brother's body in prison, having been informed of his execution. She finds him placed on a table in the middle of an empty basement room.

There are more images that carry the same weight of mortality. The narrative of the Asia Minor catastrophe, the execution of Agamemnon, the tortures and executions of the Leftist rebels, the demonstrations of December '45 and Chrisothemi's marriage to the American soldier contrast with the traditional lament that seems to

permeate through the whole film. However, this is not a lament of despair: it carries with it a force of resistance that is passed on to Chrisothemi's young son who walks off enraged during the grotesque marriage. The white cloth that drags between his legs becomes somehow a signifier for the *Trilogy of Silence* of the 1980s where the generation of little Orestes, including the director himself, will face a disorienting present.

A different image of death comes through the *mise en scène* when the camera becomes still and the fixed frame concentrates on the stillness of the actors after they have performed a ritualistic movement. It is here that the cinematic image delivers an image of time as rupture, the Barthesian *punctum*, an image that escapes the intentional message of the director. *Punctum* and *dictum* are the two terms Barthes saw as forming the nature of photography. The *dictum* is the intentional message of the picture and the *punctum* is an "element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me."²⁶ The *punctum* is presented as something that is not intentional in the picture, a detail that will strike the viewer and make him/her invest a personal reading or emotion in the image. The function of the *punctum* expands from this personal viewing to a general rupture of delivering a time both present and absent. Unlike the cinematic image, which animates the past into an eternal present through movement, the stillness of the picture creates a disorienting feeling of the uncanny. The stillness of the image fixes time, yet the lifelike resemblance of the object brings it to the eyes as an animated death. The time of the photograph seems to be concentrated in the '*it has been*'. The object of the gaze had objectively stood before the lens at a moment in time which has now passed. What the viewer perceives in the now is this fixing of time. The photograph fixes something permanently which is now different or dead. This is not an image of mental space which recollection can delve into. The photograph delivers time as rupture. It is a remainder of mortality, of the viewer's mortality. Just as the object that stood before the lens is no more, so too will I one day be no more.²⁷ Melancholia seems to be the permeating aspect of photography and Angelopoulos reaches something very close to the quality of the still frame. The *punctum* here has nothing to do with an accidental event that the camera might

capture in a natural setting. There is hardly anything accidental in the perfectly orchestrated mise en scène of *Thiassos*. The *punctum* is the piercing of the past that is irretrievable and reminds us of our mortality. This absence comes to the foreground in moments such as when the actors freeze in the fixed frame of the Battle of Athens or when the action stops when the troupe is performing for the British soldiers. We could argue that the Brechtian distanciation becomes a similar point of rupture that carries with it the melancholia of history.

The sequence of the Battle of Athens delivers the past into the present but the stylisation of the movement delivers an image of death. The sequence is not an imitation of the event. It is an orchestration that comes anterior to the event. If cinema delivers an image of life through its ability to render movement, it is as if the stylisation of movement delivers a rupture in life. If cinema inherently recreates movement and makes us forget that the action is no longer there in order to identify with the life unfolding on the screen then the stylisation of movement cannot but break with this principle. In the Battle of Athens sequence, we see the groups colliding but we are not drawn into the action. The stylisation of the movement functions towards a distanciating effect. Instead of recreating the event in a lifelike manner, the sequence maintains its historical distance from the actual event. The dictum then would be that the sequence translates the event into a cinematic language. It is a translation that envelops the event in order to reach the essence of the event and simultaneously inscribe its own ideology. Yet this break in the flow of natural life becomes simultaneously an arrow of death. The fixed frame and the stillness that the actors reach even though only momentary, renders the same sense of mortality Barthes saw in the photograph. It is as if the freezing, apart from becoming a signifier of rupture in a homogenous historical flow, also runs counter to the inherent nature of the film, which is movement. If movement gives the illusion of life then a freezing of movement breaks away to deliver an image of time reaching a standstill. Abrupt violent sounds like that of a hand grenade exploding or that of a gunshot from offscreen are usually used to break the moment and re-inscribe movement and time into the image. It is as if the still frame of the Battle of Athens is changed into a split image. The intentional critical distanciation

from the action also gives the image of an event that has passed and is no more. Melancholia and rebellion function simultaneously.

We can sense the same rupture in Agamemnon's phrase 'I say' (Λέω) during his account of the Minor Asia catastrophe. The line signifies the summoning of his enunciating power in order to answer back to the royalists every time he is insulted. It is as if this is also a line of death absorbing the motion of the image and the mental spaces generated through the personal narrative. The speech type of Agamemnon, so familiar yet so distant, delivers a social milieu in the form of a ruin through the punctuation of the particular phrase. Stratos Pahis, who plays Agamemnon, had a theatrical background. However, instead of delivering the character's speech in the style of a dramatic monologue, which would have elevated the tone of the speech, he speaks in a dialect that was already obsolete at the time of the film's production. The dialect is that of the working class of the 1930s. Again the monologue is not yet another element in a faithful recreation of an era. It is not an exorcising of death through a personal narrative to make sense of a catastrophe. It is the marking of death through punctuating what is no more. Finally this presence of an absent past is there both in the opening and final shot of the film where the troupe arrives in Aigio. The troupe is shot in a static take as they assemble and then stand still before the lens. As the director himself puts it, he chose to end the film with the original lineup of the troupe. Those who are dead stand among those who have remained. It is as if this was a family portrait.²⁸ It is as if we who have been following the life of the troupe over a diegetic timespan of twelve years and for more than four hours of screen time now encounter an image from an irretrievable past. The preclusion of empathy throughout the film does not rule out the emotions we might feel for the characters. The image of the troupe arriving at Aigio in 1939 and then becoming still before the lens becomes a reminder of mortality. It is this mortality that unites us with them.

Conclusion

With *Thiassos*, Angelopoulos gives us a film of epic proportions. He succeeds in directing a film whose subject matter is a direct confrontation with the events that shook modern Greece as an entity during and after the end of the Second World War. Like a modern storyteller he blends the image of a collective memory that clearly belongs to the Left with his own subjective filter. *Thiassos* is a film that is built on the function of the sequence shot whose autonomous presence brings out a narrative based on dialectics. The long take is established as the main tool of the narrative and allows the director to form a perfectly calculated cinematic staging. It is a staging where the time of the shot identifies with the duration of an action that appears in its complete process until reaching completion.

This inscription of real time in the diegetic world also includes the spectator's time for the perception of the image. The camera is used as a recorder of movement that is in turn defamiliarised, breaking away with the conventions of naturalism. The actor is used as a vehicle for ideas and so are his/her movements. The Atreides do not exist on a psychological level. They carry the ideological battle that characterised modern Greek history. This contrast is presented graphically in the form of the film through the collision of human figures identified through their costumes, their gestures and the songs they fire at each other. This dialectic in the *mise en scène* can be read as a montage within the shot where the settings, the costumes, the choreography of groups and the gestures of the actors, far from functioning as mere elements for a lifelike recreation of the past, instead shape the meaning of the narrative. Through the use of offscreen space, the camera allows a *time montage* that occurs within the confinements of the same, shot thus underlying the ever-present nature of history. It is a history that functions in terms of a collective memory.

Finally, since the narrative is presented as memory that brings everything to a present reconstruction, *Thiassos* must be an elegiac film. History is claimed on behalf of the Left but not in order to celebrate the foundation of a new revolution.

The cyclical structure of the narrative is very explicit. The final shot, which is identical to the first shot of the film after the introduction of the old man, places the travelling players in 1939. The revolution is far from being achieved but cinema has won a film that spurs the spectator to get involved not only with life but also with death.

¹ Κωνσταντίνος Θέμελης, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος-Το Παρελθόν ως Ιστορία, το Μέλλον ως Φόρμα*, Ύψιλον/Βιβλία, Αθήνα, 1998, pp. 124-126.

² Ibid. p. 124.

³ Interview with the author, unpublished, June 2005.

⁴ For a more detailed account of the 16th Greek Film Festival see the archive page of the Thessaloniki Film Festival website: http://www.filmfestival.gr/film_festival/archive/national_comp/1975.html.

⁵ Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller - Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov' in *Illuminations*, Fontana Press, Great Britain, p. 92.

⁶ Γιάννης Κ. Κορδάτος, *Προλεγόμενα στο Ομηρικό Ζήτημα (Μέρος Τρίτο)*, <http://www.mikrosapoplous.gr/homer/kordatos3.htm#fn32>.

⁷ Γιάννης Κ. Κορδάτος, *Προλεγόμενα στο Ομηρικό Ζήτημα (Μέρος Τρίτο)*, <http://www.mikrosapoplous.gr/homer/kordatos3.htm#fn32>.

⁸ Thodoros Angelopoulos in an interview with Mixalis Dimopoulos and Frida Liapa in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, trans. by E.M., p. 183.

⁹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Fright of Real Tears: Krzysztof Kiesłowski: Between Theory and Post-Theory*, BFI publishing, London, 2001 pp. 50-51.

¹⁰ Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1998, p. 169.

¹¹ Lino Micciché, 'Ο Αισθητικός Υλισμός του Αγγελόπουλου' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, p.138.

¹² Ειρήνη Στάθη, *Χώρος και Χρόνος στο Κινηματογράφο του Θόδωρου Αγγελόπουλου*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1999, p.123.

¹³ Gilberto Perez, *ibid*, p.169.

¹⁴ For Sergei Eisenstein cinema has to influence the audience in a desired direction. The film has to attract the spectator's attention through a chain of stimuli that will in turn produce certain emotional shocks in the spectator for him/her to perceive the ideological aspect of what is being shown. As discussed in the Days of '36 the juxtaposition of two images from a different spatiotemporal situation can produce an abstract meaning which lies in neither of the images if viewed in isolation. The meaning is produced from their confrontation which is more that often agitating. See my chapter on Days of '36 p. 69-70. See also Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Attractions' in *Eisenstein Writings Volume 1 1922-34*, BFI Publishing / Indiana University Press, London Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988, p. 34. See also Jacques Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein*, BFI Publishing Indiana University Press, London Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1979, pp. 44-47.

¹⁵ See Bertolt Brecht, 'The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre' in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willet, Methuen Drama, 1978, pp. 33-42.

¹⁶ Many critics agree that Angelopoulos incorporates Brechtian techniques in this film. Most importantly, Angelopoulos has admitted that this was a conscious attempt. See Isabelle Jordan, *Για ένα Επικό Κινηματογράφο* in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, p. 232 -238. See also Angelopoulos' interview with Michel Dimopoulos and Frida Liappa featured in the same volume pp.181-187 as well as Πέτρος Μάρκαρης, 'Ιστορία και Ιστορική Απόσταση-Οι Μπρεχτικές Αναφορές στο έργο του Αγγελόπουλου' in the periodical *διαβάζω*, τεύχος 457, 2004, pp. 79 – 83. In a personal interview, Angelopoulos noted

that it is only in the *Travelling Players* that he consciously attempted to incorporate the theories of Brecht. He insisted that there are no alienation techniques in any other of his films.

¹⁷ Nikos Koloivos also notes that the sequence is a reconstruction, a metonymy of the Battle of Athens. See Νίκος Κολοβός, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, Αιγόκερως, 1990, p. 91.

¹⁸ Bertolt Brecht, 'On Gestic Music' in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic*, *ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁹ Isabelle Jordan, 'Για ένα Επικό Κινηματογράφο' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, p. 237.

²⁰ Theo Angelopoulos in an interview with Mixalis Dimopoulos and Frida Liapa in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, *trans.* by E.M., p. 182-183.

²¹ Isabelle Jordan, 'Για ένα Επικό Κινηματογράφο' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, p. 238.

²² Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, Fontana Press, 1992, pp 252-253.

²³ Ειρήνη Στάθη, *Χώρος και Χρόνος στο Κινηματογράφο του Θόδωρου Αγγελόπουλου*, *ibid.*, p. 175.

²⁴ Sergio Aprecco, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, Εκδόσεις Ηράκλειτος, Αθήνα, 1985, p. 104

²⁵ Ειρήνη Στάθη, *Χώρος και Χρόνος στο Κινηματογράφο του Θόδωρου Αγγελόπουλου*, *ibid.*, pp. 101-103.

²⁶ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida - Reflections on Photography*, Vintage Books, London, (1981) 2000, p.26.

²⁷ See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida-Reflections on Photography*, *ibid.* pp. 94-99.

²⁸ Theo Angelopoulos in an interview with the author, unpublished, June 2005.

THE HUNTERS / ΟΙ ΚΥΝΗΓΟΙ

During an expedition to the mountainous areas of northern Greece, a group of hunters discover a frozen body in the midst of a snowy landscape. The time is New Year's Eve 1976 and the body is that of a rebel partisan from the Civil War, which ended in 1949. The corpse is in perfect condition; moreover, the blood from his wound is still fresh. The hunters take the body back to the hotel where they are staying and place it on a large table in the middle of what seems to be the main dance hall. It becomes apparent that the body strikes every single member of the group with a sense of great discomfort if not terror.

The members of this group are not ordinary everyday individuals. Each one, from a different perspective, represents the New Social Order that emerged in Greece after the Civil War. The haunting presence of the body launches the protagonists on a journey into the past, examining the major social and political events that took place from the end of the Civil War until the film's narrated present.

By the time *The Hunters* was released in 1977, the sense of euphoria that had inspired Greek filmmakers after the end of the junta in 1975 seemed to have faded away. The fall of the junta saw the return of Konstantinos Karamanlis, president of the postwar rightwing faction E.P.E. (National Radical Union) and Prime Minister for the second half of the fifties until 1963. Karamanlis had taken over as Prime Minister after the sudden death of General Papagos in 1955 and his name has been associated with the country's entry into the European Economic Community in 1961, the precursor of today's European Union. His efforts towards modernisation came together with a heavy anti-Communist agenda, and he was strongly accused by all the leftwing parties of winning the 1961 elections through fraud.

Karamanlis left the country in 1963, after losing the elections to Georgios Papandreou, head of the Ένωσις Κέντρου (Centrist Union). During his time as Prime

Minister, any leftwing organisation faced severe persecution; his drive towards industrialisation and modernisation came against the backdrop of a police state, where divisions from the Civil War loomed over public life. Needless to say, his return in 1974 – followed by his role as *ethnarchis* (leader of the nation) and guarantor of democracy, appointed by the most conservative forces in Greece – could only appear as a paradox to those on the Left.

Two years after the Thessaloniki Greek Film Festival of 1975, where *The Travelling Players* met with rapturous acclaim and the audience hailed the event as ‘the first film festival of the people’, the Greek film world was plunged into chaos. The Ministry of Industry decided to appoint a council for the newly formed Greek Film Centre (the main funding body for Greek cinema) which did not include a single film director or critic. This was followed by the exclusion of all of the labour unions relating to cinema from the committee of the Thessaloniki Festival. The filmmakers reacted by withdrawing their films from the official programme and organising their own ‘anti-festival’, which featured seven films including *The Hunters*.¹ The rupture between the filmmakers of the New Greek Cinema and the State denotes yet again the tension between an art-house cinema (where the director and the unions would be in control of the film) and a commercially oriented cinema where the producer would have absolute control. As Angelopoulos stated in an interview, extracts of which are published in Giannis Soldatos’ *History of Greek Cinema*:

I believe that the people who started making films in the 70s can do both [commercially oriented and art house films]. The difference is that we have reached a point of extreme antithesis....there is no common ground. There is no film that we can meet with the existing producers...We do not have films like Ettore Scola’s *A Special Day* (Una Giornata Particolare) which is beautiful but definitely a commercial film. We only have the two extremes: very demanding works vs. pure entertainment.²

The Hunters was produced by Nikos Angelopoulos, the director's brother, yet it was not the first film where he enjoyed complete autonomy. The previous two films, funded by Giorgos Papalios, were also made under the auteur principle. The only real problem was for the production to meet the financial demands of the project, the control of which was in the hands of the director. Papalios refused to produce *The Hunters* because he was afraid of the political implications involved in producing yet another film by Angelopoulos and the negative impact it would entail for him as a businessman. It should be noted that the government of Konstantinos Karamanlis attempted once again to sabotage the film's entry to the Cannes Film Festival by refusing to submit the film as the country's official candidate. Yet the film was included in the programme after the new director of the Festival, Gilles Jacob, sent a personal invitation to Angelopoulos.³ *The Hunters* also won the prize for Best Film at the Thessaloniki Anti-Film Festival of 1977.

Closing the circle

The Hunters closes the *Trilogy of History* in the most oblique manner. Angelopoulos' plunge into recent Greek history takes the form of a grotesque ballet incorporating representative members of the ruling bourgeoisie that emerged after the end of the Greek Civil War in 1949. *The Hunters* is one of the most demanding films in the director's output. It is not only its three-hour length that makes it difficult for an unwary viewer, nor even the consecutive use of long takes and sequence shots – which follow one another seamlessly, but with no sense of fulfilled action or mounting suspense. What makes it a very difficult film to watch – and here we should note its affinities with *Days of '36* – is that Angelopoulos delivers a perfectly orchestrated mise-en-scene that leaves the spectator hanging in thin air.

In *The Hunters* there is no breathing space. This is not because the spectator does not have the time to take his eyes off the screen due to fast editing and spectacular visual effects. Neither is it because there are so many narrative cues that the slightest distraction would leave the audience with the sense of having missed the plot, as in a

classical *film noir* like Howard Hawks' 1946 *The Big Sleep* (where keeping track of who is who and what they are doing is like solving a riddle) or in a film like Oliver Stone's 1991 *JFK* (where the rapid editing creates an elusive narrative that matches the chaotic mass of information surrounding the President's murder). In the above-mentioned examples, the audience anchors its point of view to a main character who becomes the agent for the development of the plot. In *The Hunters*, the spectator is left hanging in thin air because there is no ground to hold onto, no leading agent or group with whom the audience can identify.

Although *The Travelling Players* abstains from the use of psychology in the portrayal of individuals, emphasising instead their social identity and their function in terms of group action, the narrative provides space for an audience to feel for the members of the troupe. Modern Greek history is presented as a gigantic clash between two forces, the Right and the Left, where the individual is inevitably drawn to one side or the other, but the film also marks the space of everyday individuals caught up in the middle. The narrative holds a separate point of view, yet we are also made to see the unfolding of events through the point of view of various members of the troupe and, mostly, through the perspective of Electra. Furthermore, the film naturally leans towards the Left since it portrays a wider democratic tendency in Greek society, a tendency that was violently suppressed by the Royalists and the Fascists (aided by the British army) after liberation from the Nazis in 1944.

In *The Hunters*, Angelopoulos stages a trial for the members of the hunting party. We as spectators, however, are deprived not only of the luxury of empathising with any of the characters, but also of having any emotional response towards a human agent. For three hours, we are made to witness a fake trial where each member becomes a vehicle for a flashback into recent Greek history. There is absolutely nobody in the film for an audience to identify with as an agent for redemption – apart from, possibly, the corpse.

After the hunters bring the frozen body back to the hotel and notify the police, an investigation starts where each member narrates his involvement in the incident. The

investigation takes place within the main hall of the hotel. The group of hunters, together with their wives, are sitting in the middle of the room. The corpse is placed on a large rectangular table and hidden behind a curtained alcove on one side of the room. Above the curtain, there is a sign saying 'Happy 1977'. Throughout the film, the corpse is repeatedly brought into the room only to be placed behind the curtain again. When the investigation starts, the chief officer calls each member of the group by name and occupation. Yet he abstains from asking a single question. His only remark comes from reading out the records of the case at the very beginning of the interrogation, where he announces the place where the body was found: beside the ruins of ancient Tymphaia on the sides of Mount Tomaros. For the viewer who is acquainted with the director's previous work, this is an obvious allusion. Beside the ruins of ancient Tymphaia lies the village in *Reconstruction*.

As in the first film of Angelopoulos, the police are staging a standard cross-examination. In *Reconstruction*, the police determinedly use a bureaucratic examination to determine which of the couple is guilty of the crime. By finally assigning guilt to the murderous wife, they close the case in legal terms yet fail either to explain the irrationality of the act or to address the oppressive patriarchy of the small village, which is withering away in the face of growing internal migration. Similarly, in *The Hunters* the staging of a cross-examination is not done to produce any results. As we see when the police arrive, the Chief Inspector (working hand-in-glove with the publisher) wants to round up the usual suspects, find someone guilty of the crime and close the case. Likewise, there is an order to limit access to the press. There is a further historical allusion that the non-Greek viewer will not grasp. During the Civil War, Mount Tomaros was a stronghold for leftwing partisans. As we see in the film, the hotel that the hunters are staying in once served as a partisan headquarters.

As soon as the group of hunters discovers the body in the snow, the industrialist exclaims: "This story ended in '49. Damn. I do not understand." Right before the police arrive, and after the group has placed the dead partisan on a table in the main hallway of the hotel, the publisher remarks that "the last Communist partisans were

either killed or forced to cross the borders into the countries of the Soviet Bloc at the end of '49. Everybody knows that. The fact that he is here before us is a historical mistake.” Immediately, one realises that the film does not evolve on a realistic plane. Rather, it evokes a closed universe in and around the hotel; the director builds an allegorical narrative that aims to make visible what the members of the hunting party want to suppress. The presence of the corpse becomes a haunting presence. As Isabelle Jordan points out, the body marks the return of a past that the ruling bourgeoisie is blotting out on their way to modernity.⁴

This return of the repressed marks the narrative of the film and informs its time transitions, where we see each member revisiting his/her own past in a time frame that starts as early as 1949 and extends until the film’s narrated present. Before analysing the frame of these time transitions in detail, we should examine the make-up of the hunting party as it appears in the film. As Sergio Arreco has noted, in both *The Hunters* and *Days of '36*, what we really see is a disjointed ballet rather than unified choral ensembles as in the films of Miklós Jancsó, which bear many resemblances to those of Angelopoulos in terms of *cinematic staging* and in the way both directors are interested in the movement of groups of people rather than the fate of individual heroes.⁵ The expression *cinematic staging* is used by David Bordwell, who also notes the similarities between Jancsó and Angelopoulos in the way they both concentrate on group action within the mise-en-scene and both deal with the emergent grand narratives of their nations. For Bordwell, both directors create a sense of distance from the evolving action, thus generating space for the viewer to contemplate the events that happen on screen.⁶

We should note however that, although both directors concentrate on the movement of social groups and abstain from individual narratives, they show a radically different perspective on that movement. Jancsó's choreographed groups, as we see in *The Red and the White* (1967) or *Electra, My Love* (1975), are the materialisation of the dialectic between Master and Slave. The mise en scène becomes a circular field where one group succeeds the other in a game of mastery and oppression. In Angelopoulos, we do not see the presence of such large orchestrated choruses.

Furthermore, Angelopoulos does not see the same structure that Jancsó sees in the history of his country. The hunters appear to be isolated, lacking the voice and the support of the society they claim to represent.

In *Days of '36*, we see the representatives of the state failing to reach a conclusion as they confer about what to do with a prisoner who has taken a politician hostage. At times they reach a standstill and the absurdity of their position is made clear. Angelopoulos has referred to the film as a black comedy.⁷ It is precisely this element of parody that distances his cinema from that of Jancsó. In Jancsó's films, we would never see a figure like the Greek politician walking along the beach with a rifle on his shoulder as if he were going to hunt birds.

It is really the same type of social persona that is multiplied sevenfold in *The Hunters*. The hunting party is not one of grandiose power. They lack the uniformity of a chorus; rather, they resemble figures in a minimalist puppet play. Angelopoulos refuses to endow them with either a humanist subjectivity (where the subject becomes an agent that controls history) or with a collective consciousness (which acts upon and reflects a particular ideology). The hunters, as a group, lack any real agenda other than the drive to acquire power. They are the embodiments of the Right, and the way in which it rose to power in Greece. As Vassilis Rafailidis points out, the Right in Greece had only one ideology: to preserve the power and increase the wealth of its members.⁸ The industrialist, the hotel owner, the politician, the civil engineer, the military officer, the publisher and their wives comprise a dislocated ballet situated in a hotel at the sides of a lake.

Let us observe how this plunge into the past takes place in the current film, and how it differs from the time transitions in *The Travelling Players*. The whole narrative of the film evolves in a single pattern. Each member of the group revisits his/her past, which accounts for the evolution of a whole society in time. Each member is a type rather than a psychological character. After the group of hunters gathers around the corpse for the second time – when the publisher exclaims that this is a historical mistake – the head of the local authorities decides to go into town to receive

authorisation on how to deal with the case. The sequence cuts to a shot of the pier, where we see the local policemen boarding a boat that will presumably take them to the city. On the pier, the group of hunters is framed from behind at an almost vertical angle. The camera records them as they stand at the edge of the pier, watching the boat as it departs and gradually fades away across the lake. We as viewers are left watching their backs on a rainy landscape, with the mountains in the far background and the vanishing boat in between.

After a pause where nothing seems to be happening, the hotel owner (played by Vangelis Kazan whom we had seen as Aigisthos in the previous film) starts walking away from the pier towards the hotel. The camera – which had been standing still, as if observing them from a certain distance in actual time and from an almost human eye-level – starts a slight recession movement to the left as it follows him. Without a cut, the shot changes from an establishing shot to a medium tracking shot where we can see Kazan's whole body up to the knees. The camera moves along with him, framing him from an almost vertical angle while retaining a certain lead. As he is walking, a voice from a loudspeaker is heard offscreen to the left, from the direction where Kazan is heading. Almost immediately, Kazan comes across a few people who are standing immobile, staring offscreen to the left.

The voice from the loudspeaker is proclaiming the benefits received from the Marshall Plan. The so-called Marshall Plan, whose official name was the European Recovery Program (E.R.P), was a package of large-scale financial aid that the United States launched for its European allies whose economies had been ravaged by the Second World War. Introduced in 1947, the Marshall Plan was welcomed throughout Europe – except in the countries of the Soviet bloc, which refused it due to its political and diplomatic restrictions. The voice proclaims that the budget of the current financial year (1949-50) has been positive.

While Kazan moves further into the crowd, the camera speeds up and gradually leaves him behind as he tries to make his way through. Set on a crane, the camera scans the space – as if inside the crowd, but at a slight diagonal from above – and

then pans to the left, revealing a cinema screen placed on two poles in front of the crowd. Rising further, the camera moves straight into the white screen until it covers all four corners of the frame. The shot cuts to an exactly identical frame of the same screen. Its shades are now light blue. The camera descends and we realise that we are at the same location, later on in the evening. We now see behind the screen. Kazan walks into the frame, passes under the cinema screen and walks towards a small table where the man with the loudspeaker is sitting. That man is the publisher. At their sides stands a U.S. army tent. The publisher gets up, hands a piece of paper to Kazan and the two men shake hands as if they had signed a deal. The shot ends with Kazan walking away as the soldiers are getting ready to screen *Casablanca*. Later during the same episode, we realise that a deal had actually been made. The document is the licence for the hotel.

The hotel itself becomes a metaphor for the whole of Greece. During the Civil War, it was a base for partisan rebels. When the new owner and his wife visit the premises for the first time, it is half demolished by the bombings of American planes. Dancing inside the decaying building (and inside the ballroom in particular) the couple pause for a moment and peer through a window towards the edge of the lake. Outside, a band of partisans is being executed by the soldiers of the regular army. As the couple continue their dance, Kazan approaches the camera until – at one point – his back covers the whole of the frame. With an almost invisible cut, the shot opens again to the back of the actor who starts moving away only to reveal a ballroom full of people dancing. The room is being decorated as for a great feast and a band of musicians is playing on stage.

The two sequences described above give an example of how Angelopoulos evolves the principle of moving through time within a single take. In *The Travelling Players*, when the band arrives in Aigio in 1952, the time lapse occurs within the same take. The troupe moves into an alley and then returns in the same street with a different line-up. Almost immediately, a cut introduces a shot almost in terms of a point of view from the direction the troupe is walking. Pyladis is leading the way into the central square of Aigio. Later on in the film, Angelopoulos is able to perform the

transition without a single cut. The troupe moves up a street in 1952 and, as they disappear off screen, the camera pauses until a Nazi jeep enters the frame – taking us once more back in time to 1941. Similarly, the hotel owner in *The Hunters* moves from 1977 to 1949 within the same take. The cut is almost invisible. Angelopoulos moves the camera in direct proximity with material objects, allowing him to introduce an invisible cut, one that does not interrupt the internal rhythm of the shot. This way of alternating periods in time is unique to the director's work. Angelopoulos thus manages to maintain the same principle while adding to its visual innovation. The time transition occurs as if in a uniform space.

We should note that the first time transition follows the pattern of establishing shot-movement-establishing shot. The parallel tracking shot to the hotel owner gives the impression of moving inside a corridor, so as to find oneself in a different room at the end. From there, one is led back to the same starting point – the main ball room – where the group of hunters is sitting around the corpse. The sequence with Kazan ends when Stratos Pahis (playing the civil engineer) enters the celebration in the newly renovated hotel. Immediately, we understand that he is the brother of Kazan's wife (played by Betty Valassi). He has just been released from prison after signing a petition in which he recants his leftwing beliefs. A cut takes the viewer back to 1978, in the same ballroom, where everyone sits around the corpse. The police is present and the cross-examination has started. This is a perfectly orchestrated ellipsis in the narrative. The film returns to the present, but instead of moving back to the pier, we as viewers find ourselves inside the hotel. The arrival of the police and the start of the investigation have been left out.

Angelopoulos is interested in the tension brought about by the juxtaposition of two sequences, as we have seen already from *Days of '36* and *Reconstruction*, where the alternation between thematic episodes did not follow a pattern of cause-and-effect but one of dialectical juxtaposition. In the current film, it is the emphasis on the orchestrated movement that leads back and forth, in and around the space of the main ballroom. Starting from the narration of the industrialist which follows the account of the hotel owner, the ballroom becomes the centre of a circular narrative.

With the industrialist, the film turns more towards a theatrical arrangement that lends itself to abstraction. The industrialist starts narrating the events that took place during the national elections of 1958. The Left supporters had taken to the streets and there was much noise outside the poll station. At one moment, everything went quiet as if something were happening. While he is narrating this, the industrialist changes places with a policeman who is recording his testimony. The industrialist starts typing into thin air. The main door of the hotel opens and a man enters. We realise that the two are first cousins whose families killed each other during the Civil War. The man aims to vote. He takes the paper ballot and exits the screen towards the left. The industrialist goes on with his narrative. We find out that the man was followed by hundreds of leftwing voters. The Left won 80 seats in the parliament. Suddenly there is a gunshot from behind the curtain. The industrialist pauses and a soldier appears from behind the curtain, only to drop dead after a few steps. The industrialist hastens to remark that this was an accident; it was not a suicide as the newspapers wrote. The soldier was a Left supporter, but never had there been any pressure on him or any other soldier to vote for the rightwing E.P.E.

We witness the same type of theatricality later on in the narrative, when the civil engineer is brought before the publisher. Two policemen grab him by the arms and carry him towards the publisher, who then pulls a paper from his pocket and reads it out to the engineer. The latter remains passively silent. We find out that the publisher was acting as a prefect at the time, and that the document is a false testimony that the engineer was forced to sign in order to be set free, after being dragged to prison for the second time after the end of the Civil War. The Engineer was released right before the elections of 1964, which were won by the party of Georgios Papandreou, Ένωσις Κέντρου (Centrist Union). This party was thought to express a wider democratic tendency in the society of the time. The grotesque sequence ends with the publisher addressing the two standing policemen, saying that the civil engineer needs a haircut.

A cut takes us back to 1964 or, to be more precise, a condensed time and space that embodies and sums up that era. We witness the fabrication of the scandal that caused the fall of the Enosis Kentrou from power, when two secret police officers visit the drunken engineer in a tavern and force him to sign yet another false testimony verifying the existence of a Communist faction within the army, ready to stage a *coup d'état*. The engineer is forced to perform a humiliating dance in the middle of the tavern, where the narrative cuts to a shot of him trying to copulate with a prostitute in what appears to be a small room in a brothel. He screams "I can't take it anymore," and then turns to the side of the bed. The camera then performs a pan to the right and reveals the rest of the hunters staring at him. What seemed to be a brothel room is revealed as a staged room at the side of the main ballroom of the hotel. We are back in 1977.

In this film, everything is condensed into a kind of acting that might be more accurately called *doing*, so deeply does it reveal the essence of an event. What we are seeing is not a psychological drama. We never witness the thoughts of the hunters or of anybody else. Their thoughts are descriptions of events, narratives related to their actions and their actions are a product of social relations. There are hardly any dialogues in the film. In the sequence described above, the publisher is quoting the engineer's testimony. When the two security officers approach the civil engineer in 1963, they merely read out his fabricated statement. In *The Travelling Players* we called this kind of acting *gestive*, borrowing the term from Brecht who saw the movement of the actor as something other than itself: a sort of quotation mark, implicitly critical of the character that the actor is playing.⁹ What better example of this kind of acting can we find than the sequence of the industrialist's wife when she dances with the absent king?

Towards the end of the film, when the guests have arrived to celebrate New Year's Eve 1978, we see Eva Kotamanidou (who acted as Elektra in *The Travelling Players* and now plays the industrialist's wife) pointing towards the door of the ballroom, calling everyone's attention to the arrival of the king.¹⁰ Kotamanidou bows before thin air, and then starts dancing as if she were dancing with the king. The dance

evolves into an orgasmic experience, where she writhes on the floor and mimes having sex with His Majesty. The camera isolates her from the rest of the party-goers as it frames her from above. We see nothing but her, in ecstatic spasms, and the floor around her. When she finishes, she adjusts her hair and starts getting up slowly, when a clap of thunder breaks the intensity of the sequence. The camera tilts upwards, and we see all the revellers clapping as if they had witnessed a great performance. It is this applause – along with Kotamanidou's slight bow to her 'audience' – that makes this a *gestive* sequence, a grotesque parody of Royalist sympathisers.

In Brechtian terms, the performance calls attention to itself as 'performance'.¹¹ It verifies its truth as a reconstruction, an interpretation of history. This reconstruction offers a view of the world, a view that the spectator can challenge or accept. This is not to say that the film advocates relativism. The film, on the contrary, aims at truth. It seeks and actually evokes the feeling of totality. The camera moves in and out of the hotel in long takes, drawing full circles that encompass the movement from one period to the next, a perpetual self-engulfing present. It is the present of the film as discourse, at once showing history and showing itself narrating that history. However, far from being a mere self-reflexive device, this technique relates organically to the theme of the film. It denotes the haunting presence of the dead partisan, as well as the amnesiac presence of the ruling bourgeoisie who – in their drive towards 'modernity' – try to suppress their legacy of violence and repression. There is no question as to the grandeur of the film's vision. Angelopoulos views the hunters as an entity haunted by memories of Civil War or the spectre of revolution.

This chapter began by saying that Angelopoulos' *Trilogy of History* is not orchestrated into large choruses to signify a static dialectic between Master and Slave as in Jancsó. However, *The Hunters* – like *The Travelling Players* before it – includes crowd scenes in which groups are identified through their action in the *mise en scène*. Their doing becomes a signifier of being. Singing becomes, once more, an attribute of social conflict. At one point in the narrative, a group of soldiers enters the main ballroom. They walk in a group formation, simultaneously singing a music hall song. Previously, we had witnessed this same group marching around an empty

square, singing an anti-Communist song in chorus. This is how Angelopoulos evokes the establishment of the military junta in 1967. Uniformity, and the rigid order of group formation, are associated in Angelopoulos with totalitarian ideology.

While this rigid formation may appear menacing in the square sequence, it is downplayed in the later sequence through parody. When the group enters the hotel, the spectator must confront his or her own predetermined reaction. The group of soldiers moves like a chorus line in a musical comedy – and it is hard not to find them comical or, at least, amusing. The director here evokes the notion of *staging* history, of masquerade. The movement becomes other than itself. Behind the façade of the music hall lies the real-life presence of the army. They are both present in the public life of the same country. The borders between life and entertainment break down. The escapism of the musical cannot sustain the surplus of violence existent in the current society. The same function is served by the silent youth in *Days of '36*, standing in line before the state dignitaries for the inauguration of the Olympic stadium. Their uniformity and apparent serenity are maintained by armed guards who, in the very next sequence, aim their guns at the cells where political prisoners are banging on the windows in protest.

In *The Hunters*, the presence of the army comes to follow the group of the Anti-Communist Crusade, the only other group that speaks in chorus but says only one sentence: “We are concerned.” The grotesque exclamation ends the flashback sequence of the hunters’ recreational trip to a forest. The circular movement of the camera had previously marked a space of free play among the trees, until the group of fascists arrived to receive orders. The orders will be executed in the next sequence, where we watch the assassination in cold blood of the leader of the peace movement in 1963, an obvious allusion to the assassination of leftwing MP Grigoris Lambrakis that same year in Thessaloniki. On their way to the demonstration, we see them walking in line formation. At one point, two of them spin around themselves as if they were dancing. Once again Angelopoulos makes conscious the act of representation. The Fascists incorporate the movement associated with the Greek machismo dance of *Zeimbekiko*. It is the same type of dance that the two security

officers force the civil engineer to perform, before he retreats to a brothel and after he has signed a false testimony. The machismo dance is identified with murder, in a period where it is naturally perceived as signifying an a-historical Greek manhood. At the other extreme comes the traditional lament, which breaks into the hotel from offscreen just as the publisher is preparing to give his testimony. One of the police officers says it is coming from one of the political detainees in the prison yard. The publisher orders the windows to be closed. This song is the same one heard in *Days of '36*, when a political prisoner whistles it in the prison yard, and also features in *Reconstruction* and *The Travelling Players*.

“He was talking to the corpse...I could not overhear what they were saying.”

In a striking sequence towards the end of the film, the civil engineer, played by Stratos Pahis (who played Agamemnon in *The Travelling Players*), approaches the corpse of the partisan as it lies on the table. He introduces himself as follows: “Testimony of the civil engineer Georgios Fyntanakis.” He pauses and then continues: “Those of us who got out...we looked for ways to patch up...taking contracts...keeping busy...time passes...” He stops and then, with a sudden lunge forward and a glimmer in his eyes, he calls to the corpse “Tell me, when is the revolution going to come?” He leaves and withdraws upstairs to his room. His sister, the hotel owner’s wife, enters the ballroom, meets her husband and the publisher and tells them what happened. Significantly, the civil engineer is the only one who does not testify to the police. He gives his account to the corpse. If we were to see the narrative as having locked the hunters in a perpetual present – where memory returns unbidden, in order to break the spell of amnesia that hangs over contemporary life – it is the engineer who confronts the past just once in pure consciousness. If the circular movements of the camera create a self-engulfing space where the hunters have locked themselves inside – disavowing the past and giving testimonies before a fake trial – now is the first time a member of the group gives his testimony of the past. It is the past as history and might we call it, after Cornelius Castoriadis, the history of freedom.¹²

This is not the myth of individual freedom as a transgressive free will. Neither is it an a-historical essence, an eternal Platonic ideal to which we are bound to return. For Castoriadis this history

...commences with [ancient] Greece, recommences after a long eclipse with the First Renaissance (which precedes by three or four centuries the conventional 'Renaissance' of history textbooks), continues with seventeenth century England, the Enlightenment, and the revolutions of the eighteenth century (in America and France) and then the workers' movement.¹³

I will not attempt to superimpose this history on the film. *The Hunters* does not make reference to any of these events. Yet the presence of the corpse reflects a tendency towards the right to individual and social autonomy as well as self-government, a tendency which automatically follows the principles of the above-mentioned legacy. This legacy propagates the social being of the subject, who acts towards change and criticism, towards a historically-defined human and social equality. It is the desire for freedom that looks back on the legacy of revolution without terror and without worship. It denies the postmodern dictum whereby revolution means terror, thus denying a teleological cause-and-effect pattern in history that sees every revolution leading up to totalitarianism. It is a sober reaction that does not conflate the social movements of the past under a single banner but focuses rather on the historical differences between them.¹⁴ Hence the importance in Angelopoulos of the pause – that moment where the linear succession of events is suspended between unpredictability and indecision. This suspended moment breaks the succession of cause and effect, making visible the gap in which a multitude of reactions or actions remain possible. It does not change the chronology nor does it cancel history. For example, the Greek Civil War is not constituted either by the French Revolution or the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917. Yet it is informed by both events.

While the corpse may signify the Greek Civil War, it also refers to a wider notion of revolution. The Greek Civil War, in all its historical specifics, cannot be seen apart

from the wider clash of ideologies in the same period. How then does it fit in with the idea of revolution? For Castoriadis, revolution entails the participation of a people who imagine themselves as an entity, and want to break free of a previous regime to pursue self-government and autonomy.¹⁵ It aims, furthermore, at the actual participation of the people in government. Whether or not this is feasible today is a separate issue, but the fact remains that the partisans of the Civil War arose from a popular movement of resistance to Nazi occupation. They aimed, among other things, at the establishment of democracy and the abolition of monarchy. Although they were led by a Stalinist faction, they cannot be equated with Stalinism. The partisans had no way of imagining what Stalinism entailed, nor did they wish for bureaucratic control of their lives.

The dead partisan is not just a memory of the past, but also a promise for the future. This is not, however, an inflammatory ‘call to arms’. It is, rather, a call for contemplation. The line “When is the Revolution going to come?” evokes pathos. Yet it is spoken by someone who has been reduced to a relic. His subsequent assassination by the hotel owner, who has to release his fury in one way or another, will not in the end resolve anything. Meanwhile, Angelopoulos lays bare in a humorous manner the confusion endemic in the group, when we hear the hotel owner’s wife remark in terror: “He was talking to the corpse. I could not hear what they were saying”. This type of narrative progression was described as Brechtian in *The Travelling Players*, where the sequence of Electra’s rape is followed by her account of the December demonstrations, a public event that distances the viewer from her individual ordeal. Likewise in *The Hunters*, Angelopoulos does not allow the audience to feel for the broken man by following him to his rooms. Rather, the narrative follows his exit with the subsequent entrance of his sister, who shifts the mood of the sequence from contemplation to grotesque parody.

Freedom – in the words of Castoriadis – is an act of creation, defined by a social imaginary.¹⁶ As in the previous films of Angelopoulos, individualism gives way to a social being. While we cannot superimpose a single unified theory, Castoriadis’ definition of a self-constituted being can still prove useful in the current analysis. For

Castoriadis, there are four types of self-constituted beings: the living being, the human psyche, the socially fabricated individual and the particular society (constituted, in every case, as different and distinct from other societies).¹⁷ Keeping in mind that film is first and foremost a medium of images, we will not attempt an in-depth analysis of Castoriadis' work. However, it is helpful to define his notion of autonomy.

Castoriadis sees autonomy as a signification of modernity, of an individual setting and living by one's own laws: "*Nomos* [the word usually translated as law] is our creative imaginary institution by means of which we shape ourselves as human beings."¹⁸ This means that we construct our own reality, and that reality is ontologically constituted as an act of creation. When asked how mankind is to inhabit the earth, Castoriadis compares *nomos* with *phusis* (nature). Going back to Aristotle, Castoriadis defines *phusis* as the push, "the endogenous and spontaneous growth of things that nevertheless is generative of an order (*nomos*)".¹⁹ Leaving aside Aristotle's view that things move towards an end (meaning that they take a final form), Castoriadis emphasises the notion of movement. *Phusis* is the essence of things that contain, in themselves, the principle of movement. *Phusis* is equated with the movement towards order, and this movement is generated by a desire that Aristotle called *eros*.²⁰

Eros is movement, movement towards form. *Phusis* thus appears as the drive of any being to give itself a form. *Phusis* ceases to be an object, becoming a movement towards giving itself form in order *to be*. Furthermore, movement should not be seen as the traditionally theorised movement of stable entities moving in space. That in itself should be seen as part of a wider definition of movement, one that includes internal generation and corruption. This type of movement – including that of local movement (that is movement of stable entities in space) – is *change*. *Phusis* thus becomes that which has in itself the principle or the origin of its change, of its alteration.²¹

Rather than equating *phusis* with society, Castoriadis places the two in opposition. Nature proceeds according to its own laws; society, meanwhile, moves through laws of its own. We as humans are predestined to view nature through our societies, and through the institutions that constitute the ‘imaginary’ of each epoch. We are predestined to see things from within, as self-constituted beings. There is no extra-social being that looks upon human societies and authorises their form, no extra-historical subject who can be the judge of history. This does not mean, however, that we are not authorised to view society as an entity, as a totality. Totality traditionally means something that has already acquired form, something that entails closure. Here, following on from Castoriadis, we can define autonomy not as closure but as the ‘open’.²² Autonomy becomes that which changes in the direction of a final form, but retains within itself the principle of change. “*Nomos* becomes the explicit self-creation of form, making it appear both as the opposite of *phusis* and as one of the latter’s points of culmination.”²³ Autonomy is the project of change from within, a critical movement towards a new order that, in itself, contains the principle of change, thus eluding a final closure.

In this way, the films of Angelopoulos retain their autonomy towards the ‘open’, carrying within themselves the principle of change. If they invite different readings over the years, that is not because the readings imposed are arbitrary but because the films themselves contain the principle of their own alteration (*alloiosis*), their change. In addition, this movement towards change – as we can conclude from above – is an act of creation. We have already argued how the camera adopts an autonomous point of view, presenting things on a level different from that of mere mimesis. In *The Hunters*, the camera creates a world rather than representing a world. The autonomous movement of the camera, the preponderance of the colour blue (giving a sense of permanent winter), the time transitions without flashbacks, the elements of performance and the grotesque – these are all elements that create a singular cinematic view. Furthermore, the film creates a world that views the ruling bourgeoisie as an entity and Greek society as another whole that cannot be reduced to any of its elements. Similarly, the motor of history is not identified with any of the

individual agents/social types that we see in the film. It is society as a whole that produces history from within itself.

Let us now see how the element of change is introduced in the story of the hunters. At the end of the film, after all the guests have arrived to celebrate New Year's Eve, the camera performs a double circular movement around the tables and the dancing couples in the middle of the ballroom. During the second of these circular movements, we realise that all the guests have disappeared – leaving the hunters alone once more, as they rejoice in singing and dancing. Suddenly, the doors burst open and a group of partisans from the time of the Civil War storm into the room, aiming their machine guns at the hunters, who stand frozen on the spot. As the partisans of the Democratic Army surround the hunters, the curtain in front of the music stage draws open. The partisan who lay dead on the table now starts walking into the room, to assume command of the partisans.

How are we to view this episode but as an alternative reading of the resurrection? As Andrew Horton points out, the partisan rebel is a Jesus Christ figure who rises at the end of the film. As Horton rightly points out, the whole narrative evolves in a circular pattern with the partisan at its centre.²⁴ To that we should add that it incorporates, in this scene, the most important narrative in the whole of Christian Orthodox dogma – the resurrection. As one of the cornerstones of Greece's national religion, it is by extension a central myth that aims at social cohesion and national identity. As in the previous film, Angelopoulos takes a myth and places it in a historical context.

Sergio Arreco points out that what we see in the film is the contrast between a primordial and ahistorical structure that illuminates a blasphemous historical present.²⁵ In *The Travelling Players* he sees the use of the myth of the Atreides as a model that explains the historical behaviour of modern Greece. Arreco notes that Angelopoulos “by having that myth enriched with further structural changes, succeeds in discovering again what lies behind the distortions that the myth has *suffered* due to the influences of a blasphemous popular tradition”.²⁶ In other words

Arreco is searching for a return in an ahistorical essence that one can have access to if one tears down the veil of the present. Arreco speaks of the possibility to have open access to an unmediated past.

In contrast to this type of structural analysis I have claimed that the myth of the Atreides in *The Travelling Players* is used as a narrative vehicle in a manner similar to how James Joyce uses the Odyssey in *Ulysses*: as a form that does not carry with it the essence of a primordial past. What we have in *The Travelling Players* and what we see in the current film is rather a historical perspective on a society as a whole. This society is informed by myths and meanings that refer back to antiquity. What we see in Angelopoulos is exactly this gap between past and present. The myth is given a historical dimension. If we were to see resurrection as part of a mythical narrative that informs the history of a nation then it is exactly the blasphemous present that will shed light to its essence. If religion aims at creating a homogenous identity, Angelopoulos uses the same myth that retains a total view on a given society but reverses its symbolic function. The myth now makes visible the gaps of cohesion; it presents the *Other* that has been suppressed in the history of the victors. Angelopoulos re-enacts the most central religious myth that informs the Greek identity and interprets it in a social context.

We should note here that the Greek word for revolution is *epanastasis*; resurrection is *anastasis*. The etymology for *anastasis* would be ‘to rise,’ while *epanastasis* means to ‘to rise again’. Whereas the former happens only once – and then informs mankind for the subsequent final closure of history with the Second Coming – the latter denotes its perpetual occurrence throughout history. It will happen again and again, and each time will be different than the time before. If the ruling bourgeoisie is imprisoned (or is trying to imprison itself) within a perpetual amnesiac present, it is the presence of the corpse that breaks the circle and reintroduces history.

Each journey into the past is an attempt to reintroduce memory and shatter the amnesiac acting out of the hunters. Angelopoulos shatters the order of the *status quo*, but does not leave an arbitrary chaos in its place. We should note that each journey

into the past begins at the point where the previous one left off in terms of chronology. Angelopoulos follows a strict chronological sequence in his representation of historical events, moving gradually from 1949 to 1978. This is not, however, a sequence of cause and effect. As noted above, the break or the pause introduces a multitude of different actions – all of which are possible at any given time. Angelopoulos aims to introduce meaning to the present, and does so by revisiting the past through memory. As Paul Connerton points out: “past history is an important source of our conception of ourselves.”²⁷ He also notes that “to remember is precisely, not to recall events as isolated; it is to become capable of forming meaningful narrative sequences.”²⁸

Twice in the film, we see the hunters rejoicing and singing in chorus as they try to hold their grip and establish their presence through communal songs of joy. On both occasions, it is history that intervenes. The first time is right after the police arrive. The hunters are about to fabricate the event in a spasmodic manner, and we see them gathering by the windows of the main room. The camera follows their gaze out of the window and onto the lake, where the sound of a harmonica introduces a group of boats rowing past. From each boat hangs a red flag. The same image is repeated close to the end of the film, after the hunters leave the hotel – singing merrily in yet another attempt to block out what is happening. The sound of the harmonica freezes their singing. They turn their gaze to the right along with the camera, and we see the same group of boats floating by. The nostalgic tune becomes a reminder of the Other that refuses to participate. We should not see the red flags as the excluded Other, nor as a signifier for the Communist Party in Greece. They are, rather, a power of negation: a power that moves around and away from the hunters, who are isolated at the edge of the hotel. As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, it is the voice of a society that refuses to acknowledge the power of the established *status quo*.

Back into the snow

After the hunters and their wives are apprehended, they are led outside the hotel and placed in line with their backs to the pier. That was the place where we saw the

group of partisans being executed by a band of soldiers, when the hotel owner first visited the premises in 1949. The partisans read out a decision of their own autonomous tribunals from the time of the Civil War. The date in the document is 29 August 1949, which marked the official end of the Civil War. While the document establishes the date and declares the authority of the tribunal as the court of the people, we never hear the sentence that is passed. All that is said after the presentation is: “In the name of the Government of the Mountain, in the name of Revolution”.

We never actually see who is reading the document. By the time the partisan starts reading, a panning shot takes the viewer from one group to the next. The voice of the partisan is heard over a shot of the lake, with a mountainous landscape in the background. This is the way Angelopoulos chooses to render the communal voice of the partisans – and, probably, equate their sense of justice with the immanent law of the society that reads the verdict. By the time the camera reaches the hunters, there is silence. Adopting a frontal perspective, the camera places us – as viewers – in direct confrontation with them, as if the director wants us to take the place of the court. The sound of machine gun fire breaks the silence; the hunters fall to the ground. The camera remains stationary, framing them as they lie motionless. After a long pause, they start to move slowly. They get up and start back to the hotel. The camera performs the exact opposite movement as before, when it established the space of the execution. The partisans are nowhere to be seen.

Once back in the hotel, the group of hunters – who had been moving slowly, like a group of sleepwalkers – adopt the same dancing positions as before the partisan raid. They stand immobile, as if waiting for the signal to move. The industrialist’s wife goes back up on stage and starts playing the piano as before. The whole group starts to sing and dance, as if the whole sequence of the execution had been no more than a dream. After a few moments, however, the singing fades out and the piano falls silent as the dancers come to a halt. Angelopoulos cuts back to the same snowy landscape as at the start of the film. The hunters are carrying the body of the partisan in a blanket. The civil engineer is back there with them. They stop in the middle of

nowhere, and start burying the body under the snow. Once he is covered completely, they start walking away to the left. They then meet two men with hunting dogs: the same men who accompanied them in the opening sequence, when the camera framed the group approaching from the far depth of the frame. Passing the men with the dogs, the hunters turn round and take up their positions from the opening sequence. The whole group starts to move; the camera records their slow retreat into the snow – until they are just tiny figures in the background. A non-diegetic military anthem plays on a trumpet. The film cuts to a title announcing *The End*.

This is the only film by Angelopoulos that closes with an end title. The representatives of the establishment bury the body back under the snow and continue on their way. Yet their way leads to a wilderness of snow. The film comes full circle, by bringing the narrative to an oblique closure. We should not see this finale as a sign of pessimism, but as an act of negation that calls for a radical change in society. In truth, the hunters can never get rid of the body. All they can do is place it back where they found it. The circular movement of the narrative, meanwhile, implies that the hunters will inevitably play out the same game, the same performance, again and again. The film exists as a direct accusation, a movement towards the open that criticises and negates – verifying the persistence of history as movement and change. Nothing is guaranteed apart from that.

The body, as a tangible evidence of history, remains buried and frozen. It is from those remains, in Angelopoulos' view, that society must try to re-establish the drive towards autonomy. Two years later, Angelopoulos returns to the same snowy landscape with *Megalexandros*. That landscape would see the birth of one of the greatest films in the history of freedom.

¹ For a detailed account of the clash between the filmmakers and the Thessaloniki Film Festival see Γιάννης Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου: Τόμος Β' (1967-1990)*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1999, p. 150-153.

- ² Theo Angelopoulos in an interview with Natasa Bakogianopoulou in Γιάννης Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου: Τόμος Β' (1967-1990)*, Ibid. trans. E.M., p. 151.
- ³ See Κωνσταντίνος Θέμελης, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος-το Παρελθόν σαν Ιστορία το μέλλον ως Φόρμα*, Ύψιλον/βιβλία, Αθήνα, 1998, p.127.
- ⁴ Isabelle Jordan, *Το Φάντασμα της Αγοράς* in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, p. 251.
- ⁵ Sergio Arecco, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, Ηράκλειτος, Αθήνα, 1985, p.55.
- ⁶ See David Bordwell, *Figures Traced in Light – On Cinematic Staging*, University of California Press, Berkley Los Angeles London, 2005, p. 156.
- ⁷ Interview with the author, unpublished, June 2005.
- ⁸ Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης, *Ιστορία (Κωμικοτραγική) του Νεοελληνικού Κράτους 1830-1974*, Εκδόσεις Εικοστού Πρώτου, Αθήνα, 1993, p.440.
- ⁹ See the chapter on *The Travelling Players* in the current volume, pp. 90-91.
- ¹⁰ We should note that King Constantine fled from Greece during the period of the junta, after failing to organise a counter *coup d'état* against the Colonels. The industrialist makes note of this quite early in the film. In a national referendum held in 1974, after the restoration of the Parliamentary Democratic Regime, the citizens of Greece decided against his return.
- ¹¹ For a more detailed account of Brecht's theories and how they are incorporated in Angelopoulos see the chapter on *The Travelling Players*, pp. 90-91, 94-95.
- ¹² See Cornelius Castoriadis, 'The Revolution Before the Theologians: For a Critical/Political Reflection on Our History' in *World in Fragments – Writings on Politics, Psychoanalysis and the Imagination*, ed. David Ames Curtis, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 1997, p.72.
- ¹³ Cornelius Castoriadis, 'The Revolution Before the Theologians: For a Critical/Political Reflection on Our History' in *World in Fragments – Writings on Politics, Psychoanalysis and the Imagination*, ibid., p.72.
- ¹⁴ See Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Revolution Before the Theologians: For a Critical/Political Reflection on Our History*, ibid, p. 76-78.
- ¹⁵ See Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Revolution Before the Theologians: For a Critical/Political Reflection on Our History*, ibid, p. 73.
- ¹⁶ See Cornelius Castoriadis, 'The Imaginary: Creation in the Social-Historical Domain' in *World in Fragments – Writings on Politics, Psychoanalysis and the Imagination*, ed. David Ames Curtis, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 1997, p. 6-8.
- ¹⁷ Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Phusis' and Autonomy' in *World in Fragments – Writings on Politics, Psychoanalysis and the Imagination*, ed. David Ames Curtis, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 1997, p. 338.
- ¹⁸ Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Phusis' and Autonomy, ibid., p. 332.
- ¹⁹ Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Phusis' and Autonomy, ibid., p. 331.
- ²⁰ See Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Phusis' and Autonomy, ibid., pp. 333-334.
- ²¹ See Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Phusis' and Autonomy, ibid., pp. 334-336.
- ²² See Cornelius Castoriadis, 'The Imaginary: Creation in the Social-Historical Domain' in *World in Fragments – Writings on Politics, Psychoanalysis and the Imagination*, ibid., pp. 16-18.
- ²³ Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Phusis' and Autonomy, ibid., p. 340.
- ²⁴ Andrew Horton, *The Films of Theo Angelopoulos – a Cinema of Contemplation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1997, p.32.
- ²⁵ Sergio Arecco, 'Στοιχεία για μια Συζήτηση' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, 2000, p. 252.
- ²⁶ Sergio Arreco, *Στοιχεία για μια Συζήτηση*, ibid, p. 252.
- ²⁷ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 22.
- ²⁸ Paul Connerton, ibid., p. 26.

A narrator-shepherd sits on top of a hill. He approaches the camera and starts talking about Alexander in a folk-tale manner. Alexander is presented as the mythical king who rebuffed an alien intruder and brought liberty to the people. The narrative cuts to the 1900 New Year's Eve celebration at the Royal Palace in Athens. We see the Minister of Military Affairs, together with the Greek landowner Tzelepis, trying to sell the area of Mavrovouni (which Tzelepis partly owns) to three British businessmen. The problem is that farmers have established a commune in that same area.

A group of English noblemen and their wives leave the palace and venture to Cape Sounio to watch the first sunrise of the new century. There, amid the ruins of the Temple of Poseidon, Alexander and his rebels – who have just escaped from prison – appear as if out of nowhere and take them hostage. Alexander, who led a large-scale peasant uprising in the past, is still regarded as a legend. He dispatches a letter to the government of Greece, demanding a general amnesty for all those who fought against the landowners. He also demands re-allotment of the land of Mavrovouni in exchange for the hostages.

As he journeys around rural Greece, the villagers welcome him as a liberator and honour him as a saint. He is joined by a group of Italian anarchists who are wanted by the Italian police. They arrive at Mavrovouni, which has now evolved into a commune. The anarchists are delighted, but Alexander and his rebels are dissatisfied. In the past, they fought so the land would go back to its rightful owners. During the welcoming feast, sheep are slaughtered while the army surrounds the village. A rupture develops between those who want to maintain the commune and those who want the land to revert to private ownership. Meanwhile, Alexander negotiates with the government for release of the hostages and re-allotment of the land.

A fake trial is held, where Alexander is to be found not guilty for his past rebellion. During the trial, however, the public prosecutor is shot dead and negotiations come to a halt. Alexander takes control of the commune and establishes martial law. After various failed attempts on his life, he realises the government has used him and amnesty will never be granted. In a fit of rage, he slaughters the hostages. The army invades the commune, which has grown tired of Alexander's despotic rule. As the army seems to be winning the battle, the communards seize Alexander and ritualistically eat him alive before surrendering. The film ends with a shot of young Alexander's young son, who has fled the village, as he rides a donkey towards the Athens of 1980. The narrator-shepherd's voice is heard off screen: "so Alexander entered the cities."

Megalexandros is the coda to the *Trilogy of History*. In this film, Angelopoulos questions the nature of power and ideology. History is presented in an allegorical space, which concentrates the energies generated by the European socialist movement throughout the 20th century while simultaneously drawing a cultural and political map of modern Greece.

In both *The Travelling Players* and *The Hunters*, Angelopoulos claimed history on behalf of the Left. In *The Travelling Players*, history is seen as the collision of two poles, Left and Right. The former is identified as a positive drive heavy with mythic connotations – notably that of Orestes, who stands as a metaphor for the idea of the revolution. Using the myth of the House of Atreides as his structure, Angelopoulos presents an epic view of modern Greek history from 1939 until 1951. *The Hunters* picks up where the previous film ended. The Greek bourgeoisie that arose after the end of the Civil War is shown 28 years later, still haunted by the past. The partisan rebels return as avenging angels, emblems of the repressed guilt of the hunters. The partisans reassemble to bring about justice in the present.

In 1980, however, Angelopoulos directed his criticism towards the ranks of the Left. In *Megalexandros*, he embarked on his most ambitious and fully realised project. Set

at the dawn of the 20th century, the narrative brings together historical emblems from disparate eras and fuses them at this particular moment in time. Their depiction comes from a contemporary perspective, the year the film was made. Without attempting to recreate actual historical periods through objective reconstruction, Angelopoulos questions the notion of history itself. His use of long takes delivers yet again the profilmic space in a concrete block, where the time of an action recorded by the camera coincides with the projection time of a sequence as a whole. The director's insistence on the internal duration of the shot lends a cosmic resonance to the *mise en scène*.

The film was shot in the prefecture of Epirus in northern Greece. It was the third time – after *Reconstruction* and *The Hunters* – that Angelopoulos had used this location. The main action was shot in Dotsiko, a deserted stone village on a mountainside close to the town of Grevena. Angelopoulos spent almost a year looking for the right natural setting. He needed a village with an arched stone bridge at its entrance, but after months of searching no such village could be found. Then, almost by accident, the actress Maria Vasiliou – who had played Chrysothemis in *The Travelling Players* – saw an ethnographic documentary on Epirus (presented by singer Domna Samiou and directed by Fotos Lambrinos) which featured the village of Dotsiko and the longed-for bridge.

Shooting in the village, however, involved many obstacles. Its stone houses were, for the most part, deserted and run-down. Set designer Mikes Karapiperis rebuilt the exteriors, painting the walls and repairing the roofs. The central square was restructured to include a clock tower, which was also designed by Karapiperis. Shooting took place under bitterly cold conditions, made worse by the fact that the village had no heating of any kind. The production was funded by the Italian TV network RAI and the German ZDF in collaboration with Angelopoulos, who was now financed by his brother and the newly formed Greek Film Center.

Still, the budget was inadequate for a project that involved an enormous cast and crew, spending a long time on location under primitive conditions. The actors and

extras lived almost exclusively on a diet of bread and beans, and executive producer Stefanos Vlahos had to intervene on a more or less daily basis just to keep up morale. The unique contribution that Vlahos made to the film, using his own ingenuity and intuition, has become almost legendary. It was he who convinced the people of the nearby village of Deskati to appear as extras (i.e. as the inhabitants of the commune) in exchange for food and nothing more. His argument was that the Greek Communist Party had instructed the villagers to help Angelopoulos in any way they could, and all 120 of them proved eager to do their duty.

It should be noted that Deskati was a lone little red dot on the map of Epirus, which had traditionally been a stronghold of the Right. What Angelopoulos did should be viewed in the light of the political situation in Greece at that time, when the division between Left and Right was still a part of everyday life. The participation of the people of Deskati shows the degree to which they identified their lives with something bigger than themselves. It also exemplifies the lengths to which a filmmaker had to go to, and the ingenuity that was needed, in order to get his film made at all.

Megalexandros is probably the end of an era for Angelopoulos in terms of stylistic and thematic choices. It is also the last film of the Greek New Wave. As already noted in the Introduction, filmmakers of the 70s did not present a coherent aesthetic. It was primarily the collaborative aspect – the fact that each director would help the others to get their films made – that made it possible to talk about a New Wave or movement of any sort. During the shooting of *Megalexandros*, many other Greek directors appeared on the set, not only to observe but also to assist in the production if necessary. Furthermore, a number of expatriates made their way to the mountain village just to play a part in the film. One restaurateur left his business in Italy in order to play one of Alexander's rebels. In *The Travelling Players*, Angelopoulos had clearly touched a chord with many leftwingers.

Such a degree of aesthetic engagement, political consciousness and sense of adventure seems unimaginable in an international production today. Angelopoulos'

dedication to the film would stop at nothing. During the search for locations, Angelopoulos and Sofikitis (his location photographer) were caught in a snowstorm and had to spend the night in a deserted house in sub-zero temperatures. The next morning found the director almost frozen. Such dedication, however, soon brought results. During the shoot, Angelopoulos immersed himself so deeply in his vision that he became a hate figure for the rest of the crew. Demanding an almost reverential attitude to the project, he often found himself in direct conflict with Yorgos Arvanitis, his long-term director of photography. Like Alexander himself, Angelopoulos found himself gradually turning into a despot.

Furthermore, Omero Antonutti – famous for his role as the father in Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's *Padre Padrone* (1977) – was isolated from both the crew and the other actors in order to identify with the character of Alexander. In the film, Alexander is constantly left without dialogue, so Antonutti had to become this silent body and soul. He was also forbidden to appear in public without his costume. This was a major source of frustration for the actor, who was a comedian by temperament. Demanding to see the script so he could trace how his character developed, he was annoyed by Angelopoulos' tendency of changing it without notice.

As the situation grew worse, the director faced all-out rebellion from the majority of the cast and crew, who could no longer cope with the harsh weather and primitive conditions of Dotsiko. Slogans denouncing Angelopoulos began to appear on the walls of the stone houses. Constantly dissatisfied and obsessed with finding the perfect weather conditions for each sequence, Angelopoulos prolonged the shoot indefinitely until the budget threatened to run out. It should be noted that, in order to accommodate a theatrical release, whole sequences had to be omitted from the final cut. The film, whose final print lasts for three hours, could easily have run for almost five. *Megalexandros* has two alternative cuts than the one that was finally released.¹

Angelopoulos' fame had by now grown beyond Greece, a fact that allowed him to produce a film on an international budget. Furthermore, the film shoot remains exemplary in its resistance to the reification of the artwork. Fredric Jameson notes

how, under a capitalist state, the quality of one craft – its unique and intrinsic value – is homogenised into an objective and quantitative measure of its value as a commodity. A craft such as weaving can thus be subjected to the same measure of quality as another (writing, for example) as means to a profitable end. *Megalexandros*, however, becomes a process that dismantles the dictum of commodity reification.² The production of the film turns into an adventure where the director is constantly at odds with – and in defiance of – the film's budget. The utility value of its elements is torn apart, much like the costumes that Armani made for the English lords who are kidnapped by Alexander. The costumes were dragged and battered as the characters are driven through the muddy and snowy landscapes towards the commune. They become elements in the process of a phenomenological *being there* as opposed to being part of a featured advertisement. The film becomes an end in itself. Its inner quality is drawn by the dialectics of the natural setting as it meets the reconstructive eye of the camera. Their synthesis generates an allegorical circular space for the movement of the socialist ideal, which is now materialised in the northern mountains of Greece.

This is not to say that the film escapes the laws of the market. That would require a different social system. Still, the fact that people from the four corners of the world gathered in a deserted village in Epirus, just to help in the production – with absolutely no hope of profit at the end – turns the film into a collective praxis. It is an act of passion, defying any industrialised view of cinema. Angelopoulos arrived in Epirus straight from his rented room in Exarheia in Athens, where he had written the script in a state of dire poverty. *Megalexandros* went on to win the Golden Lion at the 1981 Venice Film Festival, but that did not guarantee a wide audience. Sadly, the film attracted only 180,000 viewers in Greece on its initial release.³ It remains one of the least-seen Angelopoulos films, as well as one of the most neglected by international film theorists. While this may be a small compensation, it also tends to be the favourite among Angelopoulos devotees.

The sublime image of Megalexandros

Megalexandros is not the historical figure of Alexander the Great. It is, rather, the incarnation of his myth as it has grown across the centuries. Reference to the historical figure of Alexander is made only by the narrator in the introduction. Still, this account is not based on historical records. The narrator is a shepherd played by Stratos Pahis, familiar as Agamemnon in *The Travelling Players* and the building contractor in *The Hunters*. His retelling presents Alexander as the liberator of a language and a people. He is the mythical hero who sets to discover the impossible - the edge of the world.⁴

The account is a variation on the first paragraph of the short folk tale *The Rag of Megalexandros*⁵, an amalgamation of the various tales and myths of Alexander as they took shape after his death. The writer of the rag is anonymous. It is not by accident that the film is called *Megalexandros* and not *Alexander the Great*. The compound word *Megalexandros* replaces the title bestowed on him by historians, who saw fit to confer the same title on Emperor Napoleon of France and Tsar Peter of Russia. *Megalexandros* is a name given by folk tradition; it stands for a mythical figure whose sister was a mermaid on a rock in the open sea close to Hellespont. She stands there awaiting her brother's return from the depths of Asia. Whenever a ship passes, she asks its captain, "Is King Alexander still alive?" If he answers no, she sinks the ship.

Megalexandros makes his way into the world of diegesis through this folk tradition. He is an ambiguous figure, standing not only for the pain of exile but also for the repressed imperialist tendencies of a grandiose nationalist. Alexander became the theme for numerous songs and tales, including the shadow play *Karagiozis* that appeared under Ottoman rule. Here the mythical hero returns in order to fight and slay a dragon, in a manner reminiscent of St. George in the Orthodox Christian dogma.⁶

It is this Alexander, the mythical folk hero, who appears at the dawn of the 20th century. He is an amalgamation of mythical and historical signs. Alexander is now an outlawed rebel chieftain, imprisoned for his defiance of the landowners. When his picture is taken by a group of journalists who come to the village, Alexander poses sitting astride a horse, his sword raised above his head, as if ready to strike. A huge stretched cloth is set as the background for the photograph. On it a dragon is drawn, as if Alexander were about to slay it. He is dressed in a *foustanela*, which is an appropriation of the ancient toga. It is a garment that starts at the waist and reaches down either to the knees or to the ankles. His shoes are the traditional pigskin *tsaroyhia*. Both items of clothing form part of the traditional mainland costumes that developed under Ottoman rule, and are associated with those worn by the leaders of the Greek Revolution of Independence in 1821.

Alexander also wears an ancient Corinthian *hoplite* helmet, a direct allusion to the Greek chieftain Theodoros Kolokotronis, one of the main leaders of the 1821 revolution. Kolokotronis was a member of the *Filiki Etairia*, a pre-revolutionary organisation that aimed to found an independent Greek state based on Orthodox Christian dogma. The *Etairia* and its founding members from Odessa saw the idea of a Greek nation state as a direct descendant of the Ancient Greek world, and this is what Kolokotronis' Corinthian helmet came to signify. In the 19th century, the image of the Greek chieftain with the ancient helmet met with great enthusiasm from the European bourgeoisie, whose Romantic nationalist projections seemed to run along Hellenistic lines. Kolokotronis himself supported the idea of a Greek-Albanian federation where both Christians and Muslims would coexist, thus echoing the manifesto of the pre-revolutionary Rigas Feraios, who stood for a Balkan federacy as opposed to autonomous ethnic states. Feraios, whose poetry did much to inspire the Revolution, met his death at the hands of the Ottomans.⁷

The filmic Alexander goes further than being just an amalgamation of past motifs. He also evokes the upcoming events of the 20th century, particularly the rebels of the Civil War. The long beard he wears is that of Aris Velouhiotis, one of the leading figures of the Greek resistance against the Nazis and the first phase of the Civil

War.⁸ He was the leader of E.Λ.A.Σ. (Greek Popular Resistance Army), the military organisation of E.A.M (National Resistance Front) and himself became something of a legend. Operating in an autonomous manner and often disregarding orders from the political leadership of the Front, he was killed in an ambush before the official outbreak of the Civil War. (The political leader of the Communist Party, Nikos Zahariadis, is often regarded as being responsible for his assassination.) Velouhiotis is seen as a military genius whose dedication to the revolution was often accompanied by extreme ruthlessness.⁹ In the film, Alexander hangs one of his rebels for attempting to rape one of the hostages. This is a direct allusion to Velouhiotis, who had one of his soldiers executed after a similar incident.

Furthermore, the placing of the action in the mountains of northern Greece echoes the epic narrative of the Democratic Army, the army formed by the partisan rebels during the Civil War. The Democratic Army waged a guerilla war against all odds against the National Army, which was backed by the Americans. The mountains of Grammos and Vitsi in Macedonia became their stronghold. It should be noted that a Stalinist faction assumed absolute control of the Democratic Army, many of whose captains supported the idea of continuity with the revolution of 1821, which was both social and national. Alexander becomes an amalgamation of forces purely by means of his posture and costume. As in the previous films of Angelopoulos, costume replaces the psychological profile with the social identity of the character.

Alexander is a charismatic leader who does not recognise compromise, as stated by the Italian anarchists. He speaks only twice in the film. The first time, he addresses his dead wife's wedding dress, which he keeps hanging on the wall. The second time, after the assassination of the public prosecutor, he returns to his room and recites a few lines of poetry by Georgios Seferis. In addition, his voice is twice heard offscreen – once while addressing his letter to the governor on his way to Mavrovouni, and again during the villagers' council meeting that takes place after the slaughtering of the sheep. Alexander's profile becomes an object of gestural inquiry, where his bodily movement predominates over the use of speech. His authority is established through his riding posture and his helmet, which he never

takes off in public. His call to arms, when he is addressing his rebels, is signified by his onscreen movements. He remains distant both from the viewer and from those around him in the filmic world. Very little is known about his personal life. As the guide explains to the foreign journalists who visit the commune, he was found as a boy wandering in the streets.

During the *Last Supper* sequence, which takes place during Alexander's ascension to leadership of the commune, we see him positioned clearly as a Messianic figure. In a traditional pagan song, the villagers who attend the feast declare his divine origin, equating him with Saint George who slays the dragon. When Alexander enters the villages, the people come out to greet him as a great leader. The church bells ring out and Alexander makes his way through in a blaze of glory. In the manner of a holy man, he goes down to the river and baptises the children. Alexander is the ideal of the liberator who is reincarnated at the beginning of the 20th century to test his powers as a material historical subject. Alexander has been preserved inside his own myth.

His aura of non-being allows the people to recreate him in their own image, in line with their utopian vision. As an absent image, he stands as a counter-force to those powers that oppress the people. His immaterial substance allows the formation of a promise that remains constantly in a state of becoming. When this idea is called into material being, it comes face to face with history. The people who create him bring him to life as a Messiah, but this Messiah is one that absorbs all their hopes into a fixed identity that lies outside the subject of the creation. The creators will gradually lose their subjectivity by turning Alexander into a fetish. They will then become objects of his power over them.

Angelopoulos' portrayal of Megalexandros carries a double register. It carries the feeling of awe the director feels in the face of a grand personality, but it also contains a criticism of the 'dead end' of any power that separates itself from the social flow. This feeling of awe sweeps Alexander along, from the moment of his escape from prison all the way to his ascension as leader of the commune, and Angelopoulos

observes this progress with an almost religious reverence. Not only does Alexander bring the promise of revolution, but also he is an image of sublime resonance. After his initial escape, we see him appear for the first time in a forest. A cosmic white light emanates from above, forming a circle on the ground. Alexander picks up his helmet and weapons, mounts his horse and rides off into the woods. His bandit rebels enter the frame. Lifting their weapons from inside the lit circle, they run one after the other after their captain.

This is the first of a series of images in the film that are both beautiful and terrifying. They inspire a feeling of grandeur through the Expressionistic use of light and sound, but also invoke a sense of a spiritual 'beyond'. Arvanitis' photography reaches its apogee, as the mise-en-scène turns into a cosmic field – where the predominant shades of green combine with blue and stone-grey to convey a landscape in the grip of permanent winter. The light emanating from above seems to come from a divine source. The landscape turns into a stage, where the light marks the space for the grand entrance of the mythical hero. He advances at a slow processional pace, as non-diegetic music on a clarinet sets the tone for the shot. Already, we are introduced to an atmosphere different from that of previous Angelopoulos films. Formerly, he had used artificial light to support the natural light of the shot. In *Megalexandros*, white light comes to dominate the frame.

The use of artificial lighting, together with a non-diegetic score, marks a shift from the distant materialist gaze of the *Trilogy of History*. In the three previous films, Angelopoulos abstained from using a non-diegetic soundtrack. All the sound was part of the mise-en-scène, giving a sense of non-interventional realism to the images in the film. Now the music highlights the rhythm of the shot, pushing the image towards an Expressionist grandeur. This sense of grandeur recurs in the Poseidon Temple and Last Supper sequences, the baptism of the children, the welcome of Alexander by the peasants and, much later, the image of Alexander hanging on a rock as if doing battle with the open sky.

In the Poseidon Temple sequence, we see the British aristocrats visiting Cape Sounio to witness the first dawn of the 20th century. They are framed in long shot amid the columns of the ancient temple. The narrative cuts to a diagonal frontal shot of the group taken from human eye-level. The camera frames the group moving away from the temple, towards the edge of a nearby cliff. Lord Mancaster moves slightly ahead, reciting an extract from Sophocles' *Antigone* in Ancient Greek. As it follows the group, the camera performs a pan from right to the left and then starts a slight recession movement, while the group turns immobile at the edge of the cliff with their backs at a 90° angle to the lens. The camera also comes to a standstill, framing the backs of the group as they contemplate the cape. What we see is their bodies, the open sky and the sea that lies beneath them.

After a pause, the group sighs in astonishment. They start receding slowly out of the frame, moving to both left and right. The shot remains empty, framing the edge of the cliff and the background sky that meets the sea on the horizon. The sound of the non-diegetic clarinet breaks in, heralding the entrance of the hero. Alexander appears from behind the cliff, riding his horse into the centre of the frame. It seems as if he has emerged, literally, from the depths of the open sea. The long take turns into a low-angle shot of the mythical hero, a dark silhouette with the sun at his back.

Alexander emerging from the depths of Cape Sounio marks the start of the drama. For the underprivileged and the oppressed, he is an image of hope. Angelopoulos refutes the fossilised Eurocentric adoration of an Ancient Greek past – colonised, as we have seen earlier in the sequence, by the foreign upper class. The ruling classes in the film are presented as a coalition between foreign and local capitalists, including the remains of a dying aristocracy. The latter provides the former with an image that translates capital into culture. Angelopoulos makes the aristocracy look ridiculous. The nobility have no inkling of the plans of private entrepreneurship, as they have been drawn between local and foreign business interests. In the same manner, they are ignorant of (or indifferent to) the suffering that capital has brought upon the lives of the indigenous people.

The excursion to Sounio is part of a chauvinistic private fantasy, which excludes the agency of a surviving local culture. Angelopoulos ridicules the philhellenism of foreign nobles, who treat the contemporary indigenous culture with lofty indifference – reducing it to an illiterate barbarian *other* (an image that is also shared by the private entrepreneurs). The reciting of the ancient manuscript, however, runs in contrast to the truly magnificent entrance of the chieftain rebel. The adoration of a ‘glorious past’ is exposed as an ideological weapon, appropriated so as to reinforce the British aristocracy’s sense of cultural superiority. It comes face to face with the contemporary (and paradoxical) image of Alexander – who is now, not a king, but a bandit. In his letter to the governor after the kidnapping of the English lords, Alexander speaks in a language reminiscent of the *Memoirs* of the revolutionary chieftain Ioannis Makriyannis, who took part in the Greek War of Independence in 1821.¹⁰

The romantic image of a past that can be appropriated in terms of property returns as the foreign image of a terrible *other*. It is this other that has suffered at the mercy of the lords. It is now materialised in Alexander’s rebels and the people in the villages, in the Italian anarchists and the communards who make their way progressively into the film to fight their battle. Alexander returns as the immanent force of a contemporary culture that now stands as a *power against the power over* of capital.

Soon though, it is Alexander himself who rises over and above this culture. He becomes a power over the subjects of the commune. His terrible image will be appropriated by the *status quo*. The journalists that come to take his picture orchestrate a reconstruction of the slaying of the dragon. The revolution becomes commercialised, becoming a means of propaganda in a way similar to that in which the image of rebel chieftains was appropriated in order to serve a national cause. The language of Makriyannis, as Vassilis Rafailides notes, came to be treated as emblematic of a naïf and transgressive spontaneity. According to Rafailides, this gave way to an anti-Enlightenment national mysticism, whereby the artist reached redemption through the apotheosis of his/her individual will.¹¹ Makriyannis came to be regarded as emblematic of an eternal ‘spirit’ of Hellenism. Rafailides holds the

authors of the so called Generation of the '30's in Greek literature and most notably Georgios Theotokas, as primarily responsible for this ideological construction of an 'eternal' spirit. This critique towards a mythical spirit of Hellenism, as we believe, is also reflected in the ambiguous image of Megalexandros.

Power Over and Power Against

The concept of *power over* is borrowed from the work of political theorist John Holloway.¹² It is a key concept in his analysis on the fetishisation of power, under both capitalist and historical socialist regimes. Holloway, following Marx, questions the fetishisation of power as a force that is 'over and above' its subjects. Seeing in the concept of 'doing' the connotations of a practical negative force that blends theory and action, Holloway suggests a negative social action that denies the fixity of power. In contrast, power for Holloway is a becoming, a potential power to do, to create. It is a movement *against* fixity, against the ontology of a static 'being'. Seeing the subject as asserted by his/her doing and its potential to bring about the future, the subject moves negatively against the power of *is-ness*. *Doing* denies *is-ness*, which is the precondition of *power over*.

Power over is materialised in rigid structures like the state and stands as separate from the citizen body. Power over exists when *the doing* is turned into labour, legitimised as utilitarian work or identified with a political party that stands above and beyond its subjects. Holloway sees a 'beyond' only as a potential inherent in the subject's power to plan his/her own future. Emphasising a fluid structure that will fend off the fetishisation of rigid structures and fixed identities, Holloway sees the rise of an *anti-power* that does not aim at the acquisition of state power. It becomes an anti-power that draws from the Zapatista movement and the Paris Commune of 1871 in order to sustain a utopian revolutionary claim that escapes fixity.¹³

The film *Megalexandros* predates the above-mentioned analysis by twenty years. However, it too functions as a direct questioning of the theme of power. It is a remarkable illustration of how the traditional Marxist revolutionary model fell short

of its expectations. Angelopoulos himself noted that the film is an allegory of Stalinism.¹⁴ As has already been argued, the film concentrates the tensions and ruptures generated by the Socialist movement both during and before the 20th century, including the Paris Commune, in its depiction of the village. One is tempted to see the film as foretelling the fall of the Soviet Union, which reached a dead end generated by the separation of power from its subjects.

However, *Megalexandros* is also a portrait of an indigenous culture and its history, seen through the eyes of an author who reflects both on his chosen medium and on the interaction of local history and culture with international movements. The film delivers a personal aesthetic which – as in the previous films – has points in common with other ‘long take’ directors such as Welles and Mizogushi. Here as in no other film by Angelopoulos, this long take aesthetic merges with the artistic heritage of Byzantine iconography.

In the film, Alexander gradually changes into a dictator. As the teacher says, it is the will of ‘the one’. Power absorbs Alexander, who then resorts to any means necessary to achieve his goals. He starts off as the *power against* the official power of the government, which is negotiating the sale of the land to the English investors. The government has legitimised the big landowners, who exploit the land for their private interests. Alexander’s rebellion is embraced by the villagers, who see – etched in his face – a power of negation. At a given moment in time, however, his will stands out and rises above the social plan of the commune that has been established in the village of Mavrovouni.

In the commune, everything is collective. The members do not aim at the acquisition of power, which is shared in turn on a cooperative basis. This anti-authoritarian structure has allowed the commune to function in defiance of state power. The villagers have abolished money; their power *to do* has not been turned into labour. The collective stands for a ‘we’ that is denied by individualist notions of identity. Alexander separates himself from the ‘we.’ He does not accept the collectivism of

private property that exists in the commune. He becomes fixed as the deity of the *I*. Alexander becomes an embodiment of power.

The identity of the liberator may stand as an active force, but when this identity turns into the leadership of ‘the one’ it then negates the liberty of those it claims to represent. At one point in the narrative, Alexandros imprisons a teacher played by Grigoris Evagelatos. Young Alexandros, the son of Alexander, comes to visit him in secret. From the window of his prison cell, the teacher calls out to the boy, who is curled up with his back against the outside wall: “Power is...Property is...” The teacher never finishes his sentence. The verb *is* describes a *being* that is foreign to change. Power *is*; it does not *do*. The same applies to the notion of property. Both are established by the reign of *is*-ness (identity). They are fixed concepts that remain static. The acquisition of state power will only bring forth a different power group, which will in turn separate itself from the citizen body. Property, likewise, denies the process of *doing*.

The denial of the process of *doing* leaves space only to evaluate what is *done* according to Marx – of something that already *is*.¹⁵ By saying that something already is, one denies its ability to move or change. Things are fixed into how they are, into an eternal being that denies *doing* into fixed identities of *I* and *you*. We can see the separation of doing and done in terms of language. *Doing* denies the identity of *I*, because through *doing* I am and I am not. The transitive verb *to do* changes the fixity of the noun into movement. When I do, the emphasis lies on the action. Through action, which should not be identified here as physical action, I allow myself to change. I move from a static identity (based on concepts) into a flow of actions, thoughts and energies that block the rigidity of the static self. I am no longer identified by a personal pronoun. The pronoun is negated by the act of *doing*. I become part of a series of acts, concepts and energies that come together only to be dissolved for a new combination to arise.

Power is. Power is static and it absorbs Alexander into a state that denies the subjectivity of the communards. He wants the reallocation of the land, but in terms of

private property. Property is a fixed concept separated from the process of the social flow. Property separates the members of the community into individual personalities whose freedom is a façade, since it relies on fetishised concepts that turn the communards from free subjects into objects defined by the *power over* of the fetish. The individual stands apart from the collective.

In the film, Alexander hangs the wedding gown of his dead wife on a wall of his room. There is a stain of blood where the heart should be. Although she must have been dead for years, the red is vivid as if the blood were still fresh. The stain lies on the exact same spot as the wound of the dead partisan in *The Hunters*. Although it was 28 years after the end of the Civil War in 1949, the blood of the dead partisan was also still fresh. It is the same with Alexander's wife. Alexander keeps the gown and addresses it as if it were the woman herself. It was her death that turned him into a rebel in the mountains; in the same way, the violence of the rightwing security forces caused many leftists to join the partisans in the mountains after the Varkiza Treaty of 1944 signalled the start of the Civil War.

Angelopoulos achieves a symbolism of metaphysical connotations. The trauma locks Alexander in a repetitive circle – a fact that is verified by the incestuous relationship he has with his daughter. His erotic relationship with his daughter becomes yet another image of a closed circle, an image of separation from the social flow. Right after the assassination of the public prosecutor (who is shot dead during a show trial where Alexandros and his men were to be granted amnesty), Alexandros speaks to himself in his room: "It had to happen," he says. This could be the voice of the director himself, to whom the figure of Alexander bears a striking resemblance (particularly the bald head) as Lefteris Ksanthopoulos points out.¹⁶ Trauma rules over the man who loses himself in a circle. The fixation on this trauma turns into a predisposed fate, setting the wheels of tragedy in motion. It is the fixity of one who *can turn every action into an act of darkness*, as the anarchist Massimo points out.

Angelopoulos also has Alexandros suffer from epilepsy. The director points out that, according to Hippocrates, this was the disease of heroes simply because it could not

be explained otherwise.¹⁷ Epilepsy became a reminder of mortality. Alexander is turning into a God. Whenever he reaches the frontiers of the human, epilepsy strikes him down. The first stroke comes at the end of his ascent into the village. He reaches the river but is unable to cross it. Like the historical figure of Alexander, his journey will end on the banks of the river. The end of his journey in space, and his establishment in the commune, will also signify the shift of his identity into an established *power over*. In the river sequence, the camera records the act in a circular movement. Alexander drops to the ground and the camera describes a circle, as if confining the hero within its limits.

After the slaughter of the sheep and the arrival of the army, Alexander turns back the clock that lies at the middle of the square. One of the members of the council asks why this is necessary, since the village has no need of time. “We are not ruled by anything,” the anarchist Massimo screams, “down with clocks!” The clock has two functions. On the one hand, it destroys the Utopia of the collective. In the social system that exists outside the village, the time of the clock signifies a homogenous structure that identifies the subjects’ *doing* as labour to be measured in quantitative terms. *Doing* becomes labour for a number of hours, and it produces something that can be sold for a price. Labour in turn produces value. The thing produced, the *done*, belongs to the owner of the means of production – not to the worker, who is rewarded in a quantifiable measure, money. Time then becomes quantifiable, as it is filled with quantifiable things.

The setting back of the clock implies the re-establishment of a homogeneous time – one that is objective and filters everything through its mechanical function. The passing minutes are the same for everybody. Time becomes linear and the present is just one point in a linear progression towards the future. The time of personal enjoyment and leisure also becomes quantifiable – by being separated from the *doing*, which is now turned into labour. The clock provides a mechanical structure that is imposed on the subjects of creation. It stands outside; it is the same for everybody. Clock time transforms time into an end product, into something that *is*. It provides the linear structure of past, present and future. Past becomes the prehistory

leading to an inevitable present. Their relationship becomes one of cause and effect. As John Holloway points out:

Homogeneous time has the present as its axis... the future is conceived as the pre visible extension of the present... Radically alternative possibilities for the future are pushed aside as fiction. All that lies, lay or might lie outside the tracks of tick-tick time is suppressed. Past struggles that pointed towards something radically different from the present are forgotten.¹⁸

The anarchists break the clock before they abandon the village. Their act echoes that of the Paris Communards of 1871, who similarly had the clocks in the streets of Paris dismantled and destroyed. That is their last activism before they are murdered as they depart from the village. Their Utopia is finished. Their past struggles will be erased in a perpetual present, where anarchism identifies with destruction and its diversity is placed under the homogeneous label of terror. The thousands of anarchists who rose up at the beginning of the century will be wiped out either physically (the Spanish Civil War, the Franco regime, the Stalinist purges) or retrospectively (from the official history of both the bourgeois and the socialist states).

Time in the film is not a homogenous structure and it does not follow the clock. It becomes the time of memory as it moves from the personal to the collective. It is the personal time of the director, who attempts to convey the long duration of an indigenous culture. Images and cultural indexes make their way into the film, but always through the filter of his subjectivity. *Megalexandros* runs full circle. Inside this circle (which is set at the beginning of the 20th century) Angelopoulos includes allusions to events that happened before or after the time of the plot. We have seen how Alexander becomes an amalgam of various historical and mythical signs.

The film also encompasses a multitude of events from Modern Greek history. The kidnapping of the foreign lords bears many resemblances to the kidnapping and final slaughter of English travellers by the bandit Arvanitakis in 1870. The naval blockade

of Piraeus by the English in 1850 (during the Greek Ottoman conflict) is alluded to as a text when Alexander meets the Prime Minister and the trial is arranged. The Prime Minister himself is Eleftherios Venizelos, one of the leading figures of Modern Greek politics, head of the Liberal Party who came into conflict with the Palace. This conflict, as we saw in *The Travelling Players*, resulted in the so-called National Division between the Royalists and the Democrats. Venizelos was primarily responsible for expanding the Greek borders up to Western Thrace, and also for the inclusion of Crete. While he was not yet Prime Minister in 1900, he was a member of the government during the 1910 peasant uprising in Killeler – in which the rebels demanded re-allotment of the land, much as Alexandros does.¹⁹ The presence of the anarchists echoes the participation of many Italian anarchists on the side of the Greeks during the First Balkan War.

We can see the circle as allegorically present in the *mise en scène* and also as a recurrent motif in the movement of the camera. In the *mise en scène*, the circle appears both as a graphic design and as a circular formation of humans. Alexander appears in the midst of a white light that forms a circle on the ground. This is a contrast to the dark mass of villagers at the end, who form a circle around Alexander and devour him. When the government soldiers arrive, they camp on the far side of the bridge from the village. The straw hats they wear for digging also form a circle. In the sequence where council members are executed, a group of government soldiers is visible in the depth of field, again in a circular formation. At their feet, another circle is drawn on the ground. Around the straw hats, the land forms a circular perimeter. In the foreground, the communards are executed inside another circle formed by the dried mud.

Similarly, it is in front of a circular pond that an army officer orders the landowner Tzelepis to pretend to go ahead with the re-allotment of the land. The Anarchists make their first appearance on top of a semi-circular stone bridge. During the war dance of the rebels – which is performed twice, once during the welcoming feast in the commune, and again before the killing of the hostages – the dancers hold their rifles in the air while moving round in a circle. The whole film presents a landscape

in which one circle engulfs another. Circles drawn on the ground meet the circular dances and circular formations of people and these in turn are engulfed by a series of circular shots.

The 69th shot, which is a sequence shot, turns from a static into a circular crane shot. Right after the announcement that the government will go ahead with the redistribution of land, the villagers gather under a tree in the central square. They are portrayed in a long static shot, turning the screen space into a theatrical proscenium. The villagers argue and soon they are about to engage in physical combat. The anarchists enter the foreground and – in a final attempt to unite the people under their cause – start singing *La Dynamite*, an Italian Anarchist song from the end of the 19th century. Its lyrics involve the apotheosis of the new history, which will rise out of the debris of the bourgeois states.

The villagers start to move away, keeping their eyes to the ground; the camera now becomes mobile, following their movement to the right. The singing of the Anarchists (heard from offscreen as they stand still) is in direct contrast to the villagers' retreat. The camera soon abandons the villagers, continuing its circular movement to reveal the stone houses (which seem deserted) until it comes back to its starting point, where the Anarchists are still singing ferociously. However, the camera does not stop after a 360° turn; it continues for another 180 degrees, showing the empty village and ending with the young Alexandros on top of the bridge next to the clock tower, where the villagers moved off screen. The boy has witnessed it all.

The anarchists remain true to their ideology. The sequence is a portent of the end for their movement. The people abandon them but the Anarchists stand firm, solid in the middle of the square. The villagers move out. The camera though does not come close to the anarchists. It is not a moment of triumph. A track in to the faces of the Anarchists would automatically signify the glorification of the characters as psychologically determined. It would evoke pathos and carry a desire to portray heroes.

The typical anti-hero of the American New Wave of the 70s, though doubting the values of American society, is still a hero even though he chooses to fall from grace. It is very difficult for the cinema of the West to escape the model of the psychologically defined individual. What Angelopoulos chooses to do here is portray the struggle of a group, which is socially defined without evoking empathy. That does not imply that the sequence is free of emotions. The singing of the anarchists is full of passion, and the realisation that they are left alone carries with it a sense of grief. The circular movement of the camera, and the distance of the filmed subjects from the lens, generates a ritualistic sequence where the ferocious singing is dialectically opposed to the image. It is a visual comment that has its basis in form, rather than in the momentum of the plot.

The camera abandons the point of action in order to meet this action again at the completion of the circle. The offscreen space is constantly made present, not only through its successive inclusion in the frame by the panning camera but also (mainly) through the singing. The meaning of the shot is based on the dialectics between onscreen and offscreen space, and the dialectic between image and sound. The camera moves past the anarchists twice, as if it had lost its point of reference. The camera gains relative autonomy; it is not ruled by the action as driven by the characters. The circular movement seems to be the only way for the director to portray the death of Anarchism.

Yet again, the director finds himself at odds with an editing style that would evoke empathy or deliver a shock to the audience. As part of the new revolutionary intelligentsia, the Soviet school of montage thought they knew how to change the world. The climax of history, which would bring about the new history, is embedded in the form of Eisenstein's montage. The shock carried forward by the collision of images would activate the people towards a common goal. The static shots of Eisenstein had a strong focus. There is no doubt about the extraction of a third meaning out of two pieces of montage, out of the collision of two shots.

In *Megalexandros* the human agent becomes a point in the circle, losing his/her dominance in the formation of the filmic space. He is, rather, dominated by the space that surrounds him. The point of reference now becomes the camera itself; the sequence becomes self-reflexive in its attempt to comment on the inability to be triumphant, on the necessity to draw a circle to enclose the anarchist utopia – a circle of empty space that annihilates the singing of the *Nova Historia*. The new history does not come; the anarchists are executed in the sequence that follows.

The circle, however, should not be seen purely as a hopeless metaphysical structure that imprisons the human agents. The circular motifs of *Megalexandros* carry a strong sense of ambiguity, as they also become carriers of a collective motion. The narrative does not revolve around Alexander as an individual whose psychological profile will be the subject of the film. Faithful to the principle of the *Trilogy of History*, the film becomes a fresco of conflicting ideologies. The long take becomes, yet again, the tool that will encompass the movement of the conflicting groups as they establish their spatial presence in the rural areas of northern Greece, the director's by-now permanent setting for his staging of history.

The Dialectic of the Shot

The whole film consists of 139 shots, where the long take often circumscribes a self-contained action. Under that principle, a complete thematic sequence is formed by two or three long takes. The equation of one take with one sequence is not dominant as in *The Travelling Players*; still, this does not detract from the complexity of the shots. The thematic sequences add up to form the three major parts that make up the film. The first includes the palace sequence, the escape of Alexandros and the kidnapping of the English lords. The second part concentrates on the expedition towards the commune. The third comprises all the events that take place in and around the village leading to Alexander's downfall. The film does not contain the time transitions of either *The Hunters* or *The Travelling Players*. In a way, it is more similar to *Days of '36* since both films concentrate on the exploration of space. The

long take is now exploring an allegorical space where past, present and future are already fused in a multi-layered symbolism.

The shots play on the dialectic between movement and stasis. This happens mainly through the juxtaposition of one static shot with a tracking shot, but also through the juxtaposition of movement and stasis within the same shot. When the camera turns static, the emphasis lies strictly on the *mise en scène* and the dialectic between onscreen and offscreen space. The offscreen space is conveyed through the use of sound. When the camera is set in motion, the elements of the *mise en scène* often turn static and the movement is carried through the camera. The camera contains an autonomous subjectivity, which can potentially abandon the action introduced by the characters and record, instead, the space that surrounds them.

We can see this clearly in the sequence of the welcoming feast, which also concentrates the formalised collision of the different groups in the socialist camp. The sequence is built on three long takes, separated by three interval shots. In Shot 32, the teacher leaves the dance hall to determine Alexander's whereabouts. The *Alexander interval* consists of only one shot (Shot 33). Shot 36 portrays Alexander's daughter as she carries her son to the room next to the dance hall. These are the three instances of the narrative moving away from the dance hall. However, the three long takes in the dance hall dominate the thematic sequence. All three follow a rhythm dictated by the tracking movement of the camera in relation to the ritualistic movement in the *mise en scène*. It is an inner rhythm that works towards a perception of a continuous visual field without a cut.

The action starts when a group of musicians enters the hall through the main door. The camera retreats, panning slightly to the left to follow the movement of the musicians as they enter from the corridor to the main room. It then enters the room after them. Inside the dance hall, the communards are sitting at large tables around the periphery. As the musicians return to the corridor and take their seats, the camera retreats to its starting position. Without a cut, it then turns to the left to follow the percussionist who moves to the center of the room. The camera follows its subject

until he returns to his seat, and then frames the main door. The second action is introduced with the entrance of the villagers and the anarchists. The camera performs a movement to the left, identical to the one performed for the musicians, until it is fixed in the centre of the room. After the initiation ritual, where the anarchists are accepted into the commune, the music signals the start of the dance. The movement of the actors sets forth the movement of the camera as it slowly pans, first to the left and then to the right, in order to capture the teacher in a three-quarter shot from behind. The teacher is framed with his back to the camera, so that his gaze points to the background left side of the frame. The background reveals the empty seats where Alexander and his men should be.

The diagonal frame allows the director to exploit the depth of field as the central point of reference in relation to the foreground. Thus, the director avoids the cut and maintains the uniformity of space. In this uniform space, the camera turns mobile when the characters move and comes to a halt when they stand still. During the third long take, the teacher is dancing with Laura, an Italian anarchist. The other Italians are singing the song *Avanti Popolo*. The dance is interrupted by the entrance of the rebels. Their war dance, performed in a circle while holding their rifles in the air, comes as a counter-statement to the existence of the commune. Once more, the game of power is conveyed in purely visual terms. Dancing and singing become signifiers of social conflict.

The sequence shot of the hanging rebel is another example of how the director *edits* the shot without a cut. The sequence starts as a medium shot of the stool being pushed under the feet of the rebel, who is being hanged on a tree in the central square. The camera zooms out while the rebel hangs in mid-air. It then turns into a static extreme long shot, capturing the square and houses in the background. The trumpet announces the beginning of the second action; it is the arrival of an army cavalry unit. The female hostages are placed on the left side of the frame, in front of the hanged man, while all the rebels move out from both sides. The two actions are edited through audio-visual montage.

The galloping of hooves announces the army's arrival, a processional entry accentuated by the lack of action on the empty stage. The cavalry arrives together with a wagon from the background, from the street that leads to the square in the foreground. Everything remains in sharp focus. From then on, the whole sequence proceeds in the form of a completed action and reaction. The women enter the wagon. The head of the army unit announces the inability of the government to grant an amnesty. While the speech is delivered, there is no cut to the rebels; their presence is felt rather than seen. Alexandros then enters the frame from the right, followed by his rebels and the rest of the hostages. They advance in a straight line, one behind the other, walking almost parallel to the axis of the lens as they leave the frame to the left. The cavalry in turn stands immobile and speechless. When one group is acting, the other is waiting and vice versa.

This type of internal montage is, of course, in strict accordance with an aesthetic developed in the *Trilogy of History*. However, the shot also highlights another aesthetic that was merely a feature in the previous trilogy: the systematic erasure of depth. In the above-mentioned sequence, the houses in the background seem as if they were two-dimensional and existed on the same visual plane as the sky. The use of a telephoto lens, while keeping everything in sharp focus, also renders the image flat. In *Megalexandros*, this deliberate lack of depth becomes predominant throughout the whole film and is a result of an emblematic study and incorporation of Byzantine iconography. Throughout the film, Angelopoulos incorporates shots where he places his subjects at a 90° angle or a slight diagonal from the lens' axis. It is usually in front of a flat wall that covers the frame or a massive landscape where the action is taking place in parallel lines to the camera lens.

The welcoming of Alexander by his daughter on his doorstep, like the static shot of the teacher talking to young Alexandros from the cell where he is being detained, exemplifies this kind of framing. Both are long shots and the background, in both cases, is a wall. The first has the characters in profile, the second in a frontal posture. When the landowner Tzelepis receives his letter, he is framed in a similar manner in an extreme long shot; this time, it is in an open field where the formation of parallel

horizontal lines in relation to the camera lens gives an impression of flatness. The landowner is sitting on an armchair in the middle of an open field. The identity of Tzelepis is presented in a purely visual manner, without the use of any dialogue. Tzelepis faces the camera. The line of the horizon is in a parallel line. Likewise, the coach that enters the frame is moving in another parallel line. All the points of reference are perpendicular to the lens axis. The composition thus renders the feeling of a flat surface, where the difference in size of the objects depicted becomes the sole signifier of depth, as in Byzantine iconography.

This is even more evident, due to the content, in the Last Supper sequence. The shot starts as a medium shot of Alexander sitting behind a table. As the frame slowly opens, it reveals a long straight table with Alexander in the middle and the rebels at the sides, posed like the twelve apostles. The frame is lit in high contrast. The villagers in the foreground are in shadow, sitting parallel to the table while the rebels on the table are under high key lighting. The parallel lines erase the sense of perspective and render the image with a flatness whose depth is designated through the high contrast in lighting.

Horton also claims that, through Angelopoulos, a Byzantine heritage makes its way onto celluloid.²⁰ In order to support his claim, he gives examples from *The Travelling Players* and *The Hunters*. For Horton, the emphasis on a lingering sensation of time inscribed in the long take invokes a sense of Byzantine iconography, in which two-dimensional figures also seem to be suspended out of time. The icon brings everything into the foreground, and the representation is free of any dramatic action. Similarly, in an Angelopoulos film the spectator is directed towards contemplating the image rather than being directed by the action.

I would also claim that in *Megalexandros* it is indeed the form that becomes the prime signifier of this tradition. It is the arrangement of the mise en scène, the use of telephoto lens and the position of the camera in addition to the duration of the shot. This heritage emerges in the film in terms of allusion and appropriation that carries the signature of an author, and not as an attempt at mimetic reconstruction. Together

with Andrei Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* (1966) and Sergei Paradjanov's *The Legend of Suram Fortress* (1984), the film remains exemplary in its incorporation of Orthodox Christian iconography.

During the second part of *Megalexandros*, every shot is arranged following a tableau aesthetic. Angelopoulos uses extreme long shots, where the landscape is framed from above in a manner reminiscent of tableau icons, which follow a similar pattern of framing. The sequence shot of Alexander's welcoming to the first village is one example. It starts as a tracking shot, following Alexander and his rebels as they move forward on the slopes of the hill from where the village is built. When Alexander stops in the middle of the slope and is then surrounded by the villagers, the camera (which had been placed on tracks on the sides of an opposite hill and was performing an upward movement) comes to a standstill. The shot has now turned into an extreme long shot that frames the opposite slope from an above diagonal, leaving the sky out of frame. Alexander is in the middle and the villagers approach him from all four sides. Once again, the sense of perspective is annulled.

Another significant feature, also found in the *Dekemvriana* sequence of *The Travelling Players*, is the use of the background space as a point of entry into the frame. Throughout the whole of *Megalexandros*, the human figures seem to emerge from behind the background image. We see this in the sequence of the hanged rebel, where the cavalry arrives from the background street in the middle of the frame. This effect becomes predominant in all the sequences set in the central square of the commune, which functions as a main stage for the third and final part. The bridge in the square next to the clock becomes a passage through which figures move in and out of frame. During the third part, the narrative constantly returns to the main square, which is always framed from the right side of the clock and the bridge. This constant return applies to almost all the spaces in and around the village, adding a strong theatrical element to the film. The continuity of the action is downplayed and each sequence acquires a sense of autonomy.

This constant return also grants a cosmic resonance to the onscreen space, so it seems to exist out of time. Instead of starting from an establishing shot of the village and moving in to explore the space in a succession of geographical planes, the camera gives the impression of observing a succession of images, each superimposed onto the other. This is reinforced by the shots of the bridge, which connects the periphery of the village with the far bank where the army is situated. The semicircular shape of the river evokes the feeling that the village is a Utopian space surrounded by water.

Colour becomes yet another feature of this Utopian element. The predominant use of ochre and stone grey, embroidered with touches of red and gold – which, in turn, becomes predominant inside Alexander's house – alludes constantly to a Byzantine aesthetic. Furthermore, this aesthetic is blended with an elliptical European Modernism. The elliptical mise en scène of the *Tzelepis* long shot also owes much to Brechtian alienation techniques, where the elements of the shot point up the social identities of the characters. The interior shots of the Prime Minister and Alexander, where the characters are framed in front of a wall – cancelling out a sense of perspective – belong more to an aesthetic developed by such European auteurs as Antonioni and Godard. Bordwell makes this last point very well, but he also relates this type of framing to the aforementioned exterior shots, where the action is set in front of a massive landscape. Following Heinrich Wölfflin's thought, he calls both framings 'planimetric':

The background is resolutely perpendicular to the lens axis and the figures stand frontally, in profile or with their backs directly towards us.²¹

However, the proximity of the lens in the interior shots does not seem to create an image of bodies flattened on a wall. Rather, it creates an elliptical space that becomes emblematic of Modernist form. If this space is 'planimetric' as Bordwell insists, then the exterior shots of Megalexandros are of another type entirely, as their effect on the viewer is wholly different. Bordwell's description of the planimetric, in itself a modern term, holds up well when he relates it to the last shot of *The Suspended Step*

of *the Stork* (due largely to its content) but it becomes problematic in relation to *Megalexandros*. It fails to deliver the cosmic suspension of chronological time that resonates throughout the *mise en scène* through the incorporation of Byzantine motifs. The use of the term 'planimetric' totally disregards this heritage as a point of reference.

In *Megalexandros*, this cosmic resonance – combined with the choreographed opposition of conflicting groups, and the use of song as a vehicle for the drama – creates a dynamic field in the *mise en scène*. This dynamic field is also mirrored in the progression of events, which becomes cataclysmic after the army arrives at the commune. Together with *The Travelling Players*, this is one of two Angelopoulos films where the flow of events unleashes its full dramatic tension only after the first half of the film has elapsed. In many cases, the events occur offscreen. What becomes visualised is the culmination of intensity, which is recorded onscreen through the recurrent disruptions generated by offscreen events. These disruptions, in the tradition of Ancient Greek tragedy, come in the form of a herald or messenger. The slaughtering of the sheep and the arrival of the army both occur off screen. The camera records the impact of the events through the breaking of the news, as both events generate turmoil among the communards.

During the shooting of *Megalexandros*, the camera was constantly placed on tracks – thus giving it the potential to be always mobile. A static shot like that of the hanging of the rebel could thus be turned into a mobile shot, without the use of a cut. It is no exaggeration to say this is the one film of Angelopoulos where the emphasis on fluid camera movements – blended with the rich symbolism embedded in the *mise en scène* and the Expressionistic use of natural light – gives a sense of all-powerful subjectivity to the recording apparatus. It is as if the film exists because a single, all-seeing eye was able to blend all these disparate historical moments into one entity.

Still, if we were to see the camera as 'the eye of God' that creates the filmic world, this eye would remain incomplete. It does not explain everything, for the simple reason that it cannot. Its vision is fragmented. According to Stoic philosophy, God

creates the universe but continues to be part of it. This God is very different from the Christian God; He does not stand outside the universe. This God cannot perceive its wholeness, since He is part of the whole. In the film, the eye of the camera does not offer an all-empowering knowledge. The subjectivity of the camera itself has become a part of the story it is telling – a consciousness at one constitutive of, and constituted by, the flow of events. Thus, we never learn who assassinated the district attorney. Did Alexander slaughter the sheep? Was he responsible for the death of the anarchists? Was there a secret agent who betrayed him, and was it the same person who was behind his escape from prison? During the Anarchists' singing of *La Dynamite*, the camera performs a circular movement but then continues to end on the young Alexandros observing an empty space. This was not the all-inclusive circle of a transgressive subject, but the (by now) familiar inquiring subjectivity of the camera as it moves in a spiral.

Angelopoulos breaks the illusion of objective reality from the very first shot of the film, when the narrator-shepherd speaks straight into the camera. The subjective nature of the camera-eye of the camera is thus made explicit. What follows, after the opening shot, is an attempt to question the themes of power and ideology, which Angelopoulos observes with the self-reflexive eye of the 20th century. The film becomes a fresco describing an indigenous culture, whose character is drawn from images and narratives that took shape in the same space throughout the millennia. The allusions to Byzantine iconography offer a grandiose yet critical view of a mythical hero. Angelopoulos portrays an agrarian culture whose need to believe in myths generates the iconic figure of Alexander. The image of Megalexandros is the sublime space where politics, religion and visual aesthetics blend into one indivisible entity.

Alexander represents the villagers' need to believe in a great leader, in the same manner that the Left believed in larger-than-life figureheads such as Stalin. Angelopoulos might share a sense of a 'timeless time' that echoes Byzantine iconography, but at the same time he remains highly critical of its mystical power. Still, Angelopoulos is not entirely critical of myths. As he has noted, Marxism was in

itself a grand myth – but one that gave people hope and meaning and sustained their image of Utopia.²²

Angelopoulos presents a film manifesto against the fetishisation of power. Just as the narrative declares its subjective standpoint, thus shattering its identity as a closed autonomous text, so the identity of an autonomous power over the flow of history is proved to be a mere façade. Megalexandros is portrayed as a hero, but his identification with power turns him into a tyrant. His separation from the communal subject of which he is part does not, however, empower him to take control of the course of events. As we find out, Alexander is used by other powers outside his control. Once he realises that he cannot be the master of events, Alexander kills the hostages in a fit of rage. The villagers engulf him in a circle and, as the director points out, they literally eat him alive.²³ When they move back, he is no longer there.

It is at that moment that the circle of Alexander is complete. The mythical hero had become separated from the subjects who created him. Now he is back in the cradle of the communal subject. What remains in his place is the head of a statue, broken on the ground as if to evoke the end of an era. As the army clears the remaining communards out of the square, one of the officers approaches the fractured head. At that moment, the sound of Alexander's galloping horse is heard off screen, as if his ghost were haunting the image. The startled soldiers start receding towards the back of the frame until the main square is left empty. The completion of the circle does not imply the end of Utopia. The spectre of Megalexandros remains, waiting for a new opening of the circle; for a new appropriation of the concept of revolution.

At the end of the film, we see the young Alexandros descend into the city, into the Athens of 1980. The boy rides into the present day, on the back of a donkey – perhaps as an emblem of hope. In *Voyage to Cythera*, we will meet young Alexandros as a middle-aged filmmaker at odds with what appears to be a post-historical space. The shot of contemporary Athens that ends *Megalexandros* marks, in its turn, the starting point for the *Trilogy of Silence*.

¹ The account of the production history of the film was based on interviews with Angelopoulos (June 2005) and his set photographer Dimitris Sofikitis (September 2005). The interviews are unpublished.

² Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible*, Routledge, New York/London, 1992, p. 87.

³ The figure is taken from the diary account of Konstantinos Themelis on *Megalexandros* in Κωνσταντίνος Θέμελης, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος: Το παρελθόν ως Φόρμα, Το Μέλλον ως Ιστορία*, Ύψιλον/βιβλία, Αθήνα, 1998, p.130.

⁴ It was a common belief in the Greek world during Alexander's time that the earth was flat and surrounded by the underworld. It was Aristarhos, though, who at the end of the 5th century BC, expressed the idea that the earth is round and it is moving round the sun. This fact was not only neglected by his contemporaries but also by all of western historiography until today. It was only recently that a few scholars have paid tribute to Aristarhos for his discovery. Alexander himself believed that after India he would reach the edge of the earth. To his surprise he discovered from travelers that after India came China. Alexander reached the banks of the Indus River in India and from there on he started his return journey. He died on the way before reaching Macedonia.

⁵ See Λευτέρης Ξανθόπουλος, 'Ο Μεγαλέξανρος-Τραγωδία και Μύθος' in Sergio Arecco, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, Ηράκλειτος., 1985, pp.142-143.

⁶ On the shadow play of Karagiozis and its relation with the filmic Alexander see also Andrew Horton, *The films of Theo Angelopoulos: A Cinema of Contemplation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1997, pp. 51-53.

⁷ Historical references to Kolokotronis, Filiki Etairia and Rigas Feraios were taken from Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης, *Οι Λαοί των Βαλκανίων*, Εκδόσεις Εικοστού Πρώτου, Αθήνα, 1994, p.131,214-219,

⁸ Lefteris Ksanthopoulos also notes the allusion to Velouhiotis. He also adds that Alexander alludes to the director himself. See the article Λευτέρης Ξανθόπουλος, *Ο Μεγαλέξανρος-Τραγωδία και Μύθος*, ibid, p. 147.

⁹ See Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης, *Ιστορία (Κωμικοτραγική) του Νεοελληνικού Κράτους 1830-1974*, Εκδόσεις Εικοστού Πρώτου, Αθήνα, 1993, p. 213-214.

¹⁰ The reference to Makriyiannis is also pointed out by Leyteris Ksanthopoulos in Λευτέρης Ξανθόπουλος, *Ο Μεγαλέξανρος-Τραγωδία και Μύθος*, ibid, p. 147.

¹¹ Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης, 'Ο Θίασος της Ελληνικής Ιστορίας σ' ένα Ομιχλώδες Τοπίο' in *Το Ομιχλώδες Τοπίο της Ιστορίας (5 Κείμενα για τον Αγγελόπουλο)*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1990, pp.19-21.

¹² John Holloway, *Change the World without taking Power- The Meaning of Revolution today*, Pluto Press, London – Sterling Virginia, 2002, p.43.

¹³ See John Holloway, ibid., p.43-53.

¹⁴ Interview with the Author, unpublished (June 2005).

¹⁵ Holloway, op.cit. p.53.

¹⁶ Ksanthopoulos op .cit, p. 147.

¹⁷ Theo Angelopoulos on Interview with Michel Cement in Positif, issue 250, January 1982. Extracts of the interview are included in Barthélémy Amengual, *Μια ποιητική της Ιστορίας* in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Eirini Stathi, Καστανιώτης, Αθήνα, 2000, p.32.

¹⁸ Holloway, op. cit. p.58.

¹⁹ The account of the historical events is included in Lefteris Ksanthopoulos, *Ο Μεγαλέξανρος-Τραγωδία και Μύθος* ibid, p. 146.

²⁰ See Andrew Horton, *The films of Theo Angelopoulos-A cinema of contemplation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, p.26-27.

²¹ David Bordwell, 'Modernism, Minimalism, Melancholy' in *The Last Modernist*, ed. Andrew Horton, Flicks Books, Wiltshire, 1997, p.20.

²² Interview with the Author, unpublished (June 2005).

²³ Interview with the Author, ibid.

VOYAGE TO CYTHERA / ΤΑΞΙΔΙ ΣΤΑ ΚΥΘΗΡΑ

The film starts with a shot of the Milky Way inside a planetarium. The narrative cuts to an image of a child during the Nazi occupation. The boy is sneaking up behind a Nazi soldier and pushes a traffic sign out of his hands. He then tries to hide as if playing a game of hide and seek.

A cut introduces a man waking up in contemporary Athens. He walks to his balcony where he meets his son. It is the same child from the previous sequence. We follow the man on his way to a film set. An audition is taking place where a group of old men are quoting the line 'it is me'. The man walks to the next set where he meets an actress with whom he seems to be having an affair. We realise that this man is the director and that the old men are auditioning for his film. The director's name is Alexandros.

Voyage to Cythera is presented as a film inside a film. Alexandros directs a film in which he plays the son of an ex-partisan returning from self-imposed exile after thirty two years. Spyros, the father had fled to the countries of the Eastern Bloc after the end of the Greek Civil War in 1949.

Alexandros, the director, meets the image of 'his filmic father' in a wandering old man who sells lavender in the street. After the audition sequence Alexandros follows the old man to the port and from then on we are in the film inside the film.

Spyros arrives on a boat that has just come from the U.S.S.R. He utters the line 'It's me'. It is the same line that the old men were saying in the audition. Spyros reunites with his wife Katerina and together with Alexandros and his sister Voula they venture towards their family house in a mountainous village. When they arrive, the village is almost deserted. They encounter a public sale of the land around the village to a company that wants to build a ski resort. The deal is being made between the younger relatives of those who used to stay in the

village, the few remaining elderly inhabitants and the representatives of the company. Spyros breaks in and sabotages the contract. The deal has to be unanimously accepted by all the owners of property. Spyros refuses to sign. The villagers react. One of the locals, Antonis, starts a fight with Spyros. It emerges that they had fought on opposite sides during the civil war. The villagers manage to drive Spyros and Katerina out of the village. The police finally apprehend the old couple in an old train station that lies in the middle of an open field with the excuse that Spyros' residence permit has not been authorised.

The couple is taken to Athens and then straight to the port. Alexandros goes to the port authorities after his father had been arrested. The authorities try to deport Spyros on a Russian ship but the captain refuses to take him on board if he does not go of his own free will. The local authorities have orders to take the old man beyond the national border. After the attempt to send him onboard fails, they place him on a raft on the high sea until a resolution is found.

During the workers' celebration that takes place in the port at night Katerina wishes to join Spyros on the raft. Alexandros is unable to do anything for his father. The dawn finds the old couple on the raft. Spyros lifts up Katerina and unties the rope that is holding the raft. They face the camera as they stand silent on the raft which is left floating at the background of the frame, towards the horizon.

In 1981 the political scenery in Greece changed when the socialist government of Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou came to power. It was the first time since 1964 that Greece had witnessed a non-rightist government. The new government of ΠΑ.ΣΟ.Κ. (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) established a welfare state and worked towards the so-called bridging of the National Division that had held strong since the end of the civil war. The first four years of office coincided with an incredible wave of benefits for the lower middle classes. The government was also characterised by a strong sense of populism.

In cinematic terms the new decade coincided with the advent of new filmmakers of dissent. Pavlos Tassios with *Paragelia* (1980), Nikos Nikolaidis with *Sweet Bunch* (1983) and Nikos Vergitsis with *Revanche* (1983) pointed the way towards new themes that reflected a generation that was growing tired either of petit bourgeois materialist values or the sterile agenda of orthodox communism. The wave of new directors concentrated on the micronarratives of groups that refused to see themselves as part of a left/right dichotomy but rather drew autonomous paths in their attempt towards self-definition.

With the rise of the new decade and after completing *Megalexandros*, Angelopoulos was planning to film one of the most renowned novels of modern Greek literature, *The Third Wedding* (*To Tρίτο Στεφάνι*) written in 1963 by Kostas Tahtsis. The project was never realised and in 1982 Angelopoulos directed a short TV documentary as part of a series funded by the Italian production company Trans World Films. The series featured many European directors, each creating a short profile of a European city. The Taviani brothers made a film on Rome; Miklos Jancsó made a film on Budapest, Carlos Saura directed a short on Madrid and so on. Angelopoulos contributed with a forty-three minute film called *Athens: Return to the Acropolis*, where the cityscape blends with the director's personal impressions and memoirs from his own lifetime.

In 1983 Angelopoulos completed his next feature *Voyage to Cythera*, a film tribute to the civil war exiles. After the defeat of the Democratic Army in the civil war, many partisans fled from the mountain Grammos which had been their last stronghold to the countries of the Eastern Bloc. They were refused re-entry to Greece and many were sentenced to death or life imprisonment after being tried in absentia. In 1981 the Papandreou administration started the gradual readmission of ex-partisans. It was a project that would meet many obstacles in bureaucracy and would last for over a decade. The film is a fictional story built around the homecoming of an ex-partisan who returns after thirty two years in exile.

Voyage to Cythera was shot in Athens and in locations in Epirus. The film launched the enduring collaboration of Angelopoulos with screenwriter Tonino Guerra and composer

Eleni Karaindrou. It was funded by the Greek Film Centre in collaboration with the German channel Z.D.F., the British Channel 4, the Italian R.A.I. and the Greek National Network (E.P.T.). The film was nominated for the Palme D' Or but lost to Wim Wenders' *Paris Texas*. *Voyage to Cythera* received the award for Best Script instead. Whether that was a fair judgment is a matter of perspective but surely the award for best script is an ironic award for a director whose film language is based on the image.

“One, two...One, two... I’m losing the tempo...”

Voyage to Cythera marks a turning point in Angelopoulos' career. The retrospective of history is completed. History is replaced by the existential drama of the individual. The previous trilogy and its coda *Megalexandros* focused on the movement of larger social groups during the events that shaped Modern Greece as an entity. Now the collective narratives of the 1970s films gives way to the story of the individual in search of an identity in a contemporary world where the utopian ideals of the Left that shook the twentieth century seem to have elapsed. Jameson claims that with *Voyage to Cythera* Angelopoulos operates within the frame of a traditionalist aesthetic.¹ The phenomenological wandering of a singular hero is a road marked by cinematic authors in the sixties and before. The individual hero facing a fragmented world that does not reflect his subjectivity is a theme that runs throughout Modernist authors, from Kafka and Joyce in literature to Bergman, Antonioni and Fellini in cinema.

Jameson places this shift in Angelopoulos as part of a European disillusionment caused by the failures of the grand narratives of the Left. Despite this, he also notes that the structure of the journey that is integral to almost every post-80s film of Angelopoulos is a form that sustains a vision of change and belief in utopia. We also adopt Jameson's position and claim that the wandering of the individual hero framed in long takes brings to the foreground a wider field of social relations that are reflected in the *mise en scène*. However, the return of

utopian hope does not occur until the end of the eighties with *Landscape in the Mist*. For now Angelopoulos seems to be immersed in a melancholic pessimism.

Voyage to Cythera in a way starts from where *Megalexandros* ended. *Megalexandros* was the story of the great leader who separates himself from a communal subject and identifies with the iconic image of a father despot. Angelopoulos incorporated Byzantine motifs to draw the image of a mythical figure as a blend of religious mysticism and political absolutism. This incorporation of Byzantine motifs had a double register. It denoted the presence of an indigenous aesthetic and its incorporation in secular art but it also provided an allegory for the Eastern Bloc states where the advent of Stalinism (1929-1953) brought about a religious-like propaganda in order to establish absolutism.

Megalexandros appears as a mystical figure of divine origin. He is the slayer of the dragon in a manner reminiscent of Saint Georgios in Christian Orthodox iconography. The result is at one beautiful and frightening. The use of green and gold undertones, the suspension of depth and the choreographed movement in the mise en scène deliver a beautiful imagery that alludes to Byzantine icons. Yet at the same time the narrative deconstructs the mystifying imagery of absolutism and the dogmatism of religion. At the end, in yet another allegorical image, the father of the Left is devoured by his children.

In the final shot of *Megalexandros* we see young Alexandros entering a modern day Athens. He comes to the contemporary world riding a donkey in the final messianic image of the film. In *Megalexandros* the boy was a pure witness. He did not have any part in the formation of history that was shaped around mountains and inside the utopian village. He then becomes the bearer of memory and is allegorically transferred into the present. *Voyage to Cythera* becomes his film.

The year is now 1983. The main character in the film is in his mid forties and is also called Alexandros. He is a film director in crisis who wants to make a film about his father. In a way *Megalexandros* was also a film about a father and the need to believe in the icon of a great

leader. The father now returns from exile after thirty-two years. The return is not the return of a king. It is the homecoming of an old man.

The father, Spyros, belongs to the generation of the troupe in *The Travelling Players*. A boy immigrant from Asia Minor, he fought in the Resistance against the Nazis and then took part in the civil war on the side of the Democratic Army, to find himself defeated and forced to self-exile in order to save his life. He comes from beyond the sea like Megalexandros in the Poseidon Temple sequence but now his appearance is not marked with a grand entrance. He appears as a double inside a puddle of water that reflects his image when he makes his way down from the embarked ship.

When the boat arrives, the camera frames the sides of the ship and records the slow mechanical movement of the passenger ladder as it approaches the ground. The camera tilts down as it follows the movement of the ladder and reveals a puddle of water on the ground. The frame now shows the puddle and the end of the ladder. The sound of footsteps is heard coming from out of field informing us viewers that someone is coming down the ladder. The camera tilts further down and away from the source of the sound until it frames the puddle exclusively. Through its reflection in the water we see a human figure stepping off the ladder and standing still. We only see a reflection and it is as if the figure acquires a ghostly presence. Spyros, played by Manos Katrakis, the iconic actor of modern Greek theatre and a well-known figure of the Left, marks the return of the civil war ghosts for the second time in Angelopoulos, the first being the dead partisan in *The Hunters*.

In *the Hunters* the ruling bourgeoisie suffer from traumatic projections of guilt. Now an anonymous bureaucracy is casting Spyros off to the high seas not because he is a source of threat but because he runs counter to petty interests. The people in his old village turn against him and one of the villagers, Antonis, who had fought on the side of the regular army during the civil war, starts a physical fight with Spyros. Yet at a later point in the narrative they become reconciled. For the rest of the villagers Spyros is someone who stands in the way of profit. Only Antonis, played by another prolific figure of old commercial Greek cinema,

Dionysis Papagiannopoulos, can truly be reconciled with him because at the end of his life he sees that they were both caught in the middle of the historical events that shook Europe in the 20th century.

When the two men meet for the last time the president addresses Spyros in a calm manner in contrast to their two previous encounters: “We were used, Spyros...they pushed us into fighting each other. You on one camp, me on the other...we both lost.” As he walks away he starts whistling an old army song. Spyros never replies; he is fixed in silence. In a familiar Angelopoulou manner the shot retains its ambiguity. Does the director share the same opinion? It is as if Angelopoulos is alluding to the meeting Churchill had with Stalin in Yalta in 1945 where it was decided that Greece would form part of the Western sphere of influence. The communists and the partisans who fought in the civil war never knew of the arrangement.

Angelopoulos with *Voyage to Cythera* pays tribute to the civil war generation. Angelopoulos is naturally predisposed to those who suffered most, those that were defeated. It is certain that he does not see their struggle as futile. The *Trilogy of History* was a landscape where the human agent was engaged in constant struggle. He/she was structurally constituted by the simultaneous presence of grand political narratives, national myths and cultural texts. Their acts were affected by great historical events, international arrangements and business contracts between larger agents of power. These events would occur offscreen beyond the subject's power to act. Within a circular web he/she fought for the way to redemption.

Voyage to Cythera presents a split image between an *actor* and a *seer*. Alexandros wants to make a film about his father. Spyros is the main character of Alexandros' film and therefore an actor in his film. But the way I use the term *actor* here also denotes the subject's power to act and the agency of someone who participated in the events that shook modern Greek history. It comes in contrast with the image of Alexandros who looks back in time and records the history of his father's generation. He is more of a contemplative persona, a witness. This is not a contrast of a psychological nature between two individuals. It reflects

the state of suspension Alexandros feels and a wider crisis of the subject at the time that the film was made.

Spyros' return is marked by his immediate reaction against the commercialisation of his village. The old partisan returns from exile wearing a coat and carrying a suitcase in his hands. His tall posture and the determination in his walk denote his strong presence. When Spyros arrives at the village we see him dancing in the graveyard. It is a proud dance and the sound of the Pontiac Lyra marks the affective nature of the shot. We as spectators follow Spyros to the public selling off of the village farms. Spyros withdraws in haste towards his hut in the fields where he picks up his shovel and starts working on the land. The villagers react and they run towards him. Spyros refuses to sign the documents agreeing to the sale of the land. The Angelopoulion hero returns to an unfamiliar space. The villagers want him out. The President reads him aloud the death sentence that the court marshal imposed on him in absentia: "Spyro you do not exist. You are a dead man." The president comes to Spyros' house in the middle of the night. Finally the villagers burn his hut and then drive him out of the village. Together with his wife Katerina he wanders among a desolated setting of rundown neoclassical buildings in a city until they find temporary shelter in a train station. The station is a transitory space in the middle of nowhere symbolised by the name Mesohorion (the space between). It symbolically denotes the state of limbo that has taken over the old couple.

In the next stage of the film, the official authorities take their turn. In a grotesque manner familiar from *Days of '36* they become carriers of the absurd. Spyros is caught in yet another web. He does not have a residence permit and his citizenship has not yet been recognised. The police lieutenant asks Alexandros: *Are you sure this person is your father, he could be anyone...* Without us seeing an agent of higher authority we are left witnessing a group of men in uniforms who after following orders attempt to send Spyros off Greek national territory. When they fail to make Spyros embark on a Russian ship they then place him on a raft on the open sea.

Angelopoulos portrays Spyros in terms of a modern Odysseus.² This is suggested in a highly poetical image when Spyros is reunited with his dog, in a manner familiar from the *Odyssey* where the hero, although transformed into a beggar by the Goddess Athena, is recognised by his own dog. Yet again, Angelopoulos takes his everyday characters and elevates them to the realm of myth. We could argue that together with *The Travelling Players* and *Megalexandros* the film becomes a third attempt to incorporate ancient myths. All three films are part of the same drive, notably to mark the presence of ancient narratives in the same geographical space where they first evolved and to see how this space has become part of the psychogeography of a collective subject affected by these myths in the contemporary world. But unlike *The Travelling Players* and *Megalexandros*, where the use of myth is more culturally specific, Angelopoulos now draws from a narrative that has evolved into a universal myth throughout the millennia in order to mark the path of his solitary hero. This we see as an attempt at a more humanistic narrative in relation to the previous tetralogy.

The Odysseus icon becomes integral to almost all the post-eighties films through the allegorical use of the journey. Angelopoulos keeps faith in an aesthetic that clearly belongs to modernism. As Slavoj Žižek points out, it is in modernism that the historical hero becomes mythical, in contrast to a postmodern path that aims at deconstructing myth and putting it in an everyday historical context.³ This does not imply that the modern Odysseus is the ahistorical subject of the bourgeois imaginary on his way to redemption. The film includes its contradictions. *Voyage to Cythera* is a film made as a tribute to the old partisan but it is also a film made under social democracy. The sponsors of the film that make their way onto the screen in scenes such as the one in the petrol station where we see the logo of an oil company, hint at the film's mode of production. It is an inevitable paradox that Angelopoulos manages to incorporate very well. The enforced advertisements of large companies that are incorporated into the world of fiction become indices of the film's angst. Yet it is precisely the silence of Alexandros that comes as an answer. The film has to be made.

The old man may be the incarnation of Odysseus, he may be an actor of history like Orestes was in *The Travelling Players*, but he is also alone. In keeping with the *Trilogy of History*,

Angelopoulos depicts the futility of individual action if it is not followed by a collective drive. Spyros becomes a voyager but his journey is not one of redemption. The homeland becomes a second exile. The coat, functioning now as the grand signifier of Angelopoulos' second period, becomes its mirror image. The individual is left with a suitcase to wander in an unfamiliar universe. It is an image that is contrasted with the opening shot of the film. The majestic opening shot of the Milky Way in motion is an image of decorated space. It is a pure image, as if it came from the eyes of a wondering child. It is not by accident that the image is juxtaposed with one of a boy who sees the Nazi invasion as a game. The innocence of the child means he is fearless and the game turns into a natural act of resistance. The majestic opening shot presents the universe as an open adventure. It is a rotating circle inviting the viewer into a wondrous experience. Nevertheless, the universe that the Angelopoulou hero faces now contrasts with this wonder. The collective drive is here replaced by the solitary movement of the hero wearing a coat. The coat is the only object that can stand for the idea of the familiar, of home.

At the other end of the pole is the son Alexandros. Alexandros as a filmmaker is in control of one single thing: the ability to tell a story in images. That very function is now threatened. He may order night to appear on the set during the port sequence but right before that he murmurs "one two, one two, I'm losing the tempo." What we as spectators are presented with is the process of the author's struggle for maintenance, which is in turn juxtaposed with the suspended time of the father on the raft. The authorities are unwilling and unable to provide a resolution. The anonymous bureaucracy that has turned everybody into an identified functionalist is reconstructed in the port episode. The authorities work under orders; the port workers are powerless. They are reduced to the shades of the worker partisans of *The Travelling Players*. Spyros-Orestes is on the raft. The dynamics of *The Travelling Players* are suspended. The workers cannot but dedicate the celebration of their defeat to the old man. Alexander cannot put the images together. What remains is the stretch of suspended times of waiting.

At one point during the port episode we see a jester doing a trick show in front of Alexandros. The latter does not respond, as if his motor capacities have collapsed. They are interrupted by the port workers coming into the bar. An empty spectacle organised by the workers' union is paraded before him. The jester is reminiscent of the mime artists in Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966). It is they who force the young photographer Thomas to question the objective powers of his photo lenses. The young photographer watches the mime artists as they are pretending to play with a tennis ball. Yet, even though the tennis ball is absent, Thomas is at one point able to hear the tennis rackets striking a ball. It is an ambiguous image which turns the narrative back to the male protagonist who now becomes an observer. Was there a murdered body in the photograph he took in the park at an earlier point in the narrative or was the body a mere play of shadows as a result of him blowing up the picture? The answer will remain suspended.

In *Voyage to Cythera* on the other hand, Alexandros does not react to the mime and the image once again carries a double resonance. Alexandros' reality is that of the jester who unlike in *Blow-Up* appears as a hollow messenger. The presence of the jester can be seen as a signifier for the bankruptcy of the working class, which is putting on the sad celebration. But the jester might also be seen as an allegorical figure suggesting cinema as an empty spectacle. Now the director is part of this spectacle since he is part of the film he is making. The empty spectacle is not an entertainment break in the passage of everyday life. It becomes all-embracing and objective.

Before Alexandros moves to the port he pauses in the middle of a street and practises the thematic score of the film. He pushes the air with his fingers as if he were playing the piano. The camera which has tracked him stops and then retreats slowly while the director rehearses the theme by writing one note after the other in thin air. It is as if Alexandros, the film director, is pausing in order to be able to put the right pieces together. It is indicative from the distanced punctuation that the director is composing at this very moment. The sequence becomes a tool, a comment on the creative process. Alexandros pauses and the image drops its functional use as a continuity shot that connects two actions in two different spaces.

Alexandros abandons the action and remains suspended in the space between, in the street. Instead the element of movement is carried forward by the camera. It is as if the dialectics drawn from the stasis of the individual and the movement of the camera bring forward the thinking of thought. If the subject is caught inside the movement the subject is drawn by the action. Alexandros is pausing in order to reflect on what has been shown so far and what is to come. The camera moves towards an image of thought. It replaces the movement of the subject in the *mise en scène* with a tracking shot that in its final retreat from the onscreen director aims to generate an emotional and intellectual movement in the spectator. We then as spectators are left free to see the sequence as a *haiku* for the cinema of Angelopoulos. The absence of drama and the emphasis on the long duration of the shot becomes a time raft for the spectator to embark and use his enunciative power in order to make sense of the images. This is what the director can suggest after the death of the Father, a process that concentrates on the *doing* not the *done*. It is a process free from saturated images of speed and the emphasis on speech as identifying and imposing a fixed meaning on the image.

Objectivity/subjectivity

Voyage to Cythera appears as a film inside a film. It is presented through the eyes of the diegetic director Alexandros. The film clearly belongs to the tradition of a *cinema of poetry*. In his paper of that title, Pier Paolo Pasolini argues that the filmmaker unlike the writer cannot be fully immersed into the discourse of the characters and imitate their speech simply because his/her tools are not the lexicon of words but rather the raw material of reality.⁴ He notes that in reality communication is based on the evocation of linguistic and gestural signs which he calls *lin-signs*, which form an objective common denominator that is in constant dialogue with a personal world of images made out of memory and dreams. Each image that the human agent encounters is an image that communicates through these signs. Pasolini describes the world of dreams and memory as comprising a signifying system which he calls *im-signs*. The *im-signs* are affected by *lin-signs* or cultural signs but they also carry a pre-

historical and pre-grammatical nature. They belong to the realm of the unconscious. Cinema evokes the use of *lin-signs* since they are a means of communication but their nature is irrational like dreams, since they are not based on an organised lexicon from which they can articulate. The image lacks the representational conceptual framework of language. There is no such thing as an abstract conceptual image. In the cinematic image the field of objects is transferred onto the screen. Inevitably every object will carry a set of *lin-signs* that is precinematic and historical. But it is as if the object is animated onto the screen. The object is not abstractly represented. The language of cinema is that of images and the filmmaker then has to find a way to communicate his discourse and that of the characters through them. As John Orr points out, following Deleuze's writings on Pasolini:

[for Pasolini]The film images are irrational. This does not move the image away from the Real but towards it. Gilles Deleuze has pointed out that Pasolini's critique signalled a shift from the arid formalism of semiology towards a new kind of language system, a language system of reality...Movement and image are inseparable, for the naïve critical isolation of images as 'objects' presupposes an immobility of objects which is not only misleading but goes against the grain of the film medium itself. Thus the false semiological distinction between the object as mere referent and the image as a component of the signified breaks down. In film, image and object are inseparable. Film is not a succession of represented objects but a series of moving images. A film language exists through its response to non-linguistic material which it then transforms and narration is grounded in the image itself.⁵

An image cannot have isolated graphemes or phonemes that it assembles in order to produce meaning; an image is always based on the coexistence of multiple signs which in turn are neither placed transparently on the screen nor abstractly represented. The image carries the subjective input of its creator, the filmmaker, who now has to provide a discourse through a sign language specific to the medium. The *free indirect discourse* is for Pasolini the guarantee of this visual language coming to the foreground. Focusing mostly on Antonioni, Pasolini the theorist points out that the filmmaker's discourse is being fused with that of the character, whose distorted vision of the world becomes the excuse for a new visual style that

he calls the cinema of poetry. This is a modern cinema that breaks with the older notions of what a poetic film is. What up to Antonioni and Godard was termed poetic was a lyricism that drew on a static use of the *mise en scène*. It was a notion that drew either on literature or on painting and the theatricality of the shot. Pre-modern cinema was based on narrative and (which Pasolini admits as being crudely defined) the idea of the camera *not being felt*. This is what he defines as a cinema of prose: a set of conventions, stylemas that have been established as syntagmas for a universalised perception of film narrative. An objective narrative stands as the real which entails the subjective point of view of the characters either in terms of subjective viewpoints or memory sequences separated from the real. Flashbacks are either subjective or objective; in the latter case their relation to the notion of truth is unquestionable. The objective narrative defines how things happened or how a character recollects an event; every shot then becomes identified in this bipolar system resulting in a naturalist aesthetic. It is interesting to note that Pasolini avoids discussing the films of the Soviet montage school.

The opposite line comes through his definition of the cinema of poetry. Irrational cuts, breaking the 180° degree rule, holding the camera against the sun, became *stylemas* in a new technical vocabulary that defined the cinema of poetry which now through a new formalism allows the camera to be felt. Pasolini cites Antonioni's *Red Desert* (1964) as the prime example where the director's discourse is fused with that of the main character of Monica Vitti who plays a neurotic individual. The fusion is not one of identification but of analogy. This means that the director retains a distance from the main character, who usually belongs to a different social class from that of the director. In the case of *Red Desert* it is both gender and social class that allow the director to maintain a distance. How is this fusion possible? Pasolini sees it as being materialised in the incorporation of what he calls *the free indirect point of view shot*. The film registers the collapse of the distinction between the objective and the so-called point of view shot into one.

In the film *A Chronicle about Love* Antonioni had already visualised an aesthetic where the characters move into the frame in a shot that appears to be registered as their point of view.

We have already seen this function in Angelopoulos in *Reconstruction*. In *Red Desert* this collapse of distinction meets the authorial inscription of unnatural elements in the mise en scène as signifiers of the heroine's view of the world. In a shot where Monica Vitti is also included we witness a wagon full of apples in the background. The apples are grey and come to render the heroine's distorted view of the objective world while she is inside the frame. Yet for Pasolini this poetical arrangement of the mise en scène is not as important as framing the space per se. What comes to the foreground is not the action propelled by the characters but the double register of space. This is both an autonomous entity where the characters move in and out of frame and a double for their psychological state. As Pasolini puts it, it is the autonomous beauty of things that comes to the centre of attention. These *things* are none other than the moving images themselves. The neurotic state of the individual becomes the pretext for the second register of the cinema of poetry: style.

Pasolini does not include in his conception of the cinema of poetry auto or semi-autobiographical films. For him it is crucial that the director maintains a distance from the diegetic character. For that reason Federico Fellini's *8 ½*, (1963) which has the main character Guido acting as the alter ego of the director, is not included in Pasolini's conception of the free indirect discourse. *Voyage to Cythera* certainly belongs to the category of a semi-autobiographical film. Yet as Angelopoulos notes he feels that under Pasolini's distinction between a cinema of prose that obeys the laws of naturalism thus giving the illusion of an objective reality, and a modern cinema of poetry that registers its subjective function by laying bare its tools, he certainly belongs to the latter.

In *Voyage to Cythera* Alexandros is the alter ego of Angelopoulos. We see him as the director of the film where he plays Spyros' son. Angelopoulos adopts an aesthetic which technically lies very close to what Antonioni introduced with the free indirect point of view shot. As early as *Reconstruction*, we saw main characters walking inside the frame in what appeared to be their point of view. We find this in *Voyage to Cythera* when Alexandros appears from the right side of the frame into our visual field during the cemetery sequence. In the background Spyros is dancing. But the most important factor which grounds the film in

the tradition of a cinema of poetry is that the image loses its subordination to empirical reality and following the above quotation, narration is based in the image itself. The film ceases to be a referent to a pre-filmic objective reality. Throughout the *Trilogy of History* and now with the *Trilogy of Silence* one of the prime characteristics of the cinema of Angelopoulos is that the camera is registered as an autonomous subjectivity. The movement that the camera manifests in the first period of Angelopoulos resulted in what we have called an impersonal subjectivity. Now in *Voyage to Cythera* the camera shares its subjective point of view with that of the main character who whilst not having a separate language from that of the author, nevertheless registers the film as belonging to the realm of *im-signs*. Furthermore in *Voyage to Cythera* the world of the film inside the film and the world of reality are inseparable. Both worlds are moving images.

We could claim that the film is Angelopoulos' 8½. It was in the diegetic world of 8½ that Federico Fellini placed Marcello Mastroianni as his alter ego.⁶ But in Fellini's film the neurotic gaze of Guido reflects the childhood lusts and repressions, in short the psychological profile of the director who in his attempt to make a film lays bare the man-eating processes of the film industry. Fellini creates a surreal space where the real and the imaginary intermingle in order to see the world through the fragmented mirror of the director's psyche, which is projected through a baroque environment. What prevents Pasolini from placing it within a new cinema of poetry is the fact that Fellini does not produce a distancing effect with the use of the camera. 8½ does not present a split in the visual field between the main character and the movement of the camera. The film is Guido's film exclusively.

In *Voyage to Cythera* however, the camera is indeed distant from Alexandros. His moving in and out of frame allows for a different gaze to be inscribed on the *mise en scène*. Furthermore, as we have already established, the film presents the story of two characters. Alexandros' film is about his father, not himself. The ego of the director recedes for the emphasis to be laid on the director as a process for telling stories. When Alexandros returns to his office in Athens, we see the film poster of *The Travelling Players* hanging on the wall. Alexandros reads from the script of *Voyage to Cythera*. Although the film is more personal

than the previous Trilogy and its coda *Megalexandros*, the narrative still abstains from the use of dialogue and excessive monologues in order to analyse the characters. The film does not contain a single monologue by Alexandros. This is the major difference of the film not only to *8½* and the narratives of semi-autobiographical films in general but also with what is to follow in Angelopoulos' filmography. The character might be a reflexive image of Angelopoulos yet the film abstains from the use of psychology or melodrama. The form of the film includes the personal drama of the individual along with the portrayal of a wider field of social relations.

Alexandros' childhood is presented in the opening sequence through a single episode whose meaning is not fixed to that of a personal memory. The small boy is pushing the signpost out of the hands of the Nazi. The chase turns into a variation of a hide and seek game. The elusive meaning of this sequence lies in the familiar manner of extracting meaning through the juxtaposition of sequences and in this case through the juxtaposition of this sequence with the rest of the film. One could interpret the child's play as an act of rebellion that unites him with the image he had built for his father. Or is it the confession of somebody who wants to make a film about a father but does not share the same experience and is thus left to observe from a distance? Either interpretation could be true. Furthermore we are never certain if this episode is a dream or a real memory. What comes to the foreground is the attempt to portray the creative process of storytelling. It is a process that although for the first time attempting to open up the characters' psychology, still follows Benjamin's dictum for an ambiguous rendering that will activate the receiver to constitute the story as his and then act as another transmitter.⁷

Benjamin cites Herodotus' story of the Egyptian king Psammenitus who after being defeated by the Persian king Cambyses is tied up and forced to watch his family paraded before him as slaves. He remains silent but at the sight of one of his former slaves he breaks into tears.⁸ This is a narrative that follows a pattern of juxtaposing images as if an observer is watching the event without imposing his/her interpretation.

We find the same pattern in *Voyage to Cythera*. Spyros starts digging the earth during the public sale of the farms. His act can easily be read as an opposition to the sale. Yet the director abstains from laying bare the man's thoughts. Why is Spyros fixated on keeping barren land? The answer will not be provided by delving into the man's psyche. It will have to be extracted from a set of relations based on the poetics of the image. When Spyros returns to his hut we see him in a seemingly objective shot approaching from the background holding a shovel in his hands. On his left side lies a tree. Its colour is blue, reminiscent of the outlandish grey apples that lie on a cart next to Monica Vitti when she comes out of her house in Antonioni's *Red Desert*.

The blue tree transforms the landscape from an objective space to a semi-subjective visual field. The land becomes an *im-sign* belonging to the realm of memory and dreams. The land as seen through the eyes of Spyros generates colour. The shot is contrasted with the shot which immediately follows: an objective shot of his hut being burned to the ground by the villagers. We should not be confused though: the film does not present the point of view of Spyros. It is only in that particular shot that the director immerses himself into the old man's psyche. Throughout the rest of the film, Spyros is seen from the point of view of Alexandros, whose vision directs the film.

Another question arises. Are we actually seeing Alexandros' film being made or does this only take place in the imagination of the director? From the moment that the actress appears as Alexander's sister in the port, informing him of their father's arrival, we are in the film inside the film. The transition, however, happens without a cut. Alexandros follows the old man to the port where the latter vanishes off frame. Alexandros is left contemplating, looking off screen to the left, in the direction that the old man left in. Without cutting away from him, the actress then appears from this same place and addresses Alexandros as her brother. The distinction between the fictional world and the *real* world is blurred.

The inner film becomes the film itself where Alexandros functions both as son and filmmaker. A conventional way of portraying the film inside the film would be to expose the

apparatus of the film being made. That on the other hand would identify the distinctions between two worlds, that of fiction and of an objective reality. The world of fiction though in this case is blended with the 'objective' reality. It is the world of dreams that meets the objective world in one entity, the realm of the cinema of poetry. The question of a film inside the film is thus a false question. In *Voyage to Cythera* there is no film inside the film. There is only the semi-subjective shot that encompasses Alexandros' mental state. It carries the image of the father as a recollection image of a social force who has been reduced to a solitary old man.

When Spyros returns in terms reminiscent of a modern Odysseus, his dog is there to welcome him after thirty-four years. This is a paradoxical image. In reality the dog would have been dead for years. Similarly when the family enters the house in the village for the first time the table is already set for them. In *The Travelling Players* we saw Elektra going through the streets of Athens and then finding her way to the guerrilla camp although in the previous sequence she had claimed with historical accuracy that the fighters had their stronghold in the mountains. I claimed then that the camera does not map a realistic objective space but rather marks a trail of remembrance that can unite disparate actions, similarly to the way it brought together actions from different chronological periods. It is the same with *Voyage to Cythera* where the mental space of Alexandros materialises the return of modern Odysseus. It is this mental space that comes to the foreground not only through the use of the camera and the staging of the mise en scène but also through the main musical score that finds its way onto the screen and throughout the whole film in minor variations.

The music of Eleni Karaindrou marks its first entrance in the Angelopoulouian filmography for *Voyage to Cythera*, only to become a permanent feature of his later films. We will not call it non-diegetic. In *Megalexandros*, where Angelopoulos used post-production music for the first time since *Reconstruction*, the mood was different. The transgressive theme of the clarinet accompanied by the Japanese-style chorus chant generated an all-inclusive space that superimposed the characters in the mise en scène. In *Voyage to Cythera*, the music combined with the space becomes part of the mental state of the main characters. We saw how

Alexandros practised the main theme by pushing his fingers into thin air in the middle of the street. Every stroke of his fingers carries a note from Karaindrou's theme. Therefore the term non-diegetic becomes totally inaccurate. The post-production music now becomes one with the mode of the image which in turn carries the characters' discourse. Similarly, when Spyros goes to greet his dead companions in the graveyard he dances to the sound of a Pontiac lyre that is in his mind. The audience shares this moment of ecstatic lament but the arousal of emotions does not reach the point of ecstasy for the audience; the camera refuses to reach a close up. Once again the camera portrays a situation of *man among* rather than *man and*. However, this breakdown of reason in order to enter the realm of poetry does not underline the triumph of the distracted will. That would result in an escapist film. Angelopoulos enters the realm of imagination and dreams but that does not pull him away from the social. Alexandros might be in control of the time and space in the form of the film but he cannot control the action of the agents that send Spyros onto the raft.

There is a further point to be made about the semi-subjective shot. For Deleuze it denotes a dividing in two of the same subject. Citing Henri Bergson he notes that:

two different egos [moi] one of which, conscious of its freedom, sets itself up as independent spectator of a scene which the other would play in a mechanical fashion. But this dividing in two never goes to the limit. It is rather an oscillation of the person between two points of view on himself, a hither and thither of the spirit...a being with.⁹

The camera sees a character watching but by doing this it thinks the character; it affects his point of view. The camera maintains a distance but it is also at one with the character. It is a split of vision that never reaches the fixed state of defining the subject and the object of the gaze, meaning that the camera does not identify as a pure subject where the character is reduced to an object of its gaze. The semi-subjective camera then becomes an index of an unidentified other that watches with the character. John Orr calls it a *being with others*.¹⁰ It becomes a denotative act of the breakdown of the notion of an autonomous agency and the rise of a space where subjectivity is constantly affective and affected.

Can we not claim that in *Voyage to Cythera* this *being with others* is felt not only through the semi-subjective camera shot but also through every character who sees himself/herself acting as another? In the film the obliteration of the borders between reality and fiction results in the return of each character as a double. After Alexandros witnesses the ongoing audition we see him walking into a set of a café where all the actors from the film inside the film are resting. When later on in the narrative each actor returns as a character in Alexandros' film, it is almost impossible to pin them down consciously into this initial sequence. At the first viewing of *Voyage to Cythera*, when Spyros makes his entrance uttering "It's me", we as spectators cannot help but feel a strong sense of amazement since it is only then that the signification of the previous audition is revealed. The return often recurs in a more subtle way as in the sequence where Spyros is reunited with his old partisan friend. It is almost impossible to relate him to the actor who was complaining that his coat was too big for him in the previous café sequence.

During the final port episode Alexandros stands in front of a mirror. He stands immobile while the camera records both him and his reflection in the mirror together with the ongoing action that occurs off screen. The workers are celebrating. It is inside the mirror that Voula appears standing parallel to her brother and delivers the lines that she as an actress was reading from a script in the café sequence at the beginning of the film. It is as if the narrative were being ruptured in order to deliver an uncanny effect. The music that the workers are playing is the same boogie that the leftist youth dace to in the 1946 New Year's sequence in *The Travelling Players*. The boogie was covered in a version with alternative lyrics ridiculing General Scobie. The song was used as a weapon in the collision of the leftist and the fascist groups. In *Voyage to Cythera*, the music reappears, this time with no lyrics. The dialectics of the image bring forward the dynamics of a past force in contrast to a hollow present. Voula seals the reflexivity of the shot: "There are times when I discover with terror and a sense of relief that I do not believe in anything. Then I come back to my body. It is the only thing that reminds me that I am still alive." Previously we had seen her having sexual intercourse with a sailor. It is a scene that Kolovos notes as crudely misogynist. Kolovos also notes that Voula's

hatred for her father is not justified and becomes another signifier of Angelopoulos' negative predisposition against her character.¹¹ Yet we should remember that Voula is not a character in a psychological drama. Her function as Spyros' daughter coincides with her being a type in a familiar Angelopoulouian manner for a wider social identity. Both Alexandros and Voula stand for a disillusioned generation and while Alexandros is more affectionate towards Spyros, Voula expresses a deeper rupture between her generation and that of her father's. Let us not forget that in *The Travelling Players*, Elektra gives us a reverse image of male voyeurism when she relentlessly forces an Italian soldier to stand naked in front of the camera, thus turning him into an object of the gaze. And it is Voula who returns from inside the mirror in order to deliver the film's most dramatic lines.

With *Voyage to Cythera* Angelopoulos introduces what he called his *Trilogy of Silence*. All the figures are drifting in solitude and frustration. In his first trilogy, Angelopoulos saw history as a perpetual movement of power between two poles, the Right and the Left. The identification of power at one pole, the Right, leaves room only for the aftermath of silence, which is inscribed in the form of the film, for example in the way that the long takes of corridors and shots lingering on the framing of closed doors in *Days of '36* signified the state of censorship under which the film was produced.

Angelopoulos remains faithful to the long take. The whole film consists of 74 takes. However, there are fewer sequence shots, just as there is a reduction in the collisions of social groups. The collision is reduced to the encounter between Spyros and Antonis in the village. The dynamics of history have ceased and all that is left from the Brechtian singing of *The Travelling Players* and *Megalexandros* is Antonis' military song, which he sings with a broken voice. Spyros remains silent. This is a moving image rather than a sober, politically-charged tableau. Angelopoulos also abstains from the use of large tableaux shots and evolves into an aesthetic of smaller episodes that contain two or three cuts for each sequence. The camera also gets much closer to the filmed subjects. Although Angelopoulos does not go as far as to frame the actors in an extreme close up, the camera will often evolve from an establishing shot to a mid close up of the character.

When Spyros is confined at the port and after the attempt to send him away on the Russian ship has failed, we find him together with Katerina at an empty warehouse. The old man is standing calling out to death. Starting from a long shot, the camera moves in towards him performing a double circle where Spyros is framed in mid close up. Without a cut, the camera then withdraws back into a long shot where we see Spyros from behind. This is the only circular movement of the camera in the film but unlike previous films the movement here takes the opposite direction. Instead of framing a visual periphery with the camera panning from a fixed centre, it now concentrates on a fixed centre with the camera gazing in from the outside. It is a movement that marks the shift towards introspection in the second period of Angelopoulos. The shift will incorporate the close up but not as a separate fragment: it will be included in the same space confines of a larger tracking shot.

This change of direction implies an immersion into a more melancholic minimalism. The solitary wandering of the alienated hero reduces the movement of large groups; the collective praxis of weddings and ceremonies gives way to more personal rituals like the welcoming of Spyros by his relatives in Athens and the cutting of the bread when they are about to dine inside their stone house in the village. The permeating colour here is blue, but its shades are very different from the cold light blue undertones of *The Hunters*. It is a much deeper blue that becomes yet another signifier of melancholia. Finally, the composition of the image remains elliptical as in the previous films and the use of telephoto lens allows the extreme long shots, that are now more limited, to have a clear visual field where the depth is rendered flat as if everything were occurring on the same plane. This is the case when the villagers are approaching on tractors from the far background during the public sale of the land and also for the shots taken outside Spyros' stone house while the police are looking for him after his hut has been burned down.

So why "Voyage to Cythera"? Cythera is the name of a Greek island, but the only time that the name Cythera appears in the film is on a message left on Alexandros' answering machine. The island, together with another two destinations, appears to be a possible location for the

film shoot. It was Vassilis Rafailidis who pointed out that *Voyage to Cythera* alludes to Watteau's painting *Embarquement pour Cythere*, which was painted early in the eighteenth century (1717). Rafailidis however, associates the painting with the ascending French middle class:

Watteau had every reason to be ridiculously optimistic: the middle class had not yet taken power and was lively and high-spirited because it had started to dream of its embarkation to Cythera. However in the middle of the 19th century, Baudelaire...discovered that all the ships for Cythera had sunk. The *Invitation to a Voyage* is an ironic reading of Watteau's painting... (Baudelaire) was the first to realise that Cythera exists only as a synonym of utopia.¹²

The painting is mistakenly identified with the middle class. I would read the painting as a Rococo work and see the landscape imagery as part of a feudal milieu. It is not the upcoming bourgeoisie that dreams of its embarkation to Cythera, yet the remark that Baudelaire sees Cythera as an unattainable utopia is crucial. We should also remember that Thomas Moore's Utopia is set on an island. Maybe it is for this island that the old couple on the raft set sail in the final take. The signification though has changed. Utopia is reduced to asserting one's will in the face of death. The old couple deliver Eros as an image of melancholia that drifts on the open sea. The island is absent.

¹ Fredric Jameson, 'The Past as History, the Future as Form' in *The Last Modernist-The Films of Theo Angelopoulos*, ed. Andrew Horton, Flicks Books, Wiltshire, 1997, p.88

² See also Nikos Kolovos, Thodoros Angelopoulos, Aigokeros, Athens, 1990, p. 149.

³ Slavoj Žižek, 'The Myth of Postmodernity' in *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? :five interventions in the (mis)use of a notion*, Verso, London, 2001, p. 29.

⁴ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'The Cinema of Poetry' in *Heretical Empiricism*, Bloomington, Indianapolis, 1988, p.169.

⁵ John Orr, 'A Cinema of Poetry' in *Post-War Cinema and Modernity*, ed. John Orr and Olga Taxidou, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, p.134.

⁶ Fabrice Revault d'Allonnes also makes reference to Fellini though without mentioning *8½*. See Fabrice Revault d'Allonnes, 'Ο Ελληνικός Κύκλος' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, p. 278.

⁷ Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller' in *Illuminations*, Fontana Press, London, 1992, p.84.

⁸ Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller' in *Illuminations*, *ibid.*, p.89.

⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1-The Movement Image*, The Athlone Press, London, 1986, pp.73-74.

¹⁰ John Orr, 'A Cinema of Poetry', *ibid.* p.135.

¹¹ Nikos Kolovos, *Thodoros Angelopoulos*, *ibid.* p. 157.

¹² Vassilis Rafailides, 'Ταξίδι στα Κύθηρα' in *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος – Κριτική 1965-1995*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1995, p.74.

THE BEEKEEPER / Ο ΜΕΛΙΣΣΟΚΟΜΟΣ

The film depicts the journey of a retired teacher who on the day of his daughter's wedding in a rural town in the North decides to leave his married life and venture southwards to take up his old profession as a beekeeper. While on the road he meets a young girl who manages to arouse passions in him he thought were long buried. The film turns into a portrayal of an existential angst where two worlds collide. The beekeeper is an old leftwing activist and the girl a drifter oblivious of the past. The beekeeper's journey to the South maps a clash between memory and a perpetual present of amnesia. The landscape gradually changes into a mental geography that slowly prepares the beekeeper for his final exit.

The Beekeeper was shot in 1986, three years after *Voyage to Cythera*. European film festivals like Venice and Cannes had by then recognised Angelopoulos as the most prominent Greek director of the period. After *The Hunters*, Angelopoulos co-produced all his films with international subsidies, mainly from Italy and France. His international appeal also guaranteed the full support of the Greek Film Centre, which was responsible for all national film production. The Centre was a cooperation that belonged to the wider public sector and was supervised initially by the Ministry of Industry and then by the Ministry of Culture. Founded in the late 1970s, the Centre gradually became the exclusive producer for all films with artistic intentions that were made in Greece after this period. It should be noted that the Centre was responsible for the production of films that due to their artistic aspirations would never have got made through private funding. The major disadvantages were that film directors became prey to networking and lack of proper subsidies.

By 1986, Greek cinema had turned into a battlefield with directors often fighting against each other and simultaneously criticising the Centre for the distribution of its annual budget. The promise of a New Wave that erupted in the seventies when new directors helped each other to produce low budget films had turned into an unwritten

war between directors and a love-hate relationship with the Centre. The euphoria of the post-junta period had given way to a lingering misery hanging over the cinematic scenery in Greece. One of the main targets of discontent was the junior minister of Culture, Manos Zaharias, who was often accused of imposing absolute control over the Centre.¹ Whether these accusations are true is debatable. One thing is certain though: Zaharias did attempt but unfortunately failed to establish a National Academy of Cinematography. Whether an Academy would have improved the annual budget spend on cinematography is also debatable. What is not debatable is that the conditions in which filmmakers were working at this time were more than severe. Limited state subsidies, together with the Greek Film Centre's lack of autonomy, were two factors that held Greek filmmakers hostage. Most filmmakers had to fund their own films that were being co-produced with the Centre. Many sold their property in order to raise funds for the production of their films. Others were ruthlessly neglected. Alexis Damianos, whose film *Evdokia* (1970) is considered by many Greek critics to be one of the best Greek films ever made, was unable to make another film for the next twenty five years. After having turned into a recluse, Damianos mortgaged his own house and eventually returned for one last time with his epic *Hvíoxos/Chariot* (1995), a film fresco of modern Greece from the years of the civil war until the year of the film's production.

The Beekeeper was a French-Greek co-production involving the Greek Film Centre, M.K.2 Productions (Paris), the Greek National Network, R.A.I. and Angelopoulos. Angelopoulos cast Marcello Mastroianni in the role of the beekeeper and thus achieved wide international attention even before the film was released. Mastroianni insisted that he did not want to be dubbed and spoke all his dialogue in Greek. The film was shot on location in Florina in the north of Greece, as well as in Ioannina and smaller rural towns in the south like Loutraki and Galaxidi. It also included a few locations in Athens. Angelopoulos shot a feature of 140 minutes that was screened at the Venice Film Festival in 1986. Under pressure from the French producer, he had to cut the film down to 120 minutes for its theatrical release.

A journey to the south.

The main character in the film is called Spyros. He bears the same name as the father in *Voyage to Cythera*. Both characters are signs of the past. Yet Angelopoulos here takes a different line than the one taken in the previous film. Here, he frames the life of an ex-leftwing activist who grew up in a post-civil war environment when the Communists had already been defeated. As Vasilis Rafailides points out, the beekeeper becomes a representative of those leftwing activists who had to compromise in order to continue to live within Greek national borders.² The old man in *Voyage to Cythera* was the living embodiment of the struggles of the Left during the Greek civil war. This narrative placed him in a position different to that of the owner of a piece of land. Spyros was tied to the land not as part of an abstract ecological narrative for the preservation of nature but mostly as a vital part of a struggle against the separation of the local community from an organic relationship with the land. The obsessive framings of empty rocky landscapes become testimonies of the increasing urbanisation of Greece that is turning rural areas into abandoned spaces. The characters walk in and out of frames which foreground run-down stone houses and the rocky landscape. But as I have already demonstrated this is not an objective landscape. It carries the aura of the disillusioned protagonist whose perception is reflected in the mise en scene. In a similar manner, Spyros the beekeeper is another memory vessel on a journey through a wintry Greece. In the aftermath of the crisis of the ideologies of the Left depicted in *Megalexandros*, the *Trilogy of Silence* brings forth an on-going journey that was launched in *Voyage to Cythera*. The beekeeper becomes Angelopoulos' second voyager.

Spyros is introduced as a lower middle class teacher whose daughter is getting married in the north of Greece, where he lives with his wife. Some friends, relatives and a number of ex-colleagues are present at the wedding. The setting is of a typical low key wedding. Spyros leads a quiet life. Played by Marcello Mastroianni, the character is one generation younger than the old man in the previous film. The old man in *Voyage* carried the identity of the partisan whose presence threatened the arrangements forged between the rising petit bourgeoisie and the new state of private

investment. That Spyros refused to hand over his land to a company who were planning to build a ski resort on it. The beekeeper on the other hand is of no threat to anyone. He is a well-respected member of his small society in the north. Despite this, on the day of his daughter's wedding he realises that this is not enough

The film introduces his voiceover in the first shot of the film. The voice describes the dance of the queen bee in a fairytale manner while the camera frames an empty wedding table out in the rain. This is a memory sequence. We see the table in the rain and we hear two voices that belong to Spyros and his daughter as a child. A cut introduces us to the interior of Spyros' house. We realise that all the guests had left the wedding table and moved inside due to the rain. Nothing suggests a revolutionary past except for the meeting in the hospital with his terminally ill companion halfway through the film.

In his essay on *The Beekeeper*, Vassilis Rafailides points out that after the civil war the only way for an ex-leftwing activist to attain work in the public sector was to sign a humiliating statement of remorse.³ As a teacher Spyros works in the public sector, therefore it can be assumed that he has signed such a petition. His adult life starts with a defeat and a compromise that seems to creep up on him on the day of his daughter's wedding. What Spyros gained was a family and a job as a teacher in a small rural town, the two elements that establish him as a member of the petit bourgeoisie. Now however, he is retiring from his post as a teacher, his daughter is going away with her new husband and his son is moving back to Athens. The identities Spyros draws from both family and work are annulled on the same day.

After the wedding Spyros lifts his daughter in his arms and sings a lullaby before he passes her over to the husband who is an army officer. The image is rich in symbolism. It is as if Spyros the ex-revolutionary who saw himself as part of the flow of an international movement is forced to pass over his daughter to the most apersonally identified member of the state, the officer. The man in the uniform is a sign. He comes to join the Angelopoulou plane of men in uniforms whose function in the image is autonomous. As an officer, he carries with him the identity of the

state and of oppression. The husband has no psychological function. He does not even utter a word. On a realistic level the image might seem problematic. The dialectic drawn from the Angelopoulou hero facing yet another signifier of state nationalism reduces the daughter to an object charged with an exchange value. The girl becomes part of a ritual that deprives her of her agency. She acquires connotations of pure innocence and passivity. Yet the shot here moves from the level of realism to that of allegory. The daughter stands for Greece and the act signifies the malice inflicted by the continuous presence of the army in the history of modern Greek politics. The beekeeper passes over his daughter to the officer. It is a moment of grief. The shot is reflected by another sequence later on in the narrative where we see Spyros walking in the central square of a rural town swarming with soldiers.

The film oscillates between two poles. It moves from a level of pure seeing to that of an allegorical, almost mythical narrative. In the sequence described above, the image serves as a stand-in for an idea. The film, however, also includes a state of pure seeing where the main character and by extension the viewer perceives a flux of material phenomena that resist a rigid symbolisation, meaning that the attempt to make them meaningful does not transcend the affect generated through the encounter with matter. We can see this clearly in what I believe is the most striking image in the film. Spyros becomes a stranger to his past identity as husband and father. After the wedding he takes a long walk over the bridge next to his house until he reaches over towards a blossom tree which hangs over the river. We see him next to the tree standing still and facing the river. This is the second time that the Angelopoulou hero is framed together with a tree. In *Voyage to Cythera* we saw Katrakis walking towards his hut with a huge painted blue tree at his back which immediately transformed the objective landscape into a spatial field that reflected the psychological state of the hero. The melancholic blue signified the world seen through the eyes of both the old man and his son Alexandros, since the film we see is the film Alexandros is making about his father.

In *The Beekeeper* the symbolic function of the tree comes not from its outlandish colour but from the time it takes to be revealed in the long shot, and from the contrast

between its fully blossomed branches and the wintry landscape that surrounds it. We should not speak though of a dialectic between two pre-cinematic concepts. It is the movement of the camera and the immanent rhythm of the shot that transforms the tree from a static conceptual symbol to a dynamic entity of the sequence shot. What this means is that the tree does not have a pre-cinematic signification that the director merely includes inside the mise en scene as if he is adding a symbol taken from a dictionary of signs. Spyros approaches the tree but we see no reaction on his part. The sequence does not offer a cause and effect relationship between the man and the final revelation of the tree. The tree is revealed by the camera but Spyros does not react. Yet its presence is somehow majestic. What does that signify? The sequence refuses a rigid symbolism. The slow movement of the camera free from the restrictions of a plot delivers the rhythm of a material world that is not superseded by the realm of the concept. What the tree symbolises – an image of duration that goes beyond history - appears on the same level of observation as bearing witness to the exposition of pure matter. It is as if Angelopoulos is not only interested in the tree as an idea for something else but also attempts to bring out the tree-ness of a tree, its material substance. The final shot of the tree renders an image of time which goes beyond the motive perception of man, hence its meditative resonance. The director frames the landscape not in a realist aesthetic where the camera ceases to exist for the real world to come through, as Bazin would put it. Instead, a long tracking shot reveals the presence of the apparatus as a subjective entity. Instead of an objective realism and a crude metaphor, the camera reveals the world as it appears in its gaze.

The theme of *The Beekeeper* is essentially that of divorce. It is the divorce of the Angelopoulou hero from his society and what Angelopoulos named the silence of Eros.⁴ The narrative is divided into three episodes. Each episode, which ends with a scene at a beehive, marks Spyros' attempt to reconcile himself with life. Each time he arrives at the beehives Spyros is framed in solitude. Then the voiceover of his fragmented thoughts reveals the emotional vacuum he is in. In *The Travelling Players* the moment where a character faces the camera is a moment either of confession or didactic narrative. The development of the plot is suspended and the character steps out of the action in order to comment on the historical context. The characters face

the camera and look straight into the lens. The testimonies function as autonomous texts and provide the dynamics of a group. Still there is one testimony where a character consciously avoids the camera's gaze. The deed of signing a petition of remorse raises so great a sense of guilt that the character, Pylades, is unable to meet the camera's gaze. He does it just for a second at the end of his testimony when he concludes that his companion was left half dead but had not signed and it is as if he wished to be in his place.

Spyros is framed three times in a similar manner. The third framing includes his suicide. In the previous two we see him staring into a vacuum. He says: "*If somebody asked who I am all I could say is that I have lived here for the past twenty years.*" These are his thoughts at the second beehive before his final attempt to establish contact with the young drifter. The trauma in *The Travelling Players* is not a matter of introspection. The members of the troupe are representations of group dynamics and their testimonies take the form of a claim: the claim of history on behalf of those who fought fascism. History is brought to the present, that is, in a post-junta democratic regime, where the issue of the so-called national division is to be resolved. In *The Beekeeper* this resolution seems to be of no significance. This has been more than evident in *Voyage to Cythera*. Both characters in these two films appear as relics of a past that has lost its force in the present. In the current film Spyros and his two friends also represent the three roads taken by the popular left in the eighties. Spyros has been absorbed into the normality of a petit bourgeois environment; one friend has turned into an owner of capital and the second, played by Serge Reggiani, is in hospital, half mad. The latter, having lost touch with the present, still quotes songs of rebellion. We see him speaking only in French. Spyros' old friend has lost his native language and that for Angelopoulos is a sign of an alienating isolation. The Reggiani character is reminiscent of the poet in *The Travelling Players* who, although he recognises defeat, cannot move beyond the trauma of loss. Close to the end of the film, in a sequence with full dramatic resonance, we witness the poet ferociously reciting Katsaros' poem *Kata Sadoukaion* (*Κατά Σαδουκκαίων*). As the director notes, these characters were 'digested' by history.⁵ Unable to reconcile themselves to reality, they went mad.

Spyros did not go mad yet he is tied by a permeating melancholia that leaves him fixed in silence. Like the old man in *Voyage to Cythera* he only speaks in sporadic elliptical sentences. However, *The Beekeeper* is the only film where Angelopoulos uses inner monologue and gives access to the thoughts of the character. The delving into the man's psyche however reveals nothing. While on the road Spyros recounts the stops he has to make at the beehives. Once he reaches the second group of beehives we then witness him claiming that it is only his material being that accounts for his presence in life. His thoughts are reduced to a statement of apathy. There is not much more that we get from his actual words. In *Voyage to Cythera* the old man kept repeating the phrase "rotten apple". The phrase remained suspended, unconnected to any conscious dramatic monologue. We can see the same function in *The Beekeeper*. The character's inner motives remain at a distance from the director. Spyros does not release a stream of consciousness-like narrative or a fragmented story in the face of the silent other as in a Bergman film. A close-up in Bergman would be the trigger for a relentless dive into the character's psyche, where the subject exposes its fragmented ego through the deliverance of a soliloquy. The face could alternatively be fixed in silence. It then becomes a signifier of an inner space that is brought out into the open through the words of another character who stands either at the depth of field or out of frame.

In *The Beekeeper* the director refuses to concentrate on the face of the main character. Instead Mastroianni is framed in a long shot that reveals the whole of his body. The three shots taken at the beehives suspend the unravelling of the plot. All three portray a man in solitude among the barren hills. We could claim that Angelopoulos in his second period resembles Antonioni in the 1960s in that they both reveal the psychology of the individual through the exploration of landscape. But while the latter scans the space formed between the hero and the modern city, where history does not play a significant role, Angelopoulos plays on the dialectic of past and present. Angelopoulos has one foot in the past, trying to trace the remains of collective subjectivity in a bewildering alienating present. Spyros is a sign of the past, unlike Monica Vitti in Antonioni's *Red Desert* (1964) or *L'Eclisse* (1962)

where her past identity is not as important as her present encounter with a hallucinatory industrialisation of space.

In *the Beekeeper* Spyros travels towards the south of Greece. The film turns into a road movie where images of petrol stations, cement buildings and cooperative enterprises are juxtaposed with images of rundown neo-classical houses, decaying villages and finally an old cinema whose entrance lies next to a railroad from where we see a train passing at full speed. This is the last grand metaphor of the film. It is an image of speed contrasting with the decaying stillness of the old cinema house. From that we get two different types of movement. One describes the external motion of an object in space; the other signifies inner movement generated through the encounter of the viewer with the work of art. For Spyros it is as if this movement has been suspended. Inside the cinema we find him on stage with the girl. The empty white screen behind them becomes yet another image of rupture. Spyros returns to the bees for the third time. Each of the three shots at the beehives is a direct encounter with the absurd. Each encounter with the camera ends the futile attempt to establish communion both with his previous life (the meetings with his daughter and his friends) and with his hopes for the future (the meetings with the drifter).

The film is set entirely in the present and the narrative progresses towards its resolution in a linear chronological pattern. There are no flashbacks and the image does not entail the time transitions either of *The Travelling Players* or *The Hunters*. It is also far removed from *Voyage to Cythera* where the film splits into an indiscernible image of an actual and a virtual world seen through the eyes of Alexandros. Here Angelopoulos attempts to increase the distance between him and the main character yet the film retains a semi autobiographical mode. The main narrative drive becomes that of the love chase where we see Spyros becoming fixated with the young drifter as she continuously reappears throughout the journey. Angelopoulos now comes closer to his characters with his camera, as he did in *Voyage to Cythera*. There is no excessive use of the sequence shot, for example to incorporate successive circular movements with the camera. Extreme long shots are almost absent. The duration of the shot is much shorter in relation to the *Trilogy of*

History and the framing alternates between frontal and diagonal perspectives while retaining the formula of the observer. As in the previous film the long take shifts from a strictly parallel framing to the action to a vertical movement towards the filmed subject. We see this at the kiosk sequence where the camera tracks from a wide establishing shot to a medium close up of Spyros' hand as it is bitten by the girl. The same function reappears in the last shot of the film.

Although the plot revolves around the beekeeper and the drifter, we are also presented with episodic intervals where Spyros meets up with his wife in Athens, attends a reunion with old friends, goes back to the house of his birth and meets his older daughter. These episodes work on a parallel level to that which deals with the futile love chase of the drifter. Each episode relates to the character's being, rather than functioning as a narrative device that moves the action forward. One becomes almost oblivious of the girl while Spyros returns to his birth house or when he meets up with his friends from the past. In these last two episodes the film reflects a double return. The first marks the personal return of the hero to a space with which he once enjoyed an organic relationship. The desolate neoclassical house once provided a clear and coherent story of the world for the hero. Angelopoulos frames Mastroianni from outside the house as he opens the shutters of a window in one of the rooms. The frame remains still and we are left witnessing Mastroianni as he looks out off frame to the right. Jan Garbarek's saxophone delivers a melody written by Karaindrou underlining the hero's sense of nostalgia. The return offers a moment of personal bliss and Mastroianni is presented through a double framing effect. Framed both by the window and the camera the voyager turns somehow into a tableau vivant. Time becomes suspended and the image no longer belongs to the present. It becomes a portrait that breaks away from the flow of events to evoke a sense of time remembered.

The second marks the return of *History*. Spyros meets his old friend Nikos who is now a manager in a BMW sales department. Together they sneak into a hospital in order to visit their old friend, played by Sergio Reggiani, who is terminally ill. A nurse interrupts the short visit and Reggiani starts signalling a message in morse code

by hitting the back of his hand on his bedside table when Spyros and Nikos are about to leave. Nikos asks what the meaning of the gesture is and Spyros replies that this is how political prisoners communicated through their cells. The morse code, like the whistle language in *Voyage to Cythera*, delivers an underground moment of recognition. In both films this moment of recognition stands out as nostalgic yet it is simultaneously disturbing. It reflects the affect of companionship but it is also a reminder of isolation. It is the isolation of the historical subjects that were spat out by the grand sweeps of history.

A simple cut finds all three friends from the hospital now on a beach. Through an absurd escape from the hospital that we never witness, the three friends are transported to the beach and it is the first time that a feeling of *being with others* makes its way into the narrative. It is short-lived, for it is but a memory episode. Yet the meeting comes in contrast with the wedding that took place at the opening of the film. The wedding feast is framed as somehow sorrowful, while an unembellished meeting turns into a feast of joy, albeit momentary. The logical sequence of the shots gives way to a poetic license that presents an absurd escape to the beach as an antidote to an absurd present. The three characters escape to the sea. The nostalgia of youth will unite them into a little act of free play. Nikos is about to dive into the sea when Reggiani exclaims: "*It is in these places that we dreamed that we could change the world. I was digested by history.*" Spyros never replies and the camera is left framing the dialectic between the raving sick man and the surrounding landscape. It is the dialectics drawn from the relic of a dream as it stands against the reality of an massive architectural landscape of cement, a monstrosity of the so-called Building Reconstruction that was launched in the fifties and continued until the late eighties turning every single city in mainland Greece into a cement block.

Spyros stands between the sick man and his capitalist friend. He refuses to find a resolution in an individualistic accumulation of wealth or to cling to a past ideal that has lost all touch with the present. Spyros remains silent. The breakdown of his petit bourgeois identity marks the return of an unidentified angst. The lust for a new beginning brings him to the girl. Yet this new beginning is not possible. Spyros' lust

turns into a desperate attempt to hang on to life. It is an attempt accompanied by force. The attempt to make love to his wife when they meet in Athens is really an attempt to bury his lust for the drifter. Spyros forces himself on his wife and then stops halfway through the act. In the eyes of his childhood friends, the woman he married was a prize to be attained. If we were to see in the beekeeper yet another return of the Odysseus pattern, like Nikos Kolovos does,⁶ then now it seems that Odysseus has the same attitude to Penelope's courtiers. It remains ambiguous if Spyros ever loved his wife or his marriage was driven by the impulse of the prize. Angelopoulos' attitude towards women in this particular film can easily be dismissed as somehow stereotypical and lacking subjectivity. Spyros' wife could be seen as an archetypal woman who endures the male wandering of the hero. Yet contrary to this type of criticism, Angelopoulos is cruel mostly with his main character who is seen mistreating his wife and forcing himself on her. It is a cruelty that permeates not only him but also takes over the girl drifter when she is framed in the darkness copulating with a soldier in a hotel room while Spyros is lying on the bed next to them.

The drifter

The drifter shares a fundamental aspect with the beekeeper. They are both outsiders. However, in other ways they are opposites. She is young and does not carry the burden of history. She might be its product but she is indifferent to the fact. She carries no sense of memory. What she does have is a sense of negation for her social environment. Both characters function under a perspective of divorce. They are both in search of redemption. For Spyros the death of ideologies has brought him to a search for the body. But the drifter, as Vasilis Rafailides points out, is one who is aimlessly moving up and down highways.⁷ She does not have any purpose and her freedom is not invested in moving from one state of affairs to another. All that she has is a wedding dress she carries around in her rucksack. The presence of the dress has allegorical connotations. It can be seen as marking the incommensurable gap between two different generations who have lost touch with each other. Yet it can

also be seen as a stand in for a generation that found itself torn between a lust for adventure and a petit bourgeois morality which dictated stability and safety.

We can see the same allegorical function in the pop song that the girl puts on a jukebox while Spyros makes a stop at a gas station. It is not its American origin which is at issue here. The leftist youth in *The Travelling Players* choose an American boogie in order to use it against the polkas that have been identified with the fascists. The song there becomes an embodiment of struggle, of a material transcendence. Its use cannot be separated from the particularities of the social milieu in which it appears. Now the song appears as a consumable object. It is a random pop song and its function is to heighten yet another of the film's metaphors: the rupture between Spyros' generation and that of the girl. In Wenders' *Alice in the Cities* (1974) the main character, played by Rudger Vogler, approaches a gas station where we see a young boy sitting on a chair next to a jukebox, listening to Canned Heat's *On the Road Again*. This is a Deleuzian optical image: it serves no narrative function yet it stimulates emotion, or what Deleuze would call affect.⁸ It could be seen as a moment of recognition where the thirty-year-old protagonist feels affectionate for a child who is listening to the same music that he identified with. Vogler never enters the shot nor do we ever see a reaction shot of him. The use of the blues and rock'n'roll in Wenders is integral to his cinema. It is where his characters find the home that the modern Federal Republic of Germany cannot provide. The music turns into a point of rupture with the generation of their fathers - the generation that according to the directors of New German Cinema is to be held partly responsible for the rise of Nazism. However, that was in the mid seventies. In *The Beekeeper* ten years later the use of pop music lacks any sort of authorial signature, unlike the Canned Heat anthem. It is neither a product of collective imagination neither a subjective view of the world. It is a mass-produced industrial object that functions as a carpet for the dance of the queen bee.

The use of the dance of the bee queen metaphor is integral to the film. It appears as a narrated story in the opening credits and then Spyros' encounter with the girl is filtered through it. The dance is a natural ritual performed in the society of bees.

Angelopoulos uses it as a metaphor and elevates the film to the realm of allegory. Angelopoulos sees the dissolution of a sense of a community where the girl represents a younger generation that is not only unable to form a connection with the generation of the civil war but also lacks a sense of political and social perspective for the future. The girl is portrayed as an exhausted drifter, wandering up and down the highways. The final act of the film is played onstage in front of an empty cinema screen. The couple enters an old rural cinema house in order to find shelter for the night. The cinema is empty with only the projectionist present. He is an old friend of Spyros. The projectionist exclaims that not many people visit the cinema these days. He shows them to the cinema room and the couple climbs up the stage where they will spend the night. The projectionist then leaves. The couple lies on the floor of the stage. Behind them is a huge empty screen. At a certain moment Spyros throws himself at the girl. This attempt to make love fails. We never see the couple copulating and Spyros is never seen without his clothes on. As we witness Spyros forcing himself onto the girl the narrative cuts to Spyros sitting in the auditorium staring at the stage. The next shot is of the girl onstage lying naked with her back to the camera. Here Angelopoulos uses for the first and only time the technique of shot/reverse shot. Its singular use, as Frédéric Sabouraud points out, works towards a sense of estrangement rather than functioning as a standard device of continuity editing connecting an objective shot with a subjective point of view.⁹ The effect here is that Spyros is watching himself, his final attempt to do sex which has ended in futility.

The girl leaves him, heading back on the road which in this case is nowhere. She will probably keep on to her white dress trying to materialise a false narrative of redemption through the search of a prince. Spyros is alone. He commits suicide by kicking the beehives upside down thus releasing the bees that swarm around his body. The director comments that it should not be seen as an act of despair. It is as if Spyros is sacrificing himself to nature.¹⁰ The film does not end framing Spyros' dead body but instead the camera zooms in on his hand that is tapping on the ground. The pulsating hand is sending a message the way that his ex partisan friend did in the hospital. Whether Spyros is in sorrow or despair is not important though. Spyros

refuses to forget and take comfort in a static identity. The capitalist friend who has come to terms with life, a chorus that is reduced to a numb pack of soldiers, the cement buildings, the public spaces of national commemoration, these are the static signs that are juxtaposed to his silent journey.

The journey brings Spyros at the point of departure from life. His suicide is not a loss. As the bearer of memory Spyros refuses to digest history. We could claim that Angelopoulos again lies close to the dialectical thought of Benjamin and the latter's idea of *present time* where the object of the past is preserved in the present.¹¹ In Benjamin's image of the Angelus Novus the angel moves towards the future with his eyes fixed in the past. This is a movement that does not go through the traditional dialectical formula of thesis antithesis synthesis. The past is not annihilated for the establishment of a new present but rather persists in an image of historical contemporaneity. It is an image where the past endures while refusing to redeem the present of past miscarriages. Benjamin opposes this perception of a present that refuses consolation to an idea of a present that redeems the past under false symbolic closures.

The public spaces of commemoration for the dead German soldiers of the Great War is one example where Benjamin saw the past being sealed into false symbolic closures. The elevation of each individual death to the realm of collective sacrifice for the nation hides the true object of the past which is the absurdity of death. Against the false symbolic closures in the present, that is, against the way public spaces of commemoration do hide the absurdity of death under the idea of nationalism, Benjamin hails the utopian, repetitive rituals of remembrance that refuse consolation.¹² They are utopian in a literal sense meaning that they occupy no space: they are running repetitively in the mind and they are private. As Martin Jay points out in relation to Benjamin's refusal to mourn:

Rather than constructing spatial topoi of commemoration, those *lieux de mémoire* that functioned to solidify national identity in the present and justify the alleged sacrifices made in its name, the

explicitly u-topian – in the literal sense of no place - and ritualised remembrance of past miscarriages intransigently resist current consolation.¹³

Just as Benjamin refused to attribute symbolic connotations to the death of the soldiers in the Great War, so the film does not provide a symbolic closure to the death of the beekeeper. What remains is the memory of the dead body signalling for the sake of communication without *sacrificing the individual souls for the collective soul* meaning the identification with a national or political rhetoric. Spyros is not a symbol of the Left neither is he a representative persona of a social group. His suicide is a refusal to let go of the past but it is also a call for the viewer to act towards a being with others that is not ruled by an abstract ideal.

The beekeeper refuses to establish an absolute cause for his suicide; the past is not reified either in monumental spaces or in the preservations of ideals. The past passes through his mind like a film over and over. It is the film we are witnessing. *The Beekeeper* like any film of Angelopoulos records a space where the spectator's eye comes in direct confrontation with a form that is build on long takes and where the image is not subordinated to a rigid symbolic function. The duration of the shot allows the viewer to invest his/her own emotions and thoughts in the image rather than being driven towards a homogenous collective response. This is a principle that returns in every film. *The Beekeeper* ends with the frame of a signalling hand as an attempt to establish communication but the answer does not find its way on the celluloid. The film does not look for an absolute truth but it rather fills the space with the process of the journey where the object of the past is neither lost nor redeemed. It rather becomes a haunting presence that sustains the pulsating hand of the beekeeper in search of cine-accomplices, in search for communication.¹⁴

¹ For a detailed discussion on the problems of Greek film production in the 1980s see Γιάννης Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου Τόμος Β' 1967-1990*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα 1999, pp. 226-227, 243-244, 279-283, 302-303.

² Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης, *Ο Μελισσοκόμος* in *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος - Κριτική 1965-1995*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1995, p.140.

³ Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης, *Ο Μελισσοκόμος*, *ibid.* p.143.

⁴ See Νίκος Κολοβός, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1990, p. 161.

⁵ Theo Angelopoulos, unpublished interview with the author, July 2005.

⁶ See Νίκος Κολοβός, 'Ο Οδυσσέας στη Χώρα των Νεκρών' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης – Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 288-290.

⁷ Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης, *Ο Μελισσοκόμος*, *ibid.* p. 144.

⁸ For a further analysis on Deleuze's notion of the optical image see the Introduction p. 19-20.

⁹ Frédéric Sabouraud, 'Ο Δρόμος των Μελισσών' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης – Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, p.284.

¹⁰ Theo Angelopoulos extract from an interview at the newspaper *Ta Nea* included in Γιάννης Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου Τόμος Β' 1967-1990*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα 1999, p. 331.

¹¹ Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History* in *Illuminations*, Fontana Press, London, 1992, p. 249.

¹² See Martin Jay, 'Against Consolation: Walter Benjamin and the Refusal to Mourn' in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jay Winter & Emmanuel Sivan, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 231.

¹³ Martin Jay, *Against consolation: Walter Benjamin and the refusal to mourn*, *ibid.*, p.231.

¹⁴ Angelopoulos uses the term σινέ-voχοι in order to describe the kind of relationship he wants to share with the audience of his films. The term is a phonetic play that stems from the conjunction of the words cinema and synenohos (accomplice). See interview for Merchant Ivory in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης – Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, p. 202.

LANDSCAPE IN THE MIST / ΤΟΠΙΟ ΣΤΗΝ ΟΜΙΧΑΗ

*Voula and Alexandros are two children living in Athens with their single mother. They dream of meeting their father who according to their mother emigrated to Germany and now lives there. The film starts with the two young protagonists as they make their first attempt to catch a train in order to go and meet him. After an initial delay they finally board a train without tickets, only to be apprehended by the police. It emerges that there was never a father in Germany and that this was a fiction their mother made up to protect the children. The children refuse to accept this and after a dreamlike escape from the police station they continue their quest. While on the road they hook up with a young man, Orestes, who is actually the mythical Orestes from Angelopoulos' *The Travelling Players*. The film becomes a journey where reality and imagination mingle as the two children become emblems of hope in the face of a disillusioning present. Germany becomes a metaphor for the search of an ideal and the children seem to be the only agents moving towards redemption.*

Landscape in the Mist is the last film in the *Trilogy of Silence*. According to the director, it follows the silence of God or rather records the aftermath of this silence.¹ In a motif that permeates the whole trilogy, the director presents a landscape bereft of any sense of culminated action and dramatic tension. It is as if the film were inviting the viewer to witness a staging of what remains after the drama. The drama here is equated with the clash between grand ideologies, a clash that was portrayed in *The Travelling Players* and *Megalexandros*. This film presents an image which is split between a journey traversed across a geographical plane and a sense of suspended action where a sense of waiting becomes predominant. We are far from the material lingering over the unravelling of the action within the sequence shot, the tool that constructed the *Trilogy of History* where the dialectic of opposing groups was presented through ritualistic movement in the *mise en scene*. Now the waiting becomes more of a grand metaphor that permeates every shot. What we see in *Landscape in the Mist* is the build up of a cinematic landscape from the point of view

of two children in their attempt to trace their father in Germany. The film follows two children on a journey that has Germany as a final destination. Yet the two young protagonists believe that Germany lies on the other side of Greece's northern border and they simply have to catch a train to get there. The film becomes the second road movie of Angelopoulos, in which we see the children jumping on and off the train that they believe will lead them towards their goal. What was preconceived as a linear road to redemption however turns out to be a journey of continuous disruptions and multiple stations. Angelopoulos adopts a fairytale formula and blends it into his long take aesthetic. The stations depict an industrial field as a landscape of threat where the two children will encounter both the fairytale dragon and the redeeming prince.

The fairytale formula allowed *Landscape in the Mist* to become Angelopoulos' most self-referential film to date. While *Voyage to Cythera* reflected the act of filmmaking, *Landscape in the Mist* alludes to the director's previous filmography. The film marks the return of the travelling players together with different cinematic signs from all seven of Angelopoulos' previous films. Angelopoulos continues the journey he sketched out with *Voyage to Cythera*. But now the alienated hero gives way to the dream-like gaze of two children who are left wandering around rural Greece. What the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze saw as the weakening of the sensory-motor schema of the action narrative film through the road movie or the ballad film (a narrative based on a journey), is what we can see as the starting point of *Landscape in the Mist*.² The journey allows the construction of spaces both real and imaginary where the quest is suspended. These are spaces built on the dialectic of the old and the new, with the new standing both as an imaginary utopia and as a menacing real industrial space. The two children are the new voyagers. The narrative is split between the gaze of the children and that of the camera. At times the fairytale manner of the narrative results from the innocent gaze of the two protagonists. That in turn comes to meet the eye of the director who comes from a point of experience and places before them images from the past. This is not a magic world of adventure where fantasy can redeem an ugly present. Despite this, magic finds its way into a bleak presence, through the character of Orestes. However, the children's encounter

with Orestes does not follow the predilections of a preconceived fate. He is not the enlightened stranger of a quest fable. In the *Travelling Players*, Orestes was the signifier of revolution. Now he returns, but it is not from the point of experience. “Once I thought I knew where I was going...now I do not know anymore” he exclaims during his first encounter with the children. Orestes cannot function as a guide towards the children’s goal. Instead, they drive together through the mountains, dance by the beach and wander round the square in Florina. It is these moments which are significant in the film, for these are movements concerning the effect that the landscape generates in itself and through the characters. These moments are brought forward through images that appeal to the senses like the one where we see the children facing a gigantic factory that stands like a fairytale dragon, or through images that stand as allegorical signs such as when the travelling players sell their costumes at the bay of Thessaloniki signifying the bankruptcy of the Left. The final destination becomes a symbolic image and it only takes a simple cut for the children to be transported to this new space, a space that is never marked on their cognitive map but acquires a material substance in the form of a tree.

As I pointed out in the introduction, in his book *Cinema 2* Deleuze notes that the aftermath of the Second World War finds the modern subject wandering in spaces where the sense of organic relationship that allowed the emergence of safety and identity has been lost.³ Deleuze cites Antonioni as the director who marks the encounter of the modern individual with these new spaces of factories, cement wastelands and functional buildings. It is in *L’Eclisse* where we see the famous sequence where Monica Vitti looks out of a window in her partner’s flat just as they are about to split up. Through the window pane she sees a gigantic building resembling a looming atomic explosion. It is the encounter with the *new* that provides the filmic space. In *Red Desert* these spaces become all-embracing. The factories, the endless lines of gigantic electric poles, the polluted wastelands are seen through the eyes of a neurotic individual whose gaze, according to Pasolini, informs the style of the film, as we saw in our discussion of *Voyage to Cythera*.

Landscape in the Mist presents an industrial landscape that carries the aura of Antonioni's spaces in *Red Desert*. Likewise we are presented with dislocated places and spaces of transition: a highway where the two children will meet another type of patriarchal violence in the shape of a truck driver; the multiple train stations and the by now familiar run-down neoclassical buildings in the rural periphery. But as I have already stated in *The Beekeeper* Angelopoulos retains a dialectic with the past that is absent in Antonioni. The two children are searching for their maker so in a way their journey is aimed towards an origin. The run-down neoclassical buildings come straight from *The Travelling Players* where they hosted the battle of grand ideologies through the Brechtian use of the song. Now they are loci of melancholia. This is why the old violinist who is none other than Spyros from *Voyage to Cythera* appears in the old café of an unnamed rural town. Inside the café Young Alexandros, who had previously walked in asking for something to eat but did not have any money, was clearing tables in exchange for his food. Spyros, who now appears as a street musician, enters the café and starts to play his violin. The boy stops working and, mesmerised by the sounds of the violin, climbs on a chair in order to sit and listen to the old man. However the old café becomes a dislocated space. The free play of imagination that created a meeting point for the two is rudely interrupted by the owner of the café who drives the old man away. The sequence is not contrasted with what is to come. Each sequence signifies the presence of an indifferent milieu so in a way it is like a terminal.

What ties these spaces together in the filmic world is that they are stations on a journey undertaken by the two young protagonists. The presence of these stations in the narrative, however, is not directed by an active agent in a previous sequence as we might see in Shakespearean drama, where the arrival of a messenger would automatically challenge the evolution of events and lead the main characters in a particular direction. A sequence where a dead white horse is dragged along by a farming vehicle in the middle of a wide road on a wintry night is rich in symbolism, yet it is as if the children only happen to be there by chance. In terms of plot evolution, the sequence might seem redundant. It does not offer any change of direction in the journey nor does it introduce a new character who will change the

course of events. The sequence with the dead horse might have been absent and the overall meaning of the film would not change. What would be altered however, along with what the sequence means to convey as a subject for thought, is a map drawn by the affective response of the viewer in relation to the projected images, in the same way as the spaces encountered by the filmic characters affect them either as fields of memories or dystopian planes.

The sequence with the horse starts with the children entering the frame from the left. From a right diagonal perspective, the camera records a wide road. Far in the background is a hotel building where a party is taking place. Suddenly the main door opens and a bride comes out crying. She moves slightly towards the foreground and towards the centre of the frame and then stops. The groom, an army officer, catches up with her and, comforting her, takes her back to the building. After a pause the sound of a motor is heard offscreen to the right. A tractor enters the frame dragging behind it a white horse on a rope.

The sequence marks the children's first encounter with death. It is also a symbolic image that depicts the succession of one mode of production by another - an agricultural economy gives way to the advent of modernity. On a third self-reflexive manner the white horse is none other than Megalexandros' white horse. What we see in the sequence is an image of revolution being dragged to its ultimate defeat by the reign of industrial capitalism. The bride is Spyros' daughter and the officer the man she marries at the beginning of *The Beekeeper*. Yet as we have seen in that film, the officer stands for an allegorical image that implies the army's constant intervention in Greek politics. The choreographed sequence ends with the children in front of the dead horse. In the background a group of passers-by is singing merrily. The sequence functions in terms of an autonomous tableau that hosts two events whose meaning goes beyond the world of fiction. From the perspective of the children as agents for the unravelling of the plot, the sequence is part of a coming-of-age narrative that marks their first confrontation with death. But the shot also becomes didactic, reflecting the socio-historical milieu as well as its cultural counterpart through the references to the director's previous work, which is by now part of this heritage.⁴

The sequence reflects the temporal mode of the film, where the duration of the long take incorporates the times of two or more separate actions or alternatively the time before and after the unravelling of a single action. This is a familiar motif from previous films. But with this film, Angelopoulos also introduces a number of structural differences. The use of slow motion as well as the use of fade in/fade out, together with an attempt at more visual proximity make their way into the director's filmography. When the children escape from the police station they lapse into slow motion as they run from the back of the street almost straight into the camera. The sequence ends with a fade to black. We also have slow motion in the first two shots of the sequence that shows the gigantic hand rising from the bottom of the sea. In the first we see the hand emerging from the sea. The second is a low angle shot of the approaching helicopter that will carry it away in the third and most majestic image of the sequence. Moreover the film includes the use of visual effects, for example in the image of the snow that falls outside the police station during the children's escape. Artificial snow is also used during the sequence with the dead horse. Another stylistic feature that has been present since *Days of '36* is the momentary freezing of the actors. In that film, the indecisiveness of the representatives of bureaucratic authority inside the warden's office led them to freeze like grotesque statues. Similarly in *The Travelling Players* during the Battle of Athens sequence, the actors would take up a position of stillness thus reinforcing the distancing effect of the shot. After the grotesque performance that the troupe give for the British soldiers at the beachfront, both the soldiers and the troupe freeze at the sound of a gunshot coming from offscreen.

In *Landscape in the Mist*, when the children escape from captivity all the passers-by are frozen like statues. The stillness here is of a dream-like nature, reinforcing the irrationality of the escape. It is the fairytale formula that allows the director to freeze the action, thus portraying visually the gap between the children's power to dream and an inhospitable reality. Later on in the narrative, during the second and most majestic flight from reality, when the statue of the hand is about to emerge from the depths of the sea and the helicopter is approaching, we see the children walking in

slow pace as they come closer to the spectacular event. Behind them there are three still men. They are on bicycles and wearing yellow rain coats. As soon as the statue emerges and Karaindrou's musical score has given full gravity to the sequence, the three cyclists also take flight. The cyclists will become emblematic of the cinema of Angelopoulos' second period. Like the monumental hand that vanishes into thin air above the sea, they too will become fleeting images of time passing.

In addition to these new visual features, the music of Karaindrou is given more space in the narrative. The minimal soundtracks of the two previous films provided a melancholic undertone as a general motif. Both in *Voyage to Cythera* and *The Beekeeper* the music maintains a distance from the main characters and functions as a key in to the soundtrack of the mise en scene. In *Landscape in the Mist*, the musical score highlights more the psychological state of the characters and acquires a stronger presence throughout the whole film.

When Voula and Alexandros are reunited with Orestes, all three of them flee towards a sandy beach far from the industrial periphery of the city. Their escape is accompanied by the film's musical score leading them all the way to the top of a hill where Orestes triumphantly shouts "We have escaped them!". Similarly, every time the children get on a train, the music signifies their momentarily release from anxiety and their flight to freedom.

The use of fade in/fade out, the incorporation of a classical pattern of alternation between establishing shots, medium and close up shots, the use of music to heighten emotional response to the action and the presence of simple continuity shots that follow the children's movements in space become motifs that act as a companion to the use of the long takes which observe from a distance. As Angelopoulos notes: "What ties these formalistic changes together is a sense of timing that is absolutely personal. The film contains a polymorphous structure yet it retains an absolute homogeneity. No one would say that this is not an Angelopoulos film."⁵ What also becomes apparent is a shift in the style of acting. We could argue that there is a shift

towards a more melodramatic style where the characters engage in dramatic dialogue and the image often releases an outburst of emotions through the actor.

At the end of the dead horse sequence we see a close up of Alexandros crying. When Voula dances with Orestes on the beach she suddenly runs away in tears and the camera follows her until she kneels down by the sea. The emphasis on emotion centres mostly upon Orestes' encounter with the children. However, quite often the result does not meet the intention. The dialogues often sound overburdened with sentiment, for example in the sequence where Orestes narrates the opening of a theatrical performance to Alexandros, or when Voula overhears her uncle saying to a policeman that their father does not exist. The director on the other hand manages to draw satisfying performances from his two young actors while retaining an overall distance from empathy throughout this conscious dive into melodrama. This can be seen in the much-quoted rape scene where we see Voula falling prey to the truck driver. The camera remains at a distance framing the truck after the girl has been dragged inside and we as viewers are left helpless staring at the sealed back of the vehicle. Angelopoulos' sense of respect for pain and trauma will yet again engage/distance the viewer through a gaze which moves on the periphery of the action. In a familiar motif, the shot builds a dialectic between offscreen and onscreen space. The offscreen space becomes part of the onscreen space, with the truck remaining in constant view. It is the director's aim to create a sense of terror and a feeling of powerlessness on the part of the viewer. This terror could be reinforced by an increase of tension as two cars stop in the far background. The driver of the first car steps out and goes back to the car that has been following him. He seems to be having a conversation with the other driver or the person sitting next to him. It is not clear if this is Orestes searching for the children or if it is just a group of strangers. One cannot help thinking that they might come closer, see the terrible act that is taking place and rescue the girl. Angelopoulos however does not offer this redemptive option. After what seems to be a brief exchange of words the man steps back into his car and then both cars leave. Angelopoulos presents a ruthless and menacing landscape where safety seems to have totally disappeared. Yet this image will be reversed at the end of the film. It is in a space formed between a piece of

celluloid and the projected desire of the children that the tree of hope will appear in full substance.

The space between

Gilberto Perez in his writings on Friedrich Murnau, the prolific film director of the silent era, calls the long shot the medium to describe the space between. Quoting Jose Ortega y Gasset on the difference of proximate and distant vision, where the first has a tactile quality and the latter the quality of a spectral, he asserts that:

In distant vision no object stands out and our gaze instead spreads over the entire visual field, so that the central object of attention becomes the space between objects, the hollow space that reaches to our eyes as objects recede into the distance, the air in which all seem to float like a mirage.⁶

Landscape in the Mist is the space between the travelling players in their encounter with an ahistorical present. It is the space between the children and Germany, the limbo that the director feels at the end of the battle of grand narratives. It is the return of a distant gaze, that of the long take, which brings back the travelling players from the deep, out of the mist.

After they have escaped from the police station and are continuing their journey on foot, the two protagonists meet Orestes for the first time at the side of a rural road, where the latter has stopped in order to repair his van. Orestes offers to take them with him. As they drive to a nearby village he tells them his name and introduces himself as an actor in a troupe that travels round Greece staging the rural play *Golfo the Shepherdess*. When they arrive at the main square of the village all three step out of the van and Orestes starts unloading his motorcycle from the back of the vehicle. He remarks: "We must hurry. They are going to be here soon." The camera that had framed the van from the side now performs a tracking movement to the left and reveals the open space of the square and a road in the far background. It is from that

misty road in the far background that the troupe returns. They are reunited as if nobody had died. As they emerge from the distance, the word “hope” is sculptured into the image in the space between the camera lens (substituting our vision) and the dark silhouettes slowly approaching the foreground.

The filmic world as Perez notes is never restricted to what lies in frame. It is always in relation to what lies offscreen that the meaning of the frame is asserted.⁷ Early cinema with Griffith treats the image as a stage, where the space is confined within the frame hosting the action and an alternating montage reveals a tension build up on fragments of space which exclude what lies around them. With Murnau, cinema acquires a different vision. Things appear at a distance and the offscreen space becomes equally important as the onscreen space. An example of this can be found in *Nosferatu* (1922), when the menacing shadow of the vampire enters the frame from out of field in a shot that had previously only shown us an empty wall on a staircase. This is a change of quality which is immanent to the duration of the shot. The same shot acquires a new signification, that of death approaching. And it is always in relation to this dark elusive silhouette that remains unframed after its arrival in town that the onscreen space acquires meaning. The coffins that appear in the middle of the streets for example are in a dialectical relationship to the menacing vampire, despite the fact that his onscreen presence after his arrival is minimal. Furthermore, in Murnau the mise en scene becomes the prime signification of a rising tension and as Perez notes in relation to *Sunrise*, during the sequence where we see the wife and her husband on the boat it is the image of the engulfing sea that informs the viewer and the wife of the husband’s malicious intentions.⁸

Similarly in *Landscape in the Mist*, although the film adopts a more proximate vision than the *Trilogy of History*, it is the space between the recorded objects that comes to the foreground. Space comes to signify a transition, a passage. We find this principle in Mizoguchi and Antonioni; from the early seventies we find it in Angelopoulos as well. In the first sequence by the beach outside Thessaloniki we see the members of the troupe rehearsing. It is not as actors of the rural play *Golfo the Shepherdess* that they read out their lines, but as the actors of the film *The Travelling Players*. The

camera tracks among the bodies waiting on the beach outside the city. While the camera turns a wide circle round each member of the troupe, the surrounding open space of the brown sandy beach with the cement houses in the far background marking the city limits informs the viewer of the players' isolation. As they stand immobile or going round in circles, the track ends with an image of the Poet who stands aside of the troupe, delivering the same ferocious poem as he did at the end of *The Travelling Players*. The poem is an accusation against the exploitation of the concept of revolution, an exploitation that leads to the reestablishment of an authoritarian status quo dressed under different clothing. Yet the poem sustains the promise for a radical break with the current social conditions. However it is as if the answer to his plea comes from the theatre owner who enters the frame inside a car in the far background. The car moves parallel to where the troupe stands in the foreground. As he comes out of the car, the theatre owner moves only halfway into the foreground in order to announce the end of their partnership. Because he must meet the demands of the market he can no longer offer his theatre to the players. This agent is none other than Spyros' friend from *The Beekeeper* where we saw him as a manager of a multi-national company. His presence signifies yet again the third road taken by the popular Left in Greece, that of embracing capitalism. The sequence shot passes from one action to the next as it ends with Clytemnestra leaving with Orestes in search of another venue – a search which will be futile. All that remains is for the troupe to be transported to the bay of Thessaloniki in order to sell their stage costumes; as they stand in line the image of the sea behind them inscribes a natural border between them and the reclaiming of the present.

It is as if the camera of Angelopoulos becomes an index pointing in different directions in time at a unified space. Angelopoulos inscribes a space as a threshold, where actions acquire their identity always in relation to this in between. Time becomes a spatial dimension where the past lies behind the mist; it takes a simple pan to the left for it to appear in focus. It is as if the present film signifies the impossibility of such a track outside art, as if the direction towards the past has been lost and that is why the Travelling Players, although visually present, are obsolete and redundant.

Yet the film is not a testimony of despair. In the port at Thessaloniki, Orestes and the children witness what we could call *the final wonder of God* or *the receding image of the leading hand*. The gigantic hand emerges from the water but unlike Michelangelo's hand of God in the Sistine Chapel's *Creation* (to which the sculpture is an obvious allusion), the pointing finger is missing. The characters are left staring at the mass of stone as it is carried away by the helicopter. Behind them the cement buildings of the port of Thessaloniki form a grey line dividing the sea and the sunset in the sky.

It is as if Angelopoulos were implying that now that the images of great leaders and grand ideologies have receded, the artist retains the right to lament but not be in despair for an irreparable loss. The movement for the acquisition of power as sketched in *Megalexandros* fostered the dead end of a repetitive circle; Angelopoulos portrayed the darkness and the pain generated by the struggles against exclusion, towards an ideal of equality. As Terry Eagleton points out and as we see in the above mentioned film, revolutions at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th signified a struggle to end alienation but then produced their own kinds of alienation.⁹ The shot becomes monumental in the grandeur of its composition yet it is also one of critical perspective. The hand is no longer pointing at anything.

The monumental statue is carried away by a helicopter; this is not a metaphysical flight. As Vassiliki Kolokotroni points out, Angelopoulos states that if this was an image from a Tarkovsky film, the finger would still be pointing. Angelopoulos composes a monumental image.¹⁰ Yet the hand is not standing at a fixed point in space to which the camera can always return. It is a fleeting image where we see the receding hand as it literally vanishes into thin air. What remains is the space between the children's gaze and the receding hand, floating in the sky like a mirage. The gaze of the children is used as a symbol of a new beginning. Their innocence stands as a kind of forgetfulness, which should not be confused with amnesia. It is a forgetfulness that allows movement in a new direction yet retains the images and forms of the past. Angelopoulos here is not interested in exploring a new formalism.

The form of the film is not a breakaway from the past; it is a return, suspended between a critical and monumental view of history. The constructed cinematic space is one of familiarity yet it is as if the director were welcoming the breaking out of a different image for the future. The final shot finds the children embracing a tree. This is not a new image, yet it is hopeful in its content.

In the penultimate sequence of the film we see the children attempt to cross the border at night by crossing a river on a boat. The light beam from a border watchtower falls on the boat. Offscreen, we hear a guard shout. At the sound of a weapon firing, the image fades into black. The film cuts to an image of a landscape in the mist. The two children are framed from a high angle as they enter the frame, startled by an image of a tree that appears out of the mist. It is the tree that Orestes imagines lying behind the mist in the blank celluloid they find in the street at an earlier point in the narrative. “In the beginning there was chaos,” says Alexandros, reaching for his sister’s hand. “And then there was light, and the light was divided from darkness.” We could say, following Perez, who saw the light that dispels the shadow of the vampire in *Nosferatu* as that of the medium of cinema,¹¹ that it is the same light that casts away the shadow of fear in *Landscape in the Mist* and shapes the surrounding chaos in the form of a tree for the children to embrace. In the space formed between the viewer and the projected image, utopia still lingers.

¹ Personal interview with the author, June 2005, unpublished.

² Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2 –The Time Image*, Athlone Press, London, 1989, p.3.

³ Gilles Deleuze, *ibid*, pp.8-9.

⁴ Eirini Stathi makes a similar statement. The self-reflexive manner of his late films becomes a reference to a corpus that has been inscribed as part of a cultural heritage. It is now a cultural index. See Ειρήνη Στάθη, ‘Με το χρωστήρα του Θόδωρου Αγγελόπουλου’, in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, p.172.

⁵ Theo Angelopoulos interview for the periodical *Λέξις* included in Γιάννης Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου Β’ Τόμος*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1999, pp 386-387.

⁶ Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost-Films and their Medium*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore London, 1998, p. 135.

⁷ Gilberto Perez, *ibid*, p. 137.

⁸ Gilberto Perez, *ibid*, p. 143.

⁹ Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence –the Idea of the Tragic*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden-Oxford, 2003, p.59.

¹⁰ Vassiliki Kolokotroni, 'Monuments of Time' in *Post-War Cinema and Modernity: a film reader*, ed. John Orr & Olga Taxidou, 2000, p. 406.

¹¹ See Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost-Films and their Medium*, *ibid*. p. 148.

**THE SUSPENDED STEP OF THE STORK / TO METEΩPO BHMA TOY
ΠΕΛΑΓΙΟΥ**

Alexandros is a TV journalist making a documentary on groups of immigrants whom the State authorities have placed in a small town district on the northern borders of Greece. During the making of the documentary his attention is drawn to an old immigrant who is recorded sitting inside a wagon of an abandoned train that the immigrants use for shelter. The documentary takes on a different twist as the journalist becomes obsessed with the image of the old man and tries to discover the truth concerning his identity. The old immigrant looks identical with a politician who disappeared ten years ago.

With the *Suspended Step of the Stork* in 1992 Angelopoulos launched his “borders” trilogy. Once again the Greek director situated the action of his film in the northern town of Florina in winter and cast Marcello Mastroianni with whom he had gained a wider international recognition with *The Beekeeper*. In this film, the Italian star plays a ragged immigrant who looks identical to a famous politician who has been missing for ten years and Jeanne Moreau plays the politician’s wife whom Alexandros brings to Florina in order to identify whether the solitary immigrant really is her husband.

Angelopoulos reunited Mastroianni and Moreau, the couple from Antonioni’s *La Notte* in which the two stars acted together in 1962. However, such a reunion meant nothing to the local church bishop in Florina, Kandiotis, who after having read parts of the script decided that the film was blasphemous and anti-nationalist. He tried to prevent the film shoot by any means available, from giving speeches against Angelopoulos calling him an atheist, to organising lynch mobs that would tear down the film sets. After the shoot, Mikes Karapiperis, who had been Angelopoulos’ set designer since *Reconstruction*, died from heart failure. According to Konstantinos Themelis, he had been under too much pressure from the ongoing war with Bishop Kandiotis. Themelis notes that the French producer was ready to stop the shoot after

he personally visited Florina and saw what the crew was up against. He also notes that the State authorities did not prosecute Kandiotis but rather kept a dubious position of neutrality throughout the whole period of the shoot.¹

The film was included in the official Cannes Festival but did not win the Palme d'Or as the Greek director was hoping. The film was poorly received in cinemas, both in Greece and abroad. However, in the following pages, I will argue that it is a work of extreme significance and one of the three most important films in the director's second period, the other two being *Voyage to Cythera* and *Ulysses' Gaze*.

The *Suspended Step of the Stork* revolves around the story of a documentary filmmaker Alexandros, who while making a film about the immigrants living at the northern borders of Greece, meets an immigrant recluse who looks identical to a famous politician that has been missing for ten years. Alexandros then embarks on a quest to prove that the immigrant and the missing politician are the same person. This quest will reflect a wider problematic concerning the issue of identity both on a personal and a social sphere. It will also reflect the desire for a new form of collective action.

In this chapter I will demonstrate how the director returns to a more hopeful portrayal of communal activity in relation to the *Trilogy of Silence*. I will also claim that through the story of the immigrant recluse, the film denies a social reality which is fixed on the precept of *this is how things are* and moves into what I will call the realm of the *not yet*.² The realm of the *not yet* is a realm that anticipates social conditions where the subject is not defined by static national identities or any given social identities but becomes part of a social flow of a collective *doing*. Instead of having an individualistic identity the self is in a process of self-determination through a continuous denial of static identities that reinforce the status quo. The term 'doing' is here once again, as in *Megalexandros*, borrowed from social theorist John Holloway. It becomes a concept that denies a world seen as consisting of separate individual objective entities. It launches a process where everything one does is part of a social process. It reintroduces the notion of a subject as part of a chorus, a chorus

that is anarchic and discordant where every action, even contemplation, is seen from the perspective of a social flow.³ I will also claim that the film looks at the increasing number of national borders in the Balkans at the end of the twentieth century and focuses on the issue of immigration as a phenomenon that challenges the idea of the homogenous identity of a national citizen body. Through this challenge the film keeps the hope for a radical change to the existing social conditions alive.

In terms of cinematography this breakdown of individual identities presents, as in the previous films, a world seen through a semi-autonomous vision that blends the gaze of the main character and that of the camera. This vision becomes a direct image of time as change, a change that is immanent to the duration of the shot. It is a change like that of a verb that changes the static identity of a noun which is then set in motion, in a continuous process of becoming.

The film starts with images of dead immigrants floating in the open sea while an army helicopter approaches to collect the bodies. The narrative then follows Alexandros as he makes a TV documentary on the immigrant district in a small border town. What we see are images of immigrants crammed inside the wagons of a deserted train. The immigrants use the wagons of this old train for shelter. The very act of the first video recording becomes a visual metaphor.

In an objective shot we witness Alexandros and the crew as they are about to record the wagons with their video camera. While the crew is looking offscreen to the left towards the train, we see the cameraman as he raises his video camera and starts recording. The narrative cuts to a tracking shot taken from the place where they are standing. The camera moves parallel to the wagons as they stand in line, immobile. The tracking shot however is not taken with the video camera, and instead follows the objective shot of the crew as they are about to start recording. It appears as if it adopts their point of view. The very fact that it is a mobile shot suggests its subjective point of view. One would expect then that this tracking shot would be presented through the lens of the video camera. In terms of classical narrative it would be the point of view of the crew as they move parallel to the train wagons. Yet

the narrative does not identify with their point of view. The tracking shot belongs to the camera eye that creates the filmic world. This *eye* blends their point of view with the autonomous subjectivity of the camera and the result is a semi-subjective point of view that frames the wagons in a poetic manner, as the immigrants stand still at the entrance of each wagon, staring straight into the camera lens. It is a point of view where the boundary between documentary and fiction collapses. The immigrants' gaze testifies to this indistinguishable blend between documentary and fiction. It would be natural if the immigrants were staring straight at the video camera for the documentary. But the camera is not that of the documentary crew. It is that of the world of fiction.

Soon after this shoot which is part of his documentary, Alexandros is back in Athens. We find him alone inside the studio of a TV station, while an image is projected on a big video screen. The image shows a train wagon in the middle of an open field. As the camera slowly zooms in, we see a man sitting at the entrance to the wagon, smoking. Is this person the politician who disappeared ten years ago? We as viewers are presented with an image that includes the video image projected on the wall and Alexandros inside the projection room. This double framing, the TV image included in the filmic image, in fact includes a third one: that of Mastroianni being framed by the sliding doors of the wagon. It is as if we are presented with an inner montage of shots that recede ad infinitum. The medium close-up of the TV image is included in the long take of the cinematic image. Mastroianni is also framed by the doors of the wagon. He resembles a portrait, as do all the immigrants in the above described sequence where we see them standing still, framed inside moving boxes that do not move. Mastroianni does not belong to the world that surrounds the wagons, a world that is framed by soldiers and barbed wires.

Apart from being a mere referent to two worlds marked by social and economical inequality, hence the double framing that separates one world from the other, Angelopoulos here questions the ontology of the filmic medium and its ability to render an objective unquestionable truth. The double framing reinforces the dream-like presence of Mastroianni. He appears for the first time as an image inside the

image. The video image in its composition contains a dream-like quality. The wagon lies in the middle of an open field. While in the sequence described above we witness a train left abandoned at the railway station, this wagon lies isolated in the middle of nowhere. The sequence establishes a strong sense of ambiguity in relation to the immigrant's identity.

In his attempt to reach a final truth Alexandros arranges a meeting between the characters played by Mastroianni and Moreau. Alexandros and his crew record the meeting with their video camera. The story however is not there: the wife does not recognise her husband. The gaze of the journalist turns into that of a voyeur as the video frame zooms in for the close up that would potentially extract the moment of extreme sentiment. The moment of recognition remains suspended, leaving the drama on the side.

In classic dramaturgy from Sophocles to Shakespeare all the way to the classic Hollywood period as established in the thirties, the moment of recognition is usually a key moment for the resolution of the drama, and the moment from which the Aristotelian catharsis will follow. In *The Suspended Step of the Stork* however, the moment of recognition is staged. Instead of filming an event, the journalist directs an act that fails to deliver the expected result. Up to the moment of the meeting which takes place on a bridge, the film follows the investigation of Alexandros and his crew. The end of the investigation comes half an hour before the film ends, leaving Alexandros at odds with his purpose. The narrative refuses to unfold a continuity system that will reach a climax. Angelopoulos' cinema abandons the safety of a closed system of a beginning-middle-end pattern.

At an earlier point in the narrative we see Alexandros as he visits Moreau in Athens. While walking around the city she recounts the story of her husband's disappearance. At one point and with no previous warning a light beam is thrown onto her face by a TV crew which starts filming her. She immediately reacts in terror and screams "Stop! You do not have the right." Alexandros also tells them to stop. What we see in this sequence is an event that turns from the recounting of a story to the

merchandising of human pain. But what exactly is this light if not a metaphor for the will to power over the individual? Towards the end of the film Alexandros admits: “All I wanted to do is film people without having any interest for their feelings.”

We could see this act of *throwing light* as a metaphor for man’s need to see more, to know more. In “Vision Machine”, Paul Virilio argues that the technological advent of modernity goes hand in hand with a desire for pure illumination. Phenomena appear as knowable objects for study; they are given names and then are placed under categories with clearly defined characteristics. The city of light, Paris, is illuminated not only as a means of surveillance but as a phenomenal shield against death where death equals the realm of undefined phenomena. Paris becomes a total image where everything falls under the reign of the eye. Virilio argues that man’s exaggerated love for light is what brings about the darkness. The enlightened man becomes an investigator where his scientific methods will bring about the final answer and everything will be explained; shedding light to cast away the fear of darkness.

When you know everything you are afraid of nothing, the French Revolution had turned the elucidation of details into a means of governing. Omnivoyance, Western Europe’s totalitarian ambition, may here appear as the formation of a whole image by repressing the invisible. And since all that appears, appears in light – the visible being merely the reality-effect of the response of a light emission – we could say that the formation of a total image is the result of illumination. Through the speed of its own laws, this illumination will progressively quash the laws originally dispensed by the universe: laws not only governing things but bodies as well.⁴

By trying to shed light onto the immigrant’s past and through the attempt to identify him as the missing politician, Alexandros is staging a recognition event. He arranges for Moreau to meet him on a bridge above the river that passes through the border

town. But when the two meet Moreau turns her head towards the film crew that has been filming the event from afar and bluntly exclaims: “C’est ne pas lui.”

Should we not claim that Alexandros is attempting to create a total image, as if to rationalise the nomadic movement of a man without identity? An immigrant is placed at the centre of attention. He turns into a protagonist for a story which the journalist believes will bring forth a new spark of light in a period of permeating melancholia. But the Mastroianni character refuses to be placed onto the iconic pedestal of the leader. The road taken by *Megalexandros* belongs to the past. Mastroianni chooses invisibility; he becomes a nomad who appears in random places as if he were moving away from reality towards the realm of mythology. He speaks through fairytales that speak of a grand immigration that will take place in an unidentified future, when the human race will be forced to abandon their place on earth. The nomad refuses to be placed back into the light. Shedding light on the domain of the private sphere also coincides with the presence of the army that regulates the immigrants’ movements in and around the small town. The army becomes a signifier of a force that excludes and territorialises.

The silence of the chorus

In contrast to Alexandros’ obsession with the identity of one man as a new image of hope, Angelopoulos turns the narrative away from the trailing of a single individual. The trek of the leader was mapped in *Megalexandros* where we saw the charismatic persona of a revolutionary turning into a despot. Now the journey across a geographical plain on the way to the commune is substituted by the static image of an interzone. The small border town is a space between. It stands as a transitory space in a journey of necessity taken by economic immigrants. Angelopoulos moves to the borderlines and the camera frames the snowy town as a transitional space of waiting, where the movement of the immigrants is being halted and placed under surveillance. It is in that space that their agency comes to the foreground.

In a manner reminiscent of *Reconstruction* where the director included interviews with real villagers, *The Suspended Step* presents a break from the fictional world by introducing an audio montage of real immigrants speaking in their native languages halfway through the film. While we see clothes collected from charity for the immigrants being unloaded from a lorry in the middle of the central square, the documented voices create a multi-cultural fresco built on layers of different languages. The testimonies reveal the toil of the new *other* for it is the waves of immigrants that now occupy a point of exclusion similar to that of the Left in Greece throughout the twentieth century, as we have already seen in the work of Angelopoulos. Yet they also express a hope for a better life. The director in turn sees the oppression experienced by the uprooted as both cruel and unjust but at the same time sustaining the seed for a path towards human equality. It is the state of exclusion and oppression that inevitably brings the people together to act as a group. It is as if Angelopoulos is planting the seeds of a new collective that remains unidentified and it is this point of virtual promise that marks the filmic space.

The question as to whether the immigrants' movement will be able to give rise to a new collective dream remains unanswered, yet it is its virtual promise that becomes important in the film. Angelopoulos observes using the familiar motif of the eyewitness. During the sequence described above the authorial narrative gives way to an audio montage of an almost Brechtian manner where the director includes interviews with real people. The boundary between documentary and fiction collapse into one vision that is at one didactic, since it is informative, but also affective, since we are asked to feel their pain. By letting the image simply include the voices without any narrative drive it is as if the director is commenting on the rise of a new collective free of a superimposing agency.

Let us now see how this new group of voyagers is staged in relation to the framing of group action in the previous films of Angelopoulos. We have already seen how the choreographed movement of groups and their use of song as a weapon in a process of social struggle became emblematic of Angelopoulos' Seventies films. In the first period that dates up to *Megalexandros*, Angelopoulos constantly employed the use of

song as a means to express dramatically the collective experience of particular social groups. The songs did not support the psychology of the individual but rather identified his/her social function while simultaneously connecting the world of fiction to its historical and cultural context. It is almost impossible not to view the presence of these groups in terms of a chorus. In the *Trilogy of Silence* however, the use of live singing becomes reflective either of a haunting presence or a melancholic nostalgia. The central motif of the first two films in the trilogy was a permeating melancholia generated through an encounter of an alienated individual with a social milieu unreflective of his desire. In *Landscape in the Mist* the alienated hero is replaced by the gaze of two children but again the cinematic landscape is one of dislocation and shattered dreams. Throughout the three films we experience the absence or the metaphorical silence of larger group dynamics. From *Voyage to Cythera* onwards the chorus either turns silent or passive.

In *Voyage to Cythera* we see port workers celebrating a day dedicated to the workers' movement inside a café in the port. During the celebration the authorities bring Spyros to the port in an attempt to get the old protagonist to leave Greek territory. Spyros had returned to Greece after thirty-three years since he had gone into self-imposed exile in order to escape execution or life imprisonment after the end of the civil war. On his return Spyros refuses to agree to the public sale of his property thus sabotaging the plans forged between the villagers and a multi-national company that wants to exploit the land to build of a ski resort. The local villagers react and want him out of the way. Spyros flees the village after the rest of the villagers try to lynch him but he is then arrested by the police. When the authorities bring him to the port but fail to make him embark on a Russian ship they place him on a raft on the open seas with the excuse that his permit has not been validated yet.

Throughout the whole process we witness the workers inside the café unable to intervene. Before the old man is brought to the port we see them dancing to the same boogie rhythm that was used in *The Travelling Players* for the 1946 New Year's Eve sequence. In that sequence, the Leftist youth use the song but change its lyrics to words of ridicule directed at the occupying English forces and the fascists. The use of

the same melody without any lyrics in *Voyage to Cythera* turns the song into a statement aimed at the degradation of the working class movement along with their inability to voice a protest or create a new language. The movement of the actors inside the café does not reflect a dynamic entity; it is rather reduced to a mere presence that occupies the café interior. The workers finally decide to give a symbolic performance at night outside the café dedicated to the man on the raft. The elliptical arrangement of the mise en scène where we see the musicians on stage but without the presence of an audience reflects yet again an absent drive.

This shot supplements another sequence earlier in the narrative where the empty square outside the café echoes to a series of revolutionary songs coming from loudspeakers. Inbetween the songs a voice dedicates the day to the workers' movement. During the sequence we see Alexandros as he attempts to trace the person sitting behind the microphone transmitting the show. He ends up on the upper floor of an empty building where he finds out that the whole programme has been pre-recorded and is being transmitted while no-one is there.

In *Voyage to Cythera* then we witness the fetishisation of a cultural process through recorded song, which comes in direct contrast to the live chorus-like singing of groups of people during the *Trilogy of History*. This is not the mechanical reproduction of the work of art that Walter Benjamin envisioned.⁵ The recorded songs do not support the education of a collective nor do they aspire to make the means of production accessible to a wider audience. Added to the fact that there is no longer a workers' movement or a collective drive, the presence of the recorded song denotes a social reality where revolutionary songs have copyrights that belong either to music companies or individual artists. Having lost touch with reality they are now only means for the personal benefit of an individual singer on his way to becoming a national star.

Similarly in *The Beekeeper* the search for identity through negation and the sexual drive of the young drifter are exploited by a culture industry that articulates a homogenised reaction through ephemeral pop songs. The *Trilogy of Silence* is

marked by the absence of communal live singing. All the songs are recorded. It is obvious that the director sees recorded songs as unable to express the voice of a communal feeling, instead turning them into symbols of the main characters' retreat into solitude.

On a purely visual level, the presence of a silent chorus can acquire menacing connotations like in *Voyage to Cythera* where a passive chorus of villagers gradually turns into a lynch mob targeting the old partisan. In *The Beekeeper* another passive chorus, this time consisting of soldiers, surrounds the protagonist while he makes his way through the central square of a rural city in the North. Spyros might be apathetically indifferent to their presence but the camera ruthlessly records the dialectic between the alienated hero and the uniformed men. In *Landscape in the Mist* there is a more hopeful image of public communion. Angelopoulos tries to frame Greek Underground culture at the end of the Eighties yet its presence in the narrative is quite limited and over-schematic.

Nevertheless in *The Suspended Step of the Stork*, Angelopoulos returns to familiar territories. The director shifts his attention from the portrayal of contemporary urban groups whose discourse is quite different from that of his own generation and places the action again in a rural landscape. The openness of Lake Kerkini and the architecture of Florina support his redemptive imagery, where the movement of the human subjects is engulfed within a larger space devoid of urban noise and distraction. This landscape renders an image of time that goes beyond the limited timeframe of human action. As the characters move in and out of frame the camera continues to record nature moving to its own rhythms, as if delivering a sense of permanence.

This is not to say that violence, rupture and distraction are not inherent in the cinema of Angelopoulos. Rupture has been present since the very opening of *Reconstruction* when the frame freezes at the image of the family's reunion. More than being a reflexive device introducing the materiality of the medium and breaking an illusionist aesthetic of objective realism, the freeze renders an ambiguous moment that could

either signify rupture or endurance. One could argue that the sequence sustains in memory a blissful moment of family reunion⁶ and that the overlapping soundtrack is part of an ethnographic gaze that aims at authenticity. Yet on further viewing and as the narrative progresses the meaning of the shot changes into an eerie signification of death. The song we are listening to is actually a lament and in the next sequence the wife has already murdered her husband.

Angelopoulos returns to a rural landscape and violence is present from the very first shot where we see a circle of dead bodies floating in the water. The film starts with Alexandros reporting on the drowning of a group of immigrants in their attempt to cross the borders by sea. In a familiar motif since *Megalexandros* the mise en scène is marked by the presence of the circle. The helicopter that descends close to the waters in order to collect the dead bodies of the immigrants creates expanding circles at the surface of the sea and as the camera persists in the recording of the phenomenon in actual time, it is as if the expanding circles acquire metaphysical connotations of perpetual motion. The presence of the circle like in the previous films denotes the notion of recurrence.

Angelopoulos marks another point in time, the threshold to the twenty first century, to stage a visual poem about the need to find a new collective dream. As I have already stated, Angelopoulos sees the immigrants as occupying the space of the *other* in a manner similar to that of the Left during the postwar period in Greece. The new society that the rebels envisioned in *The Travelling Players* and *Megalexandros* did not come about. Angelopoulos observes the route of the uprooted and the link with the past comes through the search for the politician who once shared the same political agenda with the generation of *The Travelling Players*.

In the previous two films of Angelopoulos we saw the main characters embarking on journeys that became metaphors for the search of identity within the periphery of Greece. Now, in *The Suspended Step*, the journey has been put on hold. The narrative remains constantly in the present while the long takes, accompanied by a music score that reflects a state of limbo, together with the presence of the snow, transform the

town into a space that moves beyond its historical present, into an eternal no man's land that challenges the idea of progress. Now the main character wanders among the watchtowers and the night patrols as he reaches the country's border, in turn reflecting the vertical borders of an existentialist journey as it happens involuntarily. The space of the film designates a face of modernity where the state is unable to love, as Godard would have it.⁷ The army surrounds the village of the immigrants. They are placed under surveillance in the way that the father was put onto the raft in *Voyage to Cythera*.

Yet again the presence of the army is recurrent as in every film of Angelopoulos. What emerges is the notion of the absurd although its nature is quite different in this film than that of his 1970s films like the *Days of '36* where the individual was absolutely identified with a purely symbolic function - that of a state representative. The result of this absolute identification was the reduction of the personality to a public persona that mirrored the abstract *power over* of the state, hence the unnatural and grotesque movement of the actors in the *mise en scène*. There is something totally mechanical about their movement and reflecting the fact that the symbolic function of power had taken over their bodies reducing them to a puppet-like movement ruled by the fetish of the Law. When we see them what we actually see is what they stand for, the power that embodies them. This time however the absurd returns deprived of its social implications; it is rather that of an existential angst.

At one point in the narrative the army officer played by Ilias Logothetis is inspecting a rank of soldiers in an open field. We as spectators see them in frontal perspective as they stand in line. On a few occasions and for no apparent reason a soldier utters a sentence with a strong poetical resonance forcing the officer to stand still. Each phrase that reflects a deep-rooted anxiety freezes the officer who after a moment's pause continues his inspection as if nothing has happened. What we see is the breakdown of the apparent naturalism of the shot into an absurd choreography of a game of frozen statues. The shot creates a strong, uncanny effect, one that is reflected in the officer's remarks during the next sequence when he exclaims: "This is a

terminal space at the very edge of the country. Everything here moves into a different dimension. Loneliness, uncertainty...a feeling of constant threat...people go mad.”

The officer’s function here is far from that of the officer in *The Beekeeper* where he appeared as a sign in an allegorical visual composition denoting the larger narrative of the role of the army in recent Greek history. In the *Suspended Step of the Stork* the officer (who remains nameless like everyone else in the film apart from Alexandros) is a character portrayed at a psychological level. In another visually striking sequence we see him as he approaches the borderline upon the bridge that connects/separates the two countries and then stands still at the very edge of the line. He then lifts one foot into the air as if he is ready to take another step, and it is as if his body is imitating a stork who endlessly suspends one foot in the air while standing still. As we see him there suspended with his back to the camera in a slight diagonal perspective, a soldier from the other side of the border approaches slowly from the background while loading his gun. Logothetis exclaims: “If I take one step further I am somewhere else...or I’m dead.” With his words the sequence ends with a cut. In a manner similar to the portrayal of the missing politician, the army officer is more of a *seer* who observes life from a point of view that blends stoicism with absurdity drawn straight from a play by Beckett.

Angelopoulos moves between the micronarratives of individuals and macronarratives of larger social groups. On a macronarrative level we see a landscape where the immigrants’ movements are being controlled by the presence of the army. On the level of microhistories however, we see the individual in the midst of an existential angst as he/she realises the limitations of his/her power to act. This shift from macro to micro narratives is also portrayed through the stories of the immigrants who as I have already stated, are presented in terms of a chorus. It is a chorus that shifts from mourning a dead body after an immigrant has been assassinated in an act of vendetta, to the silence of a wedding ritual that takes place on the two banks of the river which forms a national border between two countries. It is here that we see the group of the bride on one side of the river and that of the groom on the other.

John Gould argues that in ancient Greek tragedy “the essence of the chorus, the essential and distinctive feature of Attic drama, is considered in its role as representatives of the collective citizen-body.”⁸ Unlike comedy, the chorus in tragedy does not contain elements of authorial intervention. The chorus does not initiate or control the action. It is a “univocal expression of a group consciousness and memory”. According to Gould the chorus is not necessarily that of the sovereign community and he brings as an example *The Phoenician Women* where the chorus consists of Trojan slaves. As he notes the chorus denotes...

...the experience of the excluded, the oppressed, and the vulnerable.
That ‘otherness’ of experience is indeed tied to its being; the
experience of a community but that community is not that of the
sovereign (adult, male) citizen-body.⁹

The same could be argued for the tragedies of Aeschylus where the divine principle is in the foreground. In *Prometheus Bound* the Oceanides reflect the point of view of the oppressed who suffers at the sides of Prometheus. So it is the case in *The Suspended Step*, where the chorus is formed by the immigrants who occupy the small town surrounded by another authority, that of the army. This is the most striking visual juxtaposition that marks the filmic space. The sovereign citizen body is absent, or it could be argued is restricted to the past of the video image that Alexandros the journalist excavates from the archives. Even then what we actually see is not the presence of this social body as we did in *The Travelling Players* but rather the representatives of that body in the parliament and the silence of a politician, as if to admit the bankruptcy of urban democracy. During the episode in Athens we see Alexandros as he searches through the visual archives of the national TV network in order to obtain more information on the missing politician. Inside a studio he projects the video of the politician’s last speech in parliament and it is there that the politician, played by Marcello Mastroianni, ascends the podium only to deliver the line: “The time has come to embrace the silence” and then walks away never to be seen in public again.

In the small town on the border, the sovereign Greek citizen body is absent, having moved into the cities. But unlike young Alexandros who rides a donkey at the end of *Megalexandros* carrying the memory of a historical struggle for autonomy and self-determination, the sovereign citizen body resembles that of the petit bourgeoisie in *Voyage to Cythera* that return to the village only to pass the land that was once sustained by a local community over to a multinational company. What we see now in the small town is nothing but a 'representative' of the sovereign citizen body: the army guarding the borders of the state.

In *The Suspended Step of the Stork*, the borders of the state become an abstract construction designed at the centre of the sovereign national state, away from the periphery. In the film we do not witness this centre. From the very first shot of the film we have already moved to the periphery, over to the borders. The film evokes a feeling of 'being there', a feeling that brings to the foreground the absurdity of national borders, an absurdity which is felt only if one visits the frontier line as is demonstrated in the wedding sequence which is one of the two most visually striking sequences of the film; the other being the final episode with the telecommunication poles.

Separated by a river that functions as a national border, the immigrants meet secretly on its two sides, with the bride's family on the Greek side. Angelopoulos portrays the absurdity of national borders that turn a local community into an excluded immigrant body. The bride's group belong to the same community that has stayed behind on the other side of the border. What we see in the sequence is the result of abstracting power from people who live in small communities and handing it over to a central state power that divides and excludes. Angelopoulos sees the micronarratives of groups that suffer and experience the pain of decisions taken on a macronarrative level. The rise of the nation state from the middle of the 19th century all the way into the 21st century has resulted in grand shifts of populations that lived in areas close to what became borderlines. Yet as a phenomenon the shifting of large populations has existed since Byzantine and Roman rule where a central power would mix

populations either for the reinforcement of the Empire's borders or to break up the cohesion of an ethnic group that threatened to revolt.

In a familiar Angelopoulouian manner the sequence is staged in long takes. The long takes frame the people in group formation that meet in order to perform the ritual. The river, a grand metaphor of flux within the passage of time, stands between the divided choruses which perform the ritual of the wedding in silence. The perfectly orchestrated movement amidst the clear-cut soundtrack of the surrounding nature allow *the sound of silence* to come to the foreground. The sound of the stream blends with the subtle noise of footsteps and that of the rice which the guests throw at the newly-weds as an act of well-wishing. The use of telephoto lens and the open visual field render an image where depth is somehow annulled and the figures seem to be standing side by side. The human figures are included in a landscape that seems all inclusive: the background trees, the river and the people seem to be on the same plane as if in an icon. Here Angelopoulos alludes once more to Byzantine iconography where depth is rendered merely by the change of size of the two dimensional figures depicted rather than the use of central perspective. Angelopoulos' use of frontal framing that alternates into a slight diagonal brings forth an action that takes place on parallel planes. In this case it is the line of the sky with the lines of the river banks that are framed in a parallel formation. The image acquires a tactile quality which is absent in the use of central perspective where things seem to be receding into the frame and into infinity.

In classical Renaissance paintings the use of perspective points everything to the eye of the observer. It is as if a ray of light is projected from a lighthouse, but instead of the light being projected to the outside world what we feel is that the phenomena are travelling towards the inside of the painting. As John Berger argues, perspective sets the singular eye as the centre of the visible world. Everything appears in a hierarchical ordering of space where the eye becomes the centre from which things recede into infinity.¹⁰ The absence of depth on the other hand makes all the elements of the image appear to be present in an equal space. It is a space which remains suspended out of chronological time. If perspective invites the viewer to enter the

painting and travel inwards onto infinity (which implies the subsequent measurement of time through movement in space), then the absence of depth renders the redundancy of this simulation of a physical journey - everything appears as present in the here and now. Time becomes suspended and the need for the journey ceases to be the expansion of the borders of your visual field. If the last mountain peak in a landscape painting invites you to travel towards that point to see what lies ahead, then the absence of that receding point invites you to stay where you are. The journey becomes the contemplation of the self with what is before him/her.

Can we not see the opposite action in American cinema? We can see it in the pivotal role the pioneer plays in relation to the landscape in the construction of the national identity in the genre of the Western. The pioneer is someone who goes beyond the frontier into unknown territories. Through the dialectic between civilization and nature and between the pioneer's romantic contemplation of the open fields, a faith in the individual rises, in contrast to the subsequent mass migration. In the Western the landscape is not a space of memory: it becomes a space to be traversed, a space to be conquered. The open fields receding into the background become the space where the individual can have an ideal point of mastery. It is a geometrically ordered space in which the pioneer and the viewer by extension are placed in the ideal position of an eye God. The phenomena are laid out before him without the latter's need to situate himself before them. The world opens up for him to see and conquer. The Western becomes the saga of an expanding nation. In their book *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri point out that the American constitution in itself propagates this need for the constant expansion of borders. The West became the open frontier, a vast empty area awaiting the pioneer settler. In such a narrative, the Native Americans stood in the way. If their presence was included in the newly formed nation then the new areas would not be empty any more, but already occupied. Natives were thus equated with nature and seen as savages standing in the way of civilisation. The authors make clear that such a narrative arose since the United States did not use native Americans as labour power, in contrast to the Afro-Americans who served as cheap labour for the building of the nation.¹¹

It should be noted here that I am referring to the majority of Westerns from the classical period of the 40s and 50s where the semi-nomadic cowboy or the pioneering settler signifies a belief in the individual as a ruler of his destiny and an agent who introduces culture to what was perceived as wild nature. In the American image of the Wild West the Native Americans are a part of this landscape that awaits intervention. John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939) is a pivotal example of this train of thought where the Native Americans are portrayed as wild savages. The image of the natives is radically transformed in the 1960s, especially in Sam Peckinpah's *Wild Bunch* (1969) and *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* (1973) and his portrayal of Mexicans being uprooted from their homes after the settling of the national border with Mexico. In the last two decades Hollywood has attempted to restore the image of the North American Indians with films like *Dances with Wolves* (1990). Yet this film, which is an action-based drama, falls prey to exoticism and simplistic dualisms like the Good Native and the Bad Settler. Special reference should be made to Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995) where the images reflect a sense of time that the young protagonist is absorbed into. The Native Americans cease to be melodramatic devices and are portrayed in an almost documentary-like fashion. The landscape ceases to be a static concrete block that sustains an action; it rather emanates a hypnotic sense of time that refuses to be rendered as the perception of a single agent.

What we see in *The Suspended Step of the Stork* and throughout the wedding sequence are phenomena that appear to be on an equal plane; they remain there as if suspended in time. The spectator is not led through a landscape that functions as a carpet for the movement of the actors. It is rather the other way round: the actors become part of this landscape and the image addresses the viewer as a whole. The wedding sequence is choreographed in such a way that the groom appears as though the collective body of the guests had literally given birth to him. The camera records the space along with the elements that constitute the subjectivity of the people that inhabit the land. In contrast to the classical American Western, where natives are objectified and equated with nature, and where nature becomes *the thing* to be exploited by the pioneering white subject, what we see in *The Suspended Step of the Stork* are native people who are turned into immigrants only through the rise of

nation states. We see them claiming their subjectivity through the performance of their rituals. The film records the rituals that have survived through the centuries and the work becomes a fresco of different cultures in their relation to modernity whose emergence coincides with that of the modern state. The chorus remains silent on both sides of the border. The passage of time, the river, is the music that the politician in rags hopes that the people will be able to hear. Words have failed him. Silence becomes a tool for listening, a necessary tool for the production of pure optical images like the pictures that the director provides, this being far from a romanticised adoration of nature such as that of the bourgeoisie a hundred years before. The attention to nature does not signify the mystification of the land that carries the seed of a sovereign race. Fredric Jameson is quite right to point out that:

the camera is the intelligent machine which works on its own, wishing to delve, to know more; capable also of patience and of waiting; knowing some temporality of its own, a third temporality, as it were, neither that of the auteur nor of character, which has that rare capacity to sit out the time of the world until, at length, events germinate, and slowly and unexpectedly things begin to happen at last...things come into being and return out of it according to their own internal rhythms or nature itself.¹²

The little raft that crosses the river carrying illegal merchandise from one side of the river to the other carries a rhythm that functions under the temporality of the shot, independent of the development of the plot. It is a pure optical and acoustic image. A radio is playing on the raft and the sound blends with that of the running water, while the camera pans to the right following the movement of the raft. It is as if the cut is designated not by the director in relation to what follows but to an internal procession leading to its completion or suspension, accordingly. The journalist is in search of a symbolic father. But all that the father can offer now is silence. “What are the words that will bring the new collective dream?” This is the final sentence from the politician’s book *The Melancholia at the End of the Century*. Instead of a definitive answer the spectator is carried through a cinematic landscape made up of

images which linger on the recording of physical reality on the river flowing through the middle of the refugee area, on the big river that separates the two countries, the old streets that are falling into ruin, the cafes, the derelict hotels, the stone houses that are recurrent in all of Angelopoulos' films from *Reconstruction*.

Despite this, we should bear in mind that the serenity of the landscape and the visual pleasure of the shot also contain the silence of the bride, whose white figure as part of the landscape quite probably contrasts with her psychology. We as spectators know that the bride was instinctively attracted to Alexandros with whom she had a brief love affair. It is she who at an earlier point in the narrative reveals that she has been promised to her husband since she was ten years old. This statement provides a completely different reading to the wedding sequence. It reveals the state of a woman who grows up in a small community and is forced to accept the laws of a patriarchal order. At the end of the ritual in yet another majestic shot, the camera frames her from behind while she is waving her wedding handkerchief to the groom who stands on the other side of the river. This dialectic between the psychology of the bride and her function in the ritual, deprived of her feelings, gives a strong sense of ambiguity to the image.

Alexandros is recording the ritual for his TV documentary, yet it is as if the truth of the event cannot be captured within one narrative. It is as though Angelopoulos were commenting on the inability to achieve an all-encompassing narrative and the endless disquiet generated by that awareness. Angelopoulos delivers some of his most majestic and stunning images and simultaneously downplays their function. The sequence is not an apotheosis of traditional values; it is not the apotheosis of a collectiveness that carries the essence of history fighting against an oppressor in promise of eternal bliss. It is rather the wish for that bliss, the satisfaction that man draws from a visual composition that registers the absence of a superstructural truth. It is also the direct register of a melancholia generated by the increasing number of national borders that restrict the movement of people who as in *The Travelling Players* find that their power to act as individuals or as a small scale group falls prey to decisions made on a larger scale.

In Ingmar Bergman's *Persona*, Elizabeth Vogler refuses or is unable to speak but her state of *illness*, although cruel, proves more enduring than the phenomenal healthy attitude of nurse Alma whose clinging on to language cannot prevent her collapse. Susan Sontag in her essay *Persona* suggests the silence of Elizabeth Vogler as carrying a mistrust towards language, the failure of the word in communication. Language turns into a weapon but proves futile in the attempt to transcend the game of overlapping masking that the two characters play. Language is anything but a means of communication: it is rather an object of cruelty. In *Persona* the absences of utterance become more potent than words. Sontag remarks: "The person who places uncritical faith in words is brought down from relative composure and self-confidence to hysterical anguish."¹³

The politician who has gone missing in *The Suspended Step of the Stork* resides in silence; his disappearance is the ultimate act of a willing silence. He leaves in a state of sickness and he also abandons public language. His disappearance reflects an act of disbelief in his function as an orator and a public persona. It also reflects the disbelief towards parliamentary democracy as a system that can foster a radical change in a society dominated by the laws of free market. All that is left of him at the end of the film is a poem on an answering machine. The parliamentary democracy that he served sprang out of the realms of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment project stood for the radical emancipation of humans from a transcendental heavenly authority that set its laws on earth. What came to be known as humanism, the notion that there exist transcendental values that humans share on a universal level and which can be accessed through logic, established a belief in a linear historical progress where the subject can foresee and control his/her destiny both on a personal and a social level. The politician, who belongs to a system of thought that stands for progress, disappears as though he were admitting that the project of the Enlightenment failed. Anthony Giddens points out that:

The notion that more knowledge about social life equals greater control over our fate is false...Expanding our understanding of the

social world might produce a progressively more illuminating grasp of human institutions and hence, increasing 'technological' control over them, if it were the case either that social life were entirely separate from human knowledge about it or that knowledge could be filtered continuously into the reasons for social actions, producing step by step increases in the rationality of behaviour in relation to specific needs. Four factors prevent both conditions from actualising which makes the goal of the Enlightenment fall short. The differential power that is available to those in power that place it in the service of sectional interests, the change of value orders since shifts in outlook deriving from inputs of knowledge have a mobile relation to changes in value orientations. The third factor is the unintended consequences that are produced from the very act of expanding the knowledge on social reality since that knowledge is not separate from the object of study as it is in natural sciences.¹⁴

Giddens concludes that there is no stable world to know, but that knowledge of that world contributes to its unstable or mutable character. It is as if the orator is suffering from the nausea of this instability and the only political act that can stand up to his point of ethics is to abandon the system and move into the sphere of non-identity. Social theory cannot change the world, as little as a film can. Mastroianni's poem that was left on the answering machine was written by the director himself. The politician has become a recluse, a sick man. Reflecting upon modernity is not put on hold; what has been suspended is a use of language that fosters an empty political discourse as untrustworthy. Angelopoulos does not suggest reclusiveness as the antipode of social analysis is futile, nor even that the images are innocent in relation to language. It is quite the contrary as demonstrated by the force that the television crew places upon the politician's wife. All that is left of the politician are some witnesses reporting his unidentified presence in places scattered over a timespan of ten years. The parliamentary democracy that he served is unable to provide a vision to bring the word that will start a new collective dream. It is

evident that both he and the director place a critical negation on the identification of truth with the word of the party or a metalanguage.

The Mastroianni figure encountered at the border is a recluse who speaks in parables. He somehow resembles the mystic fool from Tarkovsky's *Nostalgia* (1983). He heralds a great migration, thus equating humanity with the non-identity of the nomad. It is as if the politician turns into a Borgesian figure from the realm of *Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis, Tertius*, where the reader encounters a world separated into two hemispheres. In the southern hemisphere of the planet in Borges' work, the use of nouns was never invented. Nouns reflect established fixed identities.

As I have demonstrated to be the case in *Megalexandros*, identities point at things as they are, not things as they might be or as we wish they were. An identity does not define the subject per se. It rather defines the bourgeois identification of subjectivity with identity. I am a doctor, I am Greek. These are categorisations that presuppose the *I* in contrast with the *other*. I am a Greek therefore I am different from a Turk. The idea of identity also generates difference. I am a separate individual that belongs to a group consisting of separate individuals that form a collective under an abstract banner, which is also static. This group is defined through the differences with another group and their relation remains external. The idea of identity, of the notion that I am separate from the world and that the world consists of quantifiable phenomena that can be studied individually and in relation to one another, comes from one basic function.

As John Holloway points out, this function is the separation of *doing* (human activity) from *done*, the fracture of the social flow of doing into reified commodities. The rupture of the social world of doing separates the doers whose work is transformed into labour where the product of their work becomes an object with a monetary value. The object becomes independent from the doer; it has its own value that follows the laws of the market. It becomes a *thing* with a quantifiable value. In such a process the thing does not change. It is therefore static, seemingly eternal and finally rules over humans whose interpersonal relations are ruled by quantifiable

objects that have a price - commodities. Such a system generates only quanta instead of qualities. Identity becomes the formation of subjectivity as separate from the world. This implies a particular linguistic function where nouns rule over verbs. The verb denotes the changeability of the noun. Something that is through the verb goes beyond itself - it moves. It articulates *doing* instead of *being*. *Being* on the other hand presupposes an objective world described in third person singular, the world of *it-is*. As Holloway points out:

There is no room for the subjunctive in the scientific discourse of identitarian thought. If *we* are excluded then our dreams and wishes and fears are excluded too. The subjunctive mood, the mood of uncertainties, anxieties, longings, possibilities, the mood of the not yet, has no place in the world of objectivity. The language of the world of 'that's-the-way-things-are' is firmly in the indicative mood.¹⁵

In the mythical story that Mastroianni recounts to the girl, everybody will eventually become an immigrant and this will come from the tendency to self-destruction that possesses humans. The immigrant is a person on the move. He/she goes beyond the borders of an ethnic identity. Holloway specifies that certain identities depending on socio-historical circumstances acquire subversive political connotations. Saying that I am black in the United States during the sixties in the middle of the civil rights movement at a time where the rights to citizenship were the ownership of the white Caucasian subject has a very different reading than saying that I am black in Sweden during the same period. The immigrant challenges the identity of a pure nationalist state. His/her presence marks the continuous movement of groups beyond borders and provides an identity in flux, in constant formation. Angelopoulos opens up into the world of the not yet. The film becomes visionary through the mapping of an uncertain landscape. As in the previous films the boundaries between objective and subjective discourses collapse into a semi-subjective narrative. The world that appears is not a world of objective phenomena. It includes the discourse of the director, his signature that comes to the foreground not only through the erasure of

depth as in the wedding sequence but also through the final sequence where the music directs the poetical ascendance of the men in yellow raincoats on the poles in order to reposition the missing wire. The image is not safe, or locked into a given meaning but rather opens up to a multitude of perceptions and different readings. The image remains contemporary in its ability to be reinterpreted in the now. The use of the internal rhythm of the shot delivers optical and sound images independent of the plot and the spectator is asked to invest his senses or his intellect in order to relate to them.

Can we not see the same uncertainty principle in the disappearance of the politician? When Alexandros meets up with him towards the end of the film he takes a tape recorder out of his pocket and plays the recorded poem that the politician left on his wife's answering machine ten years ago, right before he disappeared. We then see the recluse lifting the arm of his coat and then going up to the edge of the river as if he were trying to catch a fish. Just as it seems he is about to utter a word, an army jeep arrives breaking the climax of a definitive answer. There is no doubt though that the man in rags is the herald of something new that is in search of words.

Alexandros is searching for a symbolic father. But the Mastroianni figure is far from the signification of the symbolic father that represents a political avant-garde. There is nothing more passive than the persona of the immigrant. However, his silence turns into an act of resistance. The collective consciousness of the sovereign body seems to have entered a post-memory period, so evident already from *Voyage to Cythera*. Now it is the consciousness of the excluded trying to find a voice through silence. Jameson notes that "no genuinely or radically different culture can emerge without a radical modification of the social system from which culture itself springs."¹⁶ This radical modification is far from being achieved.

The Suspended Step of the Stork starts off from a state of radical uncertainty of any subjective position. The absence of grand ideologies brings about a new state of waiting. The film portrays the village as a station for the immigrants although it is forbidden to board the train that recurrently appears on the screen. Ironically they

have taken refuge in train carriages that are out of use. The immobility of the train wagons is dialectically contrasted with the movement of the camera as it tracks down a line revealing boxed figures in rags. The shot inevitably carries a self-reflexive comment already evident from *Reconstruction*. The director has the power to make a film but this in itself is reduced to a distant portrayal of something that lies outside his power. He remains an outsider. All he can do is include the voice of their repression. As Frederic Jameson points out, realism in film is designated from the originating presence of a group whose experience has been linguistically 'repressed' and 'marginalised'.¹⁷

Benedict Anderson points out that the Greek nation state was formed under the doctrines of Adamantios Korais who in the early 19th century envisioned the *new* nation as rising from a state of *sleep*, meaning that the Greeks had been in a cultural hibernation under the rule of the Ottomans for four hundred years and now it was time for them to embrace their roots. These roots stem all the way from antiquity in a continuous thread.¹⁸ Following a process of homogenisation like any other national state, the new state enforced a common language and a common religion. Those who refused to embrace the new dogma were either driven over the border or prosecuted. Two hundred years later *The Suspended Step of the Stork* portrays the movement of people beyond borders which has reached a standstill. Their presence is a reminder of all the people forming a fresco that resembles something closer to a map from Hellenistic times rather than one represented by a collective sovereign body. Again as Jameson points out it is not that Angelopoulos is fighting the idea of the nation in toto. In *The Travelling Players* he attempted to represent the historical events which have shaped the identity of postwar Greece, which since *Voyage to Cythera* seem to have passed into a state of post history where the conflict of the big ideologies has ceased, giving space to a state of almost collective amnesia. Voula in *Voyage* turns totally towards her body as a form of rescue, as the only means of feeling something and the Beekeeper betrayed by his final attempt to believe in the body resolves to commit suicide. In *Landscape* the hand of God as it is raised from the sea is missing its index finger. It is this finger that creates Adam in Michelangelo's ceiling painting of the Sistine Chapel.

It is in this space marked by the end of the grand ideologies of the Left that the Mastroianni character appears. It would be tempting to compare the Angelopoulou recluse with the man who escapes from the cave in Plato's mythical story in *Politeia* (Republic). In the myth, the chained man escapes from the cave where the rest of humanity remains staring at shadows projected on the wall of the cave, believing them to be the real world. The escaped man encounters the real substance of things outside the cave, at the level of ideas and on returning to the cave attempts to convince the rest of their illusion. Nobody believes him. Plato concludes that the empirical world, the world of the senses is likewise subject to the real world, the world of ideas. Angelopoulos of course and modern philosophy after Aristotle does not go so far as to renounce the empirical world. Following this line of thought the Mastroianni character functions in the role of mediator between two worlds. Vassilis Rafailides points out that through Baumgarten and his Aesthetics of 1750 where he expressed the concept of imagination as the mediator between the physical world and the ideal, Hegel was able to "put in motion the Idea which moves ceaselessly from heaven to earth and backwards. As the spirit descends, it materialises, it provides matter to the world of the senses and as it is ascending, it spiritualises the senses placing them back to their starting point."¹⁹

The work of art comes into being during the descent, while the effects of the work will be during the ascension where it is available for the human spirit. As Rafailides argues, the Mastroianni character signifies exactly that: the use of imagination as a mediator between the empirical world and the world of ideas. Whenever the past or reality approaches him, he vanishes. When the journalist plays the recorded message to the Mastroianni character he makes a choice to move to the realm of imagination and to the level of the myth: he disappears.

We should however bear in mind that the lost politician returns as an immigrant, as a person without identity. His world is that of a mythical dimension beyond identities. Similarly his wife fails to recognise him on the bridge; she renounces the logic of the obvious, keeping to the myth of her memory. If we were to follow Rafailides we

would have to admit that the mythical recluse is a propagator of an idea, of something that already is, something that was lost and that we must return to. The idea of the Spirit as being there and descending into the world of the senses gives priority to the order of ideas. It is an abstract order, a preformulated thought applied to the senses. What is more, it accepts the dichotomy between two worlds that need mediation. What I have been saying throughout this thesis however is that what we have in the films of Angelopoulos is the breakdown of the objective/subjective realm into an indistinguishable one. The world of imagination and the real world become as one.

What we have in the image of the Mastroianni character is not the return of an idea. It is an invitation to a new becoming, an evolution to a flowing realm where the idea is not somewhere outside us but is part of our doing. Mastroianni returns as an immigrant but the immigrant is always at a process of becoming. His/her identity changes, evolves into something else. And if *doing* is too closely associated with physical action, then the word that we should use is *imagining*.

At the end of the film, men in yellow raincoats restore the poles with the missing wire. The sequence is full of poetic resonance. The synchronised, one could even say liturgical ascent of the uniformed men is accompanied by Karaindrou's elliptical music score while the camera performs a lateral tracking movement which opens up our visual field to the sky behind the poles. The frontal perspective erases the depth of the shot and the men hanging from the poles seem to be stuck onto the sky with the rising sun. The iconic landscape delivers a world suspended in time. Yet it is not a permanent suspension. The rising sun implies a time of transition. It gives the sensation of waking from a dream where the borders between reality and the dream are blurred. The wire moves beyond the framed brackets of the shot as if erasing its borders. Alexandros at the bottom of the poles looks in another direction - towards the lens of the receding camera that floats on the water as if receding towards the other side of the river. This is the first time that the camera crosses the natural border of the river and it is as though the camera that was on Alexandros' trail and at times even acted as a substitute for his vision has now become something else. The camera

engages the point of view of those beyond the borders and looks straight at Alexandros and the men on the poles. Yet we as viewers become part of this gaze, we are placed in the position of *the other*. It is in this suspended time during the breakdown of the borders, when the gaze of the *other* meets the gaze of Alexandros and that of the director in mutual recognition, that the Stork is left free to imagine the next step.

¹ Κωνσταντίνος Θέμελης, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος: Το παρελθόν ως Ιστορία, το Μέλλον ως Φόρμα*, Ύψιλον/βιβλία, Αθήνα, 1998, pp.136-137.

² The concept of the *not yet* was first formulated by the Marxist theorist of utopia, Ernst Bloch (1885-1977). Bloch criticized traditional Marxist critiques of culture for their negative value on ideology. Bloch saw utopian elements sustaining the view for change in the current social conditions as also being embedded in works quickly dismissed as ideological. The Marxist critic ought to point out these elements that for Bloch signify the road towards socialism. He saw these utopian elements as being falsified played out and negotiated through bourgeois ideology and thus deprived of their revolutionary potential. He saw utopia as concrete in the here and now rather than abstractly projected in the future. Bloch stood for a positive evaluation of the everyday that goes hand in hand with a radical criticism of negation. See Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, trans. Anonym Nassar, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2000. for an introductory reading see the on line article: Douglas Kellner, *Ernst Bloch- Ideology and Utopia*, <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/Illumina%20Folder/kell1.htm> My own usage of the term comes from the later formulation by John Holloway who has adopted the term from Bloch. See footnote 3.

³ To put it simply, when one makes a film the film is not a finished product that sits autonomous and separate from a social state of doing. The film is part of a web. One makes a film because one wants one's film to be seen. The act of seeing is social - it reintroduces the filmmaker and the viewer in a communal flow. This of course should not be confused with functionality. If nobody sees the film it does not mean that the act is not social. As John Holloway points out: *There are many doings that do not in turn create conditions for the doing of others that do not feed back into the social flow of doing as a whole...My activity is social, whether or not anybody reads this*. The act of wanting to do something which is seen by others is an act that changes me through consciously projecting upon the future. Doing is not an instinctual act, as in let's say the society of bees where doing is a process of instinctual reproduction. Human doing presupposes a going beyond one state of things towards what is not yet. What is not yet then is not a matter of the future; it becomes inherent in every act of the now if every act is seen as historically situated. Subjectivity becomes the notion of being able *to do* what does not yet exist. See John Holloway, *Change The World Without Taking Power*, Pluto Press, London, 2002, p. 22-27.

⁴ Paul Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, Indiana University Press London: British Film Institute, Bloomington, 1994, p. 33.

⁵ In his essay *The work of Art at the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Benjamin envisions the rise of a new technical school of viewers through the advent of the Soviet Avant Garde in cinema. The new viewer is also a potential creator through the redistribution of the means of production that are now in the hands of the people. Cinema also signals a grand shift in the terms of ownership and distribution. One cannot buy a film since it is an industrial product. The *life* of a film depends on distribution, on the actual attendance of the masses. The work of art becomes potentially free from previous forms of

ownership and its power lies within the people. The most essential concept that comes through Benjamin's essay is that of the liquidation of the aura of the work of art emanating from its uniqueness in space and time into a multitude of copies where the concept of the original loses all sense. The work of art loses its mystification and its distance from the viewer, a distance which was the result of the work's singular presence in space and time (a fresco in the ceiling of a cathedral for example). It was a distance that placed the viewer as the singular beholder of an objective world that appeared before him as if he were the centre of the world. The reproduced work instead presents a world broken down into a myriad of view points that now travel towards the masses instead of waiting to be seen at a permanent space that endures in time. Unfortunately according to Benjamin the capitalist mode of production hides this radical change and constantly resituates the lost aura of the work of art through an industry that supports the status quo. The industry establishes a distribution and consumption network around the work so that the work still seems distant. The star system in Hollywood is one such example where the mystifying concept of the star rises with the support of the industry through means of advertisement rather through the immanent elements that constitute the film itself.

We should bear in mind though that Benjamin wrote the essay well before the advent of the Second World War. The liquidation of the aura at the beginning of the 21st century along with the loss of origins and the idea of a unified subject in the stage of multi-cooperation capitalism can acquire a complete different reading. One might say that the dissolution of the subject becomes the excuse for capitalism's corporate model. Therefore we should be careful in our reading of Benjamin today. In terms of filmmaking the individual in a Hollywood industry becomes a shuttering presence that breaks the norms of established structures. What I am talking about in this essay is not the dissolution of the subject in toto but rather of a subject as a unique monad that remains unaltered or travelling towards a universal ahistorical essence. We see the subject as energetic, as self-determining but always evolving in communion and cooperation with others. The terms memory and history are still meaningful and are not deconstructed in mere fictional narratives. The breakdown of a dominant narrative does not leave about an absolute relativism of free floating stories that are equal in a universal level. The necessity for emancipation creates a path, a path that is marked through the study of the past.

See Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art at the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy-Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford, 1999, pp. 731-751.

⁶ Angelopoulos notes that the sequence with the family reunion is inspired by an episode of his own life when his father returned home after the family thought he had been executed by leftwing guerrillas in the Battle of Athens right before the official eruption of the Greek civil war. According to the director his father had attempted to stay neutral. See interview with Public Relations Managers for Merchant-Ivory in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, 2000, p.189.

⁷ In Jean Luc Godard's *Éloge de l'amour* the main character Edgar (Bruno Putzulu) while standing in front of the Renault car factory with his back to the camera delivers the line: *The State is unable to love*. The Renault factory is an iconic building for the events associated with May '68.

⁸ John Gould, *Myth, Ritual, Memory and Exchange: Essays in Greek Literature and Culture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, p. 86.

⁹ John Gould, *ibid.* p. 87.

¹⁰ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, p. 16-17.

¹¹ Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge-Mass, 2000, pp. 226-241.

¹² Fredric Jameson, 'The Past as History the Future as Form' in *The Last Modernist: The Films of Theo Angelopoulos*, ed. Andrew Horton, Flick Books, Trowbridge, 1997, p. 83.

¹³ Susan Sontag, 'Bergman's Persona' in *Styles of Radical Will*, Vintage, London, 2001, p.144.

¹⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity, 1990, p. 92.

¹⁵ John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power*, Pluto Press, London, 2002, p. 61.

¹⁶ Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible*, Routledge, New York ; London, 1992 p. 161.

¹⁷ Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible*, p. 167.

¹⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1983, p.72.

¹⁹ Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης, 'Το Μετέωρο Βήμα του Πελαργού' in *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος: Κριτική 1965-1995*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1995, p. 255.

ULYSSES' GAZE / TO BAEMMA TOY OΔYΣΣΕΑ

Ulysses' Gaze starts with images from The Weavers, a reel shot by the Manaki brothers, possibly in the 1910s. An old woman is weaving cloth. She stares at the lens not with astonishment but without doubt with the emotion of facing something new. But is it only that she is facing a new experience or is it that her image is also new for the contemporary audience? The grainy image has a sense of tangibility that together with the absence of sound provide the static shot with the dreamlike nature of a reality retrieved as if from another world. While these images unravel, a voiceover asks: "Is this the first gaze?"

We find out in the next sequence that there are, in fact, three further reels shot at an even earlier date than that of the film of the weavers. The voiceover is that of A., a film director facing a personal and professional crisis, who has embarked on a journey through the Balkans in the middle of the Yugoslavian war. He is in search of three lost reels shot by the Manaki brothers, two documentarists who worked at the beginning of the 20th century.

The reels are the first filmic footage ever shot in the Balkans. A.'s trip takes him on a double journey: a geographic one, through a Balkans at war with a bombed Sarajevo as its final geographical destination; and a temporal one, revisiting his past, the history of the Manaki brothers and the history of the Balkans. Time splits open, with one vector pointing towards the future and other delving into the past.

In this chapter I will attempt to outline how Angelopoulos deals with the concepts of time and memory through an approach that does not treat the image as a 'given' to be illustrated, but as an open field where questions on perception and representation are asked. This approach leads me to question the director's insistence on the use of long takes and their function as memory vessels in a film that wants to raise hope in the middle of the ongoing war in the former Yugoslavia. Gilles Deleuze's concept of *the*

time image provides a useful construct for speaking about the film's focus on the personal past of A. and the historical past of the Balkans.

The opening sequence of the film, which stands as a *haiku* prefacing the rest, is also a remarkable illustration of the convergence of the director's approach with Deleuze's reflection on film and time. The Thessaloniki tableau starts with a fade-in on a tracking shot accompanied by a voice offscreen which says: "It was that winter of '54 when Yannakis Mannakis saw a blue ship moored in the harbour of Salonica. I was his assistant back then. He had a longing to photograph it as it sailed. One morning the ship set sail..." As we listen to the voice, the camera reveals an old photographer, dressed in fifties clothing, and his assistant (in contemporary clothes), who turns out to be the source of the voice over. A blue ship makes an entrance in the background, at sea, from the right side of the frame, and simultaneously, within the visual field of the photographic lens. At this point, Yannakis clutches his heart. His assistant comes to his aid and calmly places the dying man on a chair behind him.

The assistant then starts walking towards the place where the camera began the tracking shot. The camera follows him while he addresses someone off screen to the right. The tracking movement reveals the presence of A., who seems to have been watching all along from off-screen to the right. A. moves to the left. Passing his assistant, he takes the camera's focus along with him, and 'forces' it to reverse. As he returns to the edge of the bay, however, the old photographer's body is no longer to be seen, and neither is his photographic equipment. The camera captures the blue ship while A. is still framed gazing out at it. Karaindrou's non-diegetic musical theme is introduced as the camera zooms in to isolate the ship. A. is left outside the frame.

In the above sequence, one long take presents a time span of forty years within a uniformity of time and space in the representational field. The camera moves back and forth as if moving in time. Yannakis Manakis died in 1954 and A. is standing in the same place in 1994, in the diegetic present. The assistant is standing by the old

photographer yet he is himself old and dressed in the clothes of the present. His walk in the bay marks a passage in time. The camera starts with a fade-in at a certain point in time, but it does not start from A.. Rather, it goes to him after we have seen the photographer, after the oral testimony of an eyewitness. What we experience in this sequence is not a linear narrative where past, present, and future are segments that succeed each other on a horizontal scale. There is no division between subjective and objective points of view that would, in turn, authorise the external reality of establishing shots to include the subjectivity of the internal point of views.

A standard way of filming the sequence would be to connect the old photographer with the memory of either the assistant or A. This would be designated by breaking up the sequence into a succession of shots that would form a flashback. The flashback usually refers to the subjectivity of the character who is experiencing a recollection. It consists of a hierarchical arrangement, where the recollection is subordinated to and bracketed by the objective shots of a character thinking, or by an objective present action that needs an explanation from the past in order to progress. The flashback, in turn, serves as a break that verifies the organic movement of the plot towards the future. It is usually designated by, for example, a dissolve or a fade-in.

The Thessaloniki Bay sequence, however, is not a flashback. The ship is seen simultaneously from the point of view of the photographer A. and the point of view of the camera. The uniformity of space throughout the timespan is not a designation of time launching forth to the future, in other words the palindrome movement. The sequence is a pure 'time image' where time is not integral to subjectivity but rather the opposite: consciousness is internal and constituted by time. This latter, which I believe is revealed in the Thessaloniki sequence, is Deleuze's reading of Bergson.

Starting from Bergson's notion of the *durée*, Deleuze outlines the notion of a time crystal of an indivisible unity between an actual image and its virtual image where a non-chronological past is preserved:

What is actual is always a present. But the present changes or passes. It becomes past when it no longer is, when a new present replaces it. It is clearly necessary for it to pass on for the new present to arrive, and it is clearly necessary for it to pass at the same time as it is present. [...] Since the past is constituted not after the present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past, which differ from each other in nature, or, what amounts to the same thing, it has to split the present in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched towards the future while the other falls into the past.¹

A virtual image is not a psychological or a dream image, it is a mental image reconstructed in consciousness not *according to a chronological succession*: a new image that appears without relation to the present it once was. So we have the present as the actual image and the past, which is contemporaneous, as a virtual or mirror image. This can be experienced in everyday life in moments of *déjà-vu* where perception and recollection happen simultaneously. This recollection does not belong to a past of a once-actual present, nor does it have to be actualised in a virtual present of a personal recollection.

Although the Thessaloniki sequence contains evident marks of historical time, it is the image of the ship that becomes an image of an objective virtual past contemporaneous with the present consciousness of both diegetic characters and by extension with the camera. The ship cannot be placed in an actual historical present or past, nor does it coincide with a particular point of view. It makes an entrance only until it is isolated by the camera, and then passes quietly off screen to the left. Similarly, the ship cannot be pinned down in time for it is in constant motion. The camera and the diegetic characters all share the same point of view in what I may describe as a *shared* subjectivity. It is this *shared* subjectivity of internal gazing that authorises the form of the film and makes a recurrent movement from past to present.

The two movements described in the quote above could be said to correspond to two vectors of the film: A. does indeed move towards Sarajevo in a horizontal line of chronological time which is subordinated to movement. Simultaneously, however, he moves alongside another (vertical or non-chronological) line that constitutes the incidents wherein he takes the place of Yannakis Manakis. His quest is for the reels that represent an age of innocence, where cinema contained the dynamics of a new form and the hope that their acquisition would trigger a new beginning both personal and collective. This quest places him in absolute contemporaneity with Manakis, thus forming a *shared* subjectivity.

The narrative, instead of breaking into the flashback of an objective past that constitutes the pathos of Yannakis Mannakis and his adventures in the beginning of the century, blends this past with the subjectivity of A. Here it is movement that is subordinated to time. The action directed at the retrieval of the reels is constantly suspended and down-played by the memory and *déjà vu* images blending the past and the present. These images are not hallucinatory images, and neither are they designated by a dissolve or a fade to mark out a time lapse.

Angelopoulos follows the same rhythm, down-playing the linear progression of time, throughout the film. A simple cut transfers A. to the past while he passes the Scopian border to Bulgaria. There is something uncanny about the sequence where he is arrested by the Bulgarian authorities. The policemen are dressed in early twentieth century clothing and we, as viewers, realise that A., as he faces the prosecutor who is reading him the accusations, is now Yannakis.

Is the scene a hallucination? The cut as a means to break the sequence does not help to clarify the transition in time. Rather, it blurs the border between the real and the imagined, between a world which is perceived as a cause and effect system and a world of rupture where things are ambiguous. The audience can make out the transition only in retrospect, since the passage to the questioning room does not signify a time transition. It is only after the accusations are read that we realise that we are in the beginning of the century. The time transition is transferred from the cut

to the mise-en-scene. The effect is to charge the image with the potential to be questioned. Instead of following the action, the viewer is compelled to wonder about what it is that he/she is seeing 'now', and thus encouraged to be involved intellectually rather than remaining the passive consumer of a driven action. And as the cause for the transition is not directed to a previous agent in the narrative, the question of its significance remains suspended.

It is as if the camera, by shifting its emphasis from the cut to the mise-en-scene, takes on the same role of the observer trying to make out what the situation is rather than the narrator illustrating a given story. In the Korytsa sequence the audience perceives the sensation of an exile returning home only to face a second exile. This is brought about by moving from the particular to the general, but the audience is not granted a full explanation. The image is not so much an intellectual image - although the arrangement creates an audiovisual montage where the ascetic figure is contrasted with a wide open space surrounded by concrete, and her silence gives way to the chanting of a *hodza* (Muslim priest) as signifier of the post-Communist return of religion in Albania.

The sequence provides a sensation of deprivation, a feeling of angst among the ruined houses. Again it opens up to the world outside of the frame, outside of the fiction. Why is the woman at odds with the environment? Is it just because it is ugly? The image is bleak but the viewer is not privileged to receive an explanation connecting the scene with the history of the Greek minority in Northern Epirus. The image simply provides a sense of loss based on the documented reality. It suggests its meaning, but this meaning is not imposed on the viewer.

The montage works internally. It is as if the real settings will speak for themselves the history that has been played out before them. The rendering of the truth is passed on from the uttered word to the recorded image. The audience starts off with an impression, and the choice of moving to the particular concepts that this impression alludes to is left entirely up to them.

At a later point in the narrative, the shot of the fragmented Lenin statue is taken from a point of view that fully scrutinises it starting from a detail of the broken pointing hand, moving to the head and then around the statue, thanks to the circular movement of the boat that carries the statue. This movement evokes what Deleuze has called a pure optical and sound image.²

Deleuze uses these terms to describe the breaking down of an action-driven narrative in which the image, in a given situation, presents the reaction of a character to a previous cause identifiable either by him or by the audience. The optical image creates new signs and is born, among other things, when characters face situations where the ability of a logical response collapses. The characters then turn from active agents to seers. The image breaks away from the continuity of a developing plot, it serves no specific dramatic function, and its relation to the rest of the film is not one of cause and effect but one subordinated to an internal rhythm that brings the images together.

The image of the statue is not subordinated to an action in the way that a sequence of shots in, say, a Hitchcock film would analyse the act of signifying a murder (as in the shower sequence in *Psycho* where the set of relations in which the action and the [perpetrator of the action] are caught³ and interpreted). In a narrative of this latter kind the audience is usually not left with any questions as to what the images signify. By contrast, the optical image of the Lenin statue stands for a new way of seeing, one that poses a question of what thoughts are designated, while framing the fragmented statue of an order that has been so rigidly signified.

The implied symbolism of the funeral, with people gathering on the banks of the river making the sign of the cross while the boat floats by, carries an equal signification along with a sense of astonishment while the camera insists on the autonomous recording of this huge bulk of physical matter. Is the implied symbolism a sign of nostalgia? Where does the finger point now and, if it still carries significance, does it relate to the direction of the disillusioned director inside the film? It seems that for Angelopoulos the portrayal of a world of alienation, where the

signs of previous ideological regimes have collapsed, leaves his main character to wander through a world that seems like a maze.

A new beginning?

Referring to De Sica's *The Bicycle Thieves*, Antonioni claimed that now that the bicycle is no longer there, a new signification is at stake.⁴ The worker in *The Bicycle Thieves* had a practical, functional goal: the bicycle was a means for making a living and for many, mostly outside the Western world, it still is. It becomes apparent that A.'s quest for the reels is not of a practical nature. Rather, it takes the form of a vow, in the much the same vein as offerings and pilgrimages made by religious people in the name of a saint. As pointed up earlier, however, the ritual here does not have a given structure of a beginning a middle and an end, for it is the autonomy of the episodes-stations in the journey that breaking away from the evolution of the plot like the stretches of dead time deprived of any dramatic action in autonomous sequence shots.

The dramatic evolution of a globally dominant American film industry has established a style of representation, a ritual that requires the meaning of a film to be contained by the plot, the field of action where form is subordinated to story development. This story development deploys conventions that imitate human perception in empirical reality, thus defining naturalism as the norm. Within this framework, every shot has a functional character as determined by the restrictions of the plot. A shot of a clock in close up for example has its place within the deigesis only if it is relevant to the developing action or to the characters' psychology.

Angelopoulos clearly belongs to a different tradition. When A. is waiting for the Archivist in his subterranean office, or when the asylum inmates make their exit from the building in Sarajevo, what we are presented with is an optical image: the

camera holds a fixed frame until almost all the characters are out. There is no plot-connected drive.

A ritual is predicated on a deliberate act of faith in a pre-existing order to bring deliverance. As such, *A.* does not propel the action forward, but, rather, seems to be recording, archiving. It is as if the boundaries of past, present, and future, or the real and the imagined, blend to form not a relative perspective or a hallucination but a new image, an image whose meaning is not given or rigidly identified. Nikos Kolovos calls the cinema of Angelopoulos ritualistic⁵. Yet a ritual is based on absolute faith in a signifying order that it tries to sustain. The choreographed movement of the actors and the slow movement of the camera indeed make it tempting to describe the cinema of Angelopoulos as ritualistic. The adoption of the name 'Ulysses' as a universal allegory signifying life as a journey points in that direction.

Yet the return to a past narrative does not signify the return to the same narrative. Angelopoulos sees the end of the era of grand leaders and pays tribute to the dreams that this historical era generated. However, we see the fragmented statue of Lenin taken down to the river of time. Angelopoulos is not reactionary: each return to the past takes place within a present discourse that reformulates the past as a means to shatter the crude realism of a world presented as how things are. By denying the discourse of a one-dimensional reality, Angelopoulos blasts apart the present with the force of the past, and opens up a world of potentialities where possibility becomes as real as the material, objective world which presents to us.

A possibility can be a wish for a different future. The very act of wishing changes you whether or not the wish becomes actuality. It is also possible that the remembrance of the past can become animated without warning. This can be seen in the *Kostanza* sequence, for instance, where the image of *A.*'s mother entering the frame/his mind, leads him to the family congregation for the celebration of New Year's Eve 1945 in an almost Proustian, involuntary manner. During their encounter

A. remarks: “It is somehow my footsteps that have led me here”. Once again, it is not he who becomes the agent of the action.

It is at this celebration that the character, in his present form, meets with his family from the past. This is not a conventional flashback because it is not a real break from the present. A. retains his present form throughout the sequence only to return as a child at the end. The whole sequence is performed within one long take. A greets all of his relatives and then recedes off frame. At that moment the shot is fixed, forming a tableau including the large hallway and the main exit.

The shot thus takes on the attributes of a theatre stage, the representation changing from empirical realism to a Brechtian representation reminiscent of the New Year’s Eve sequence in *The Travelling Players*. The father returns among the New Year’s well wishers in 1946. We see a brief dance among the guests, and then witness the entrance of two Stalinist security officers who, while performing a grotesque dance, arrest A’s uncle. As the three make their exit, Uncle Vangelis proclaims a happy 1948.

The ball starts up again, and continues till the officers’ return with another group to confiscate the property, and the guests wish each other a happy 1950 before gathering for *the family picture*. The family are then about to emigrate to Greece. Everybody stands facing the film camera, posing, and calling for A. As the camera zooms to the photographed family, A. makes his way into the frame and takes his position. Now he is a child again and the take ends with the camera slowly zooming in on his face.

As the title of Angelopoulos’ first film suggests, the character is not in the past, in a clear-cut segment of a reality that waits to be excavated intact. He is in a *reconstruction* where the past comes alive from the viewpoint of a child standing as the collective memory of a group (the Greek-Romanian ex-patriots), and it is as if the Brechtian defamiliarisation of the actors’ movement is here identified with the dream-like gaze and innocence of a child.

Again the long take is used in order to make a passage in time, to form a link. The absence of postproduction editing that would transfer the point of the gaze within the diegetic world inevitably draws attention to the camera itself. A personal recollection opens up to a collective narrative. Although fragmented, it makes a link with history not as a background, but as an assemblage that comes to the foreground through the grotesque dance. A period of three years that signifies the end of the Greek minority in Romania and the arrival of the new Stalinist regime is reconstructed in one take. Time is compressed in a unified space by the wishes for a Happy New Year. As Fredric Jameson points out:

Transitions in the modern must at one and the same time be organic and radically arbitrary; they must document some deeper motivation at the same time that they ostentatiously exhibit their made quality, their sheer artificiality.⁶

The final gaze of the child straight at the camera brings attention to the representation of the materiality of the film medium. The Kostanza sequence forms an autonomous tableau, meaning that its signification remains complete without reference either to the end or to another point in the narrative. The appearance of A.'s mother is arbitrary and so are the time transitions within the sequence, but on the other hand, they are organically connected with rest of the film, not only as one recollection in the personal saga of a journey but as a system that works with autonomous segments and refuses to give way to an all-encompassing truth that justifies its order as the norm.

And what else could the inner motivation of the sequence be than Benjamin's dictum that "History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now."⁷ It seems that the new could just as well be forgotten in the past, the significance of which acquires a new meaning after its retrieval, like the reels that A. wishes to signify hope for the respect of the 'other' as a universal ethical consensus in the face of terror. Lastly, the persistence of the

internal rhythm of the shot and the fixed frame that Angelopoulos employs carry traces of an early cinema like that of the Manaki brothers, as we see in *The Weavers*. It is a persistence that the director makes present not only as an attempted realist aesthetic but also as a form of resistance to action-driven narrative as a way of abbreviating time.

The journey of a modern Ulysses, then, is not that of the return to the homeland, at least not one that is geographically placed on the map. The search for meaning and identity ends its diegesis in the burning Sarajevo. Similarly, the reels of the film are burned, leaving A. to face the camera in tears. The Manaki brothers started with the Balkan Wars at the beginning of the century and now the human tragedy of war is acted out again.

Does this signify the end of history? The fractured statue, the burned cinema in Monastiri, the executions of the people in Sarajevo, and, finally, the burned foot reels suggest an actual image of a present terror, but the virtual image of the interconnected gaze sustains the image of the child as a sign of hope in pure recollection. As Deleuze points out, in pure recollection we remain contemporary with the child that we were, in much the same way as the believer feels himself contemporary with Christ.⁸

It is this contemporaneity that connects a personal world view with history for the rise of a new collective dream. The film's original treatment of its content through an episodic narrative, providing space for the viewer to produce his/her meaning, thus works as an extension of a theory of autonomy and cooperation against a dominant master code fixing the gaze, fixing time.

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2-the Time Image*, , trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, London: The Athlone Press, 1989, pp. 81-82.

² Ibid. p. 3.

³ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1-The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, London: Athlone Press, 1986, p.200.

⁴ Michelangelo Antonioni, Text quoted in Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2-the Time image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta London: The Athlone Press, , 1989, p. 284.

⁵ Nikos Kolovos, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, Αθήνα, Αιγόκερως, 1990, p.20.

⁶ Fredric Jameson, 'Theo Angelopoulos: the past as history, the future as form' in *The Last Modernist: The Films of Theo Angelopoulos*, ed. by Andrew Horton, Flick Books, England, 1997, p. 87.

⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Theses in the Philosophy of History* in *Illuminations*, Fontana Press, London, 1992, pp. 252-253.

⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2-the Time Image*, The Athlone Press, London, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, 1989, p. 92. Pure recollection exists outside consciousness. For Deleuze we as subjects are integral in time rather than time being an integral part of consciousness. Just as a physical concrete reality exists independently of perception, so the past exists outside personal memory. It exists in a virtual space that is preserved outside consciousness. "It is in the past as it is in itself, as it is preserved in itself, that we go to look for our dreams or our recollections and not the opposite" (Deleuze, *ibid.* p.82.). When A. visits his birth house or when he encounters his dead mother it is not as if he is reanimating a former present that he extracts from memory. It is as if he is drawn by the virtual image of the past which is preserved outside consciousness. The past mingles with the present in an indiscernible image of present/past. It is A. who visits the past outside memory rather than a subjective memory animating the past in a flashback or a dream sequence.

ETERNITY AND A DAY / ΜΙΑ ΑΙΩΝΙΟΤΗΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΜΙΑ ΜΕΡΑ

Alexandros is a middle-aged writer and translator dying from cancer. We follow him on the last day before he is admitted to hospital, as he unexpectedly becomes involved in the adventure of a young boy immigrant. In his attempt to help the boy, Alexandros moves in and around Thessaloniki and then all the way to the northern borders of Greece and back again. Meanwhile, his mind constantly revisits the day that his daughter was born and reunites with the spectre of his dead wife.

The encounter with the boy also conjures up the spectre of Greece's national poet Dionysios Solomos, whose unfinished poem 'Free Besieged' Alexandros had once tried to complete, even though he has long since given up. Throughout the film, the landscape of the present is constantly disrupted by past memories and longings, questioning the possibility of redemption both on a personal and on a wider social level. Moving within the temporal confines of a single day, Alexandros finds himself on the threshold between life and death. The film shows his attempt to break through the confines of the present while in search of redemption.

In his famous essay, *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) Sigmund Freud positions the subject who suffers the shock of a loss as having to go through either a state of melancholia or a process of mourning. Freud is explicit about the disparate nature of the two.¹ Mourning is the subject's reaction to the loss of a loved person or of some abstract notion such as one's liberty or ideal. It is a process where libido is withdrawn from a lost object. This withdrawal, however, cannot be enacted at once. Rather, it is a gradual process by which the subject eventually declares the object dead and moves on to invest his libido in new objects.

Melancholia, on the other hand, takes place when the subject remains faithfully attached to the lost object. It is a state of mourning without end – hence its description as a pathological and negative state. Nevertheless, David L. Eng and

David Kazanjian provide a different reading in their essay *Mourning Remains*, trying to detach the state of melancholia from its negative connotations and see it as an active process in both the personal and the social sphere.² The authors see that, through melancholia as described by Freud, the past does not remain fixed. They remark, furthermore, that melancholia – as a refusal of closure – provides “a method for interpreting loss as a creative process.”³ Through the melancholic attachment to loss, the past may come alive in the present. It is not a fixed past that is over and done with through mourning; it is a psychic topos that can shape and influence the present.

It is through this prism that my reading of *Eternity and a Day* becomes an attempt to trace the psychic topos of the film. Melancholia is a word that has been overused in relation to Angelopoulos.⁴ However, it is always either charged with the negativity of pathology or with the pride of fallen aristocrats who take narcissistic pleasure in their intellectual elitism in an attempt to ‘mourn’ the disintegration of the Left ideal after the fall of the Communist states. The individual wanderer in the films of Angelopoulos is taken to be a stand-in for what amounts to a universal antihero, his identity loaded with metaphysical connotations.

I would not deny that Angelopoulos articulates a humanist discourse with universal elements. Indeed, his film points out the need for a new universal ideal. However, this ideal becomes one where *the other* is not erased or homogenised. Here, as in *Megalexandros*, Angelopoulos presents a landscape that makes visible the gaps of any grand narrative and the dead end of high idealism. What takes its place is a notion of responsibility towards *the other*, towards difference. Furthermore, my claim is that the melancholia that permeates the *free indirect discourse* of the film is also a material account of the body in pain suffering both from a terminal illness and from the loss of a loved person. The notion of melancholia as a refusal to let go of the past becomes a critical and affective tool that constantly influences the present. To paraphrase Walter Benjamin, the film becomes a psychic topos that “seizes hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.”⁵

The 'moment of danger' in *Eternity and a Day* is the terminally ill body. It is also the absence of a political agenda on the Left, along with a landscape of lost homes and wandering immigrants. The translator-poet whose gaze marks the space of the filmic narrative is an intellectual with a Socialist agenda. In a manner reminiscent of Professor Borg in Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1957), Alexandros revisits his past within the temporal confines of a single day, the last day before he is admitted to hospital with terminal cancer. During that day, Angelopoulos places the dying writer in a direct encounter with a boy immigrant in search of a home.

The film starts with Alexandros, right before he is admitted to hospital, passing by his daughter's flat to make some final arrangements. He then visits his housekeeper to hand over his dog, in the manner of a modern Ulysses embarking on his final journey. (In the ancient epic, Odysseus leaves his dog with the shepherd Eumaios immediately before his departure for Troy.) In a familiar Angelopoularian manner, the signification of the ancient myth is deconstructed. The journey is not that of a king conquering a foreign land. Similarly, the ritual of homecoming is not the privilege of a mythical hero whose arrival signifies the sovereignty of a nation. Rather, it is a journey towards death, marked by the desire to break away from its annihilating grip. It takes place, not over years, but within the confines of a single day.

Furthermore, the hero's journey is associated with the thousands of wandering immigrants who are unable to return, caught between borders as we saw in *The Suspended Step of the Stork*. In his final journey towards death, Alexandros sits immobile inside his car after giving his dog away – drained of life and staring out on emptiness. At that moment, the boy appears and the spirit seems to return to Alexandros' body. One of the hundreds of illegal immigrant children who clean car windcreens at traffic lights (their only way of earning a living), the boy reawakens in Alexandros the will to live. This is not, however, the superhuman will of a romantic spirit. A quest for redemption in the face of death, suitable for the most metaphysical and romantic of quests, the hero's journey remains both material and mortal.

The triumph of the spirit is always balanced by the sufferings of the body. After each encounter with the past, when Alexandros is reunited with his dead wife, we see him wandering in the streets of Thessaloniki. As the film progresses, he becomes more feeble and exhausted – as in the port sequence, where the young boy collects words as Alexandros leans over a bench and clutches at his chest. His doctor, who happens to pass by, is another reminder of death. The short interlude of collecting words ends in silence.

Similarly, it is silence that marks both the beginning and the end of Alexandros' encounter with the boy – giving their story a circular structure. During the first encounter, Bruno Ganz (who plays Alexandros) is shot in a manner reminiscent of his role as Cassiel, the angel in Wenders' *Wings of Desire* (1987). A tracking shot from a high angle scans his face in despair, while the lights from the shop windows cast layers of red on the windscreen of his car. This reflects the introduction of the two angels in Wenders' film, as they sit inside a car in a display window. During that same sequence, as the car rotated together with the camera that was placed on top of it, Wenders evoked a sense of playfulness – as if one were seated on a merry-go-round. It is there, in that space, that the desire to become mortal filled Cassiel/Ganz with a sense of inexplicable joy.

The angels roam the skies above Berlin, a city divided in two. We the viewers are left watching the West side, as it struggles with the ghosts of its Nazi past as well as the side-effects of its postwar economic miracle: frantic working rates and increased production of commodities, both of which suppress any effort at self-introspection. The angels fly over a city fully immersed in capitalism – aware, as we can see from the opening sequence, that it is far from being a paradise on earth. Nevertheless, Wenders refuses to lament. Far from being ironic about utopian idealism, the German director wants to capture its positive drive and powerful will to live. He can embrace the contradictions of life in Berlin at the end of the 80s, as his angels indulge in metaphysical speculations inside a car salesroom.

Angelopoulos brings the angel of *Wings of Desire* back to his starting point. Now he is a mortal, but a very different one from his character in the sequel *Faraway So Close* (1993) where Cassiel is happily married. In *Eternity and a Day*, the angel is about to die and the spirit seems absent from his face that stares into emptiness. It is the boy who will activate his will to live – yet after he leaves for Italy, we find Alexandros alone again, in his car in the middle of the road.

The transcendence of the film into the realm of the ideal is also downplayed by two later shots. One is the shot of the airplane that passes above the quay, interrupting the daydream of Alexandros. The plane carries an advertisement for the National Bank of Greece, which was one of the sponsors of the film. This is another signification of time forking in the narrative. It is time as *value* that breaks into the narrative in a bleak autonomous image. It is an index of the birth of a film, together with the giant poster of the same sponsor that forces the camera's gaze into the background (rather than on the wandering Ganz) at a later point in the narrative.

As signifiers of time, these moments are equal to the encounters with Solomos or Alexandros' wife. It is the spectre that haunts the director or any author. It is the cruel admittance that film is also a commodity, together with the blunt affirmation of the death of the avant-garde. The airplane breaks the fleeting image of the ship and ends the memory sequence. This is not the trace of a Brechtian *Gest* breaking the evolution of the drama; it is only an advertisement. Yet even on these grounds, the film aches for transgression and so does the viewer.

The film is a search for home through a melancholic gaze. The double register of this melancholia – both critical and monumental, to put it in Nietzschean terms – is what makes the film a field of hope. Thessaloniki is turned from an objective landscape that exists 'out there' to the free, indirect discourse of Alexandros. The visit to his daughter's apartment becomes his way back to his family's old summer-house by the sea. As his daughter opens the letter Alexandros has just found, the voice of his dead wife is heard in the room. The dim grey light of the apartment gives way to the sunlit air of the summer-house, where the young couple waits for family friends to pay a

visit to their daughter who has just been born. Language is what brings the past to life in the present. It seems almost natural that Alexandros should find himself hand-in-hand with his dead wife.

In a manner already familiar from *Ulysses' Gaze*, and also reminiscent of Bergman in *Wild Strawberries*, Alexandros is not transposed as a young man into this past event. He remains in his present form, well over fifty years old and still wearing the same coat. Angelopoulos does not recreate memories from the past, in a way that would be designated as a flashback. Rather, he brings the past to life in the present, so as to highlight the tension between them.

This sequence is not an event that blots out everything that came after it. "It establishes a continuing dialogue with loss and its remains."⁶ All the guests are dressed in white. Can this be an allusion to the white suits that the ruling bourgeoisie wear in *Days of '36* to signify their blankness? Or is it the soothing white of a dream superimposed by the workings of memory? The question remains unanswered. The guests enter the house as a group and then scatter into different rooms. The camera records their entrance from within the hallway, as if the camera had been waiting for them to appear. After the group dissolves, the camera starts a semicircular inquiring movement, as if trying to decide which action to follow, which subject to choose.

Two of the guests move to the sitting room, where they are about to engage in a political conversation. It is less than a year before the establishment of the military dictatorship in Greece in 1967. The camera records them from a distance, from almost behind the door of the opposite room – like the gaze of a wanderer who happens to eavesdrop on a conversation. It will not remain long in this position. The discourse concerning the political upheavals of modern Greece, already dealt with in the 70s films, is unable to hold the desire of the gaze. That belongs to the present and the object of its quest lies elsewhere. The camera will move to the right, in order to bring back into the frame the porch by the sea where the newborn baby is waiting.

Memory becomes a moment of creation, where the subject who thinks or remembers takes refuge in the past in order to deal with the decay of the body. In this last film in Angelopoulos' *Trilogy of Borders*, the time for historical specifics seems to have elapsed. The emphasis on personal remembrance leaves little space for politics. During the second memory sequence in the family house, one of the guests asks Alexandros: "So what is the Left saying these days?" Alexandros, his mind set on the porch where his newborn baby is lying, responds with a tiny gesture (as if to acknowledge the question) and then asks, quickly but ironically, "About what?"

The Brechtian *Gest* and the focus on historical events seem totally absent. However, as in *Ulysses' Gaze*, there are striking images where politics resurface and disrupt the narrative continuum. In the previous film, it occurs at the family reunion in Costanza, where the grotesque dance of the Stalinist officers signifies the tragicomic character of totalitarianism. The arrest of A.'s uncle comes about in an almost surreal fashion. The two male officers arrest the uncle while dancing together, and walk away as a rhythmical trio.

In *Eternity and a Day*, this moment occurs close to the final sequence, where Alexander and the young immigrant are travelling by bus. It is night and this is their last journey together. The next day, the boy will board a ship to Italy and Alexander will be admitted to hospital for his final treatment. The whole sequence is rich in symbolism, already visible from the bus stop, which is named *All Souls* (Asomaton). The actual name of this bus stop in real life, *All Souls* signifies the passing over into another dimension. From this moment, the sequence takes on a deep dreamlike quality.

A young protestor enters the bus at the second stop, holding a red flag, and almost immediately falls asleep. It has already been pointed out how this signifies the Left being in a state of *sleep*.⁷ Yet this remains one of the most striking images in the film. Shot in frontal perspective, the image presents Alexandros, the boy and the Leftist youth as he sleeps in the background. The first two are watching a performance by three musicians who have just got off the bus. The shot is taken from

the side of the musicians, yet its low angle suggests that it is not a reaction shot signifying their gaze. It is an impersonal shot, yet it is far from objective. The dreamlike nature of the sequence rules out objectivity. Once again, we have an autonomous sequence free of the restrictions of the evolving plot. It is not an objective image of the real waiting to be recorded. It is a moment of creation that comments on a social reality. It carries the gaze of Alexandros, while being impersonal at the same time.

“Time is like a child playing marbles by the sea.” This is one of the first lines heard on the soundtrack of the film. To whom does this voice belong? There is no clear cause and effect between a speaker and this voice. It could be the voice of Alexandros as a child or the voice of one of his friends. It is definitely not the voice of an omniscient narrator, or the voice of God. The result is an ambiguous image, where the act of enunciation eludes any attempt at direct attribution – and the where the subject ceases to be the master of events. Time flows and Alexandros is constitutive of a memory time, where the past is brought to life in the present, but he is also subject to the passing of time irrespective of his presence.

The past returns both as liberator and as anxiety. The first memory of Alexandros as a child, sneaking out onto the seashore belongs to him as much as to the impersonal flow of time. There are no direct links, with Alexandros being the agent of this daydreaming. The tracking camera follows and leads the child outside the house. Still, it does not merely serve as a functional tool describing the movement of a human agent from one space to the next. It constitutes an autonomous movement, where the space around the boy becomes the foreground.

Furthermore, this shot does not deliver a movement executed from the script. Choosing to film on location, the director has to establish a dialogue with the pro-filmic space. Unlike filming inside a studio, where space can be accommodated to serve the requirements of a preconceived idea, shooting on location requires major decisions to be taken according to the dictates of the pre-existing space. The latter becomes transformed for the requirements of the film but still retains a prior

existence, a history that escapes the requirements of the plot. It is this space that becomes autonomous, rather than functioning simply as an object of the character's gaze.

This should not lead, however, to the opposite conclusion – whereby the movement of the child is only a pretext for a tracking shot whose function is purely decorative. The two movements are linked in an organic but autonomous symmetry. The tracking shot is the gaze of Alexandros scrutinising his own body as a child, the interior of the summer-house, the dim light that belongs to the realm of the dream along with the movement towards the shore, a movement that carries with it the sound of waves that set the dying intellectual free from his anxiety. It is a space that belongs to the diegesis as the personal past of the main character.

At the same time, the shot automatically delivers an impersonal intensity that can be traced in the cinema as far back as Murnau. Such intensity recurs, and materialises in different forms, through Welles and Mizogushi to Godard and Wenders. It is the desire for the medium to acquire mobility. We should not speak of any kind of mobility, though, but only that which is materialised through the use of the tracking shot. In *Eternity and a Day* we do not see a self-reflexive reference to a cinematic past as we do in *Ulysses' Gaze*, where the interposition of the Manaki foot reels paid tribute to the early steps of cinema. Rather, the memory of the Angelopoulou hero brings forth a tracking shot whose history is embedded in its form and is automatically evoked and brought to the surface along with the signature of its author. The Angelopoulou tracking shot marks a continuum and a difference in the desire for movement.

Eternity and a Day returns, in a way, to an image that was established in *Landscape in the Mist* – where the world as seen through the eyes of two children gave rise to a filmic landscape of a fairytale nature. In that film, the frozen policemen covered in outlandish snowflakes (falling as if in slow motion) and the factory seen as a threatening dragon are images that belong to the realm of fantasy. Far from being an escapist projection, however, the gaze of the two children came to signify faith and

hope. It was their innocence that allowed the encounter with the Tree of Hope to take place at the end of the film, thus materialising the tree that Orestes had imagined being inside the empty piece of celluloid they had found in the streets. The film also brought forward images from all the previous films of Angelopoulos to that date (the return of the troupe from *The Travelling Players*, the woman from *Reconstruction*, the horse of *Megalexandros*) and blended them with the story of the two children to create a magnificent intertextual universe.

In *Eternity and a Day*, the presence of the boy immigrant turns the old man into a storyteller who evokes the spectre of the poet Solomos. History becomes a tale, told by Alexandros to the young boy by the side of a lake, and it is of a time “when the Greeks where under the rule of the Turks” as the first line of the tale goes. The absence of past historical specifics brings forth the *now* time of a *Cinema of Wonder*, to use a term from John Orr, who attributes the term to a number of East European auteurs whose common denominator is a particular liturgical style in the use of long takes. Starting with the Georgian director Sergei Paradjanov and moving on to Andrei Tarkovsky and Angelopoulos (the only non-Eastern European), Orr inquires into the specifics of each director’s work.⁸ Orr sees the cinema of wonder as bringing forth a point of view that transcends everyday experience in a grand vision concerned with history, politics and social reality. Its narratives become frescoes of the cultures they are part of:

[The cinema of wonder] ...preserves the quest for totality, which it inherits from socialist culture, but shifts it quite radically away from the world of ideology.... It is materially grounded in a vivid life world, in the realm of the material image, yet seeks transcendental meaning beyond official frameworks of materialism. Its narratives create parallel worlds to the official discourse of politics...without resorting to the supernatural or the purely symbolic.⁹

The ‘wonder’ element in Angelopoulos is mostly related to the use of what is out of field and the way it is introduced into the shot. Having withdrawn from depicting an

action, the camera tracks slowly to cover a space in which little if anything seems to be taking place and culminates in the final revelation of an object of astonishment. This is clearly visible in *Eternity and a Day*, not only during the first encounter with Solomos but also in the previous sequence when Alexandros and the boy are moving towards the border with Albania.

A static shot, taken from an above diagonal, introduces the car with the two travellers as they make a stop at a rural road going up a mountain. The car stops right before the road makes a turn to the left. The diagonal perspective from above reduces the line of the horizon to the upper right corner of the frame, thus providing a sense of closure. The left side of the frame is occupied by the sides of a hill, which reaches down to the edge of the road. As they get out of the car, the boy – who has kept silent almost up until that moment – starts recounting his experience of crossing the border into Greece. The stillness of the camera, and the absence of physical movement in the mise-en-scene, holds the narrative to the present moment of the shot. The focus lies in the recounting of the story.

Nothing prepares us for what follows. When the boy stops talking, the camera (set on a crane) starts moving to the left. As it leaves the two characters behind, it passes above the height of the cliff and turns into an establishing shot of the border taken from a high diagonal perspective. The shot reveals a gigantic barbed wire fence in the mist, with a gate in the middle and silhouettes hanging from it, extending beyond the two ends of the frame. It is a shot of monumental composition. The black silhouettes in the mist seem to be suspended in thin air, aimlessly trying to get to the other side of the borders, to the side that we as spectators occupy while staring at the *other*.

It is a spectacle for which the spectator is totally unprepared, one that generates an overwhelming sense of amazement. This feeling is intensified by the slow pace of the crane shot, accompanied by an eerie elliptical soundtrack as if preparing for the moment of revelation. The soundtrack aims at arousing the expectation of the audience. One feels that an action or an event is about to take place, but is still left

unprepared for an image that transcends realism at such a degree. It is certainly an image that appears in terms of a revelation. The gigantic wire fence covers the frame from one end to the other and extends over its borders as if stretching to infinity.

After a moment where the camera is left framing the gigantic spectacle, the boy enters the frame from below. Slowly, the gates open and a black silhouette in high-ranking military uniform walks just as slowly towards him, stretching out his hand as if calling the boy back into the abyss. Before the officer has a chance to get his hands on the boy, Alexandros enters the frame and pulls the boy away. The sequence ends with the menacing black figure watching the two as they run out of frame. Behind him the black silhouettes remain suspended on the barbed wire like frozen statues.

One could argue, in fact, that what we see is an attempt to aestheticise pain and terror. Such a critique would be valid for a classical realist text. Angelopoulos, however, transgresses and transcends realism. He creates a filmic event that uses the pro-filmic world as a point of departure, not as a subject for representation. The director departs towards the element of wonder, yet the wonder element is not that of a grandiose Expressionism that generates titanic clashes of emotions through sublime imagery. It would be almost impossible to describe this image as ecstatic or even terrible. The hanging silhouettes appear almost like two-dimensional figures suspended in thin air seen from afar. The wire in the mist is of extraordinary proportions, yet it is a minimal geometric construction of straight lines that seem to extend horizontally *ad infinitum* and lacks depth.

Yet again, Angelopoulos denotes a diagonal perspective where the sense of perspective is somehow reduced and the image appears flat. The absence of depth makes it difficult for an audience to lose itself in the image. The grey undertones evoke humility rather than terror; the lack of substance stops the composition from becoming a piece of baroque Expressionism, which could engage the viewer's gaze in a pleasurable sense. The image is composed as if Angelopoulos were sculpting it out of thin air, and the result is that of a shadow play. Yet it remains an astonishing image. Angelopoulos, it seems, is constantly trying to formulate the feeling of awe even in its most bleak materialisations. Although the use of non-diegetic music may

appeal to the senses, it is impossible to define this moment as a move towards Wagnerianism.¹⁰ The sequence culminates in a moment of revelation, yet the elliptical score does not lead to a climax. The camera in turn lingers from a distance, suspended between a desire to encompass the whole and the need to maintain a stoical distance.

It is the same principle that materialises during the first encounter with the poet Solomos. After Alexandros and the boy pose by a lake close to the Albanian border, the camera (directed by the gaze of Alexandros) continues with a tracking movement to the right, bringing the out-of-field into the frame. Solomos appears dressed in 19th century clothing. He recites a poem from the time he decided to leave for Greece to join the revolutionaries against the Ottomans. Karaindrou's non-diegetic music delivers a revolutionary-style anthem and the poet steps into a carriage. The camera records it as it moves straight into the depth of field.

Unlike the previous shot, this sequence does not present a direct encounter between the characters and the image of astonishment. While the haunting borderline appears as a nightmare image where the characters re-enter the frame and collide with a menacing presence, it is now the movement of the camera that leaves the main characters at the sides in order to deliver a fleeting image that appears and disappears like a mirage. The poet appears as a moment of rupture in the evolution of the plot, and for a few seconds the director evokes the passion of revolution through the non-diegetic use of music. For as long as this shot endures, the characters of the drama are reduced to oblivion. This is a shot that the director evokes from the past; it is a direct encounter with history, not a flashback. The poet returns by the lake in the north of Greece and the dynamics of a movement from the early 19th century collide with the present.

However, this collision is not brought about through the use of montage where two shots are juxtaposed in direct contrast. Neither does it take place within the confines of a long take as in *The Travelling Players*. The dialectic now works *a posteriori* and it is evoked at a later point in the narrative through the image of the Leftist youth

sleeping on the bus with the red flag at his side. Meanwhile, the carriage makes its way towards the depth of field and the pervading melancholia strikes another blow for this is a fleeting image. The past force rises, yet this is not the rise of a phoenix. Nor is it a moment where reality is annihilated. The presence of the carriage has a dual significance. It is simultaneously an image of heightened passions (the poet is off to join a revolution) and an image of melancholia (this moment is in the process of being lost, just as we viewers lose sight of the carriage as it vanishes into the depth of field). What remains is a moment of passing over from Alexandros to the young boy, via a moment of recognition.

The poet was buying words, for he did not know enough Greek to speak the song of the revolution. Similarly the young boy becomes, in symbolic terms, a new collector of words. As Vassiliki Kolokotroni points out, the return of the spectre of Solomos is not a demand for a new revolution in social terms.¹¹ Solomos embodies the need to speak one's own language in a world that is becoming homogeneous in response to global market forces. As Alexandros exclaims at his mother's death-bed: "Why is it that I felt at home only when I could speak my own language?" As Angelopoulos himself remarks, quoting Martin Heidegger, the first thing one remembers after one's birth is one's mother's voice.¹²

The words that the boy offers to Alexandros are not those he heard at the port in Thessaloniki; they are part of his milieu in North Epirus. In a familiar fashion, Angelopoulos is trying to preserve images as they pass on in time. These include dialects and words that are in danger of becoming obsolete, along with community rituals like the Pontian wedding in the port of Thessaloniki and the half-derelict Neo-Classical buildings but also, first and foremost, the landscape of Florina, the usual setting for Angelopoulos' films.

While these may be images of nostalgia, they are not exempt from criticism. The camera records the wedding ritual, yet the couple could easily turn out like Alexandros' daughter and her husband, who have lost all sense of their roots and are selling the family house. Their action echoes the attitudes of the Greek middle class

since the 1950s, when the state gave every private owner a licence to exchange his/her residential property for a limited number of flats in newly built blocks. The result was the mass demolition of two-storey houses in urban centres, and their replacement with large blocks of flats built under contract by private companies. Once a further state act removed the height limit for the new blocks, the final result was the destruction of any sense of community, followed by waves of criminal violations of urban planning.

Angelopoulos records the communal rituals free of any nationalist connotations. The wedding does not advocate the supremacy of Greek tradition. Rather, it conveys a sense of loss, in that these rituals are attributed to an immigrant community. It is not a naïve propagation of an organic relationship with the land, but a further signification of the ruptures of history and the breakdown of a continuity based on a belief in progress – a familiar motif that has recurred in Angelopoulos' work since *The Travelling Players*, where the troupe was unable to finish its performance due to the interventions of history. Almost clumsily, Alexandros stops the wedding ceremony to hand his dog over to his housemaid whose son is getting married. The unnatural gesture becomes more intense by the freezing of the attendants. Yet this ritual will continue.

The image of *Eternity and a Day* is one of melancholia, yet not of despair. It creates a filmic landscape where the past constantly returns and in many ways illuminates the present. We could argue that an action-based narrative, where the characters move towards the fulfilment of tasks in order to break away from the past, is one based (however freely) on Freud's notion of liberation through mourning. When Mel Gibson plays William Wallace in *Braveheart* (1995) there is a direct cause and effect between a tragic event and his decision to take action. The enemy stands before him and the possibility of direct action is feasible. The action moves towards the fulfilment of a goal that will automatically erase the past.

It seems almost impossible to think of the massacre at the beginning of *Braveheart*. It has fulfilled its purpose, which is to set the plot in motion. We could then claim that such a narrative works in terms of a therapeutic session, where a trauma is healed

though a resorting to redemptive action. The object of mourning, gradually if not immediately, disappears. In the cinema of Angelopoulos, in contrast, the object of melancholia breaks open so that the viewer witnesses its many facets. The narrative, although linear, breaks up its motor links opening up to significations of time and to images that recur not only from the same film but also from earlier ones. Melancholia denotes the feeling of loss together with the persistence of the past, whose rendering oscillates between one of critical reconstruction and affective animation.

Eternity and a Day is the personal story of Alexandros. Yet it is also the story of the young immigrant who, as Vassiliki Kolokotroni points out, is a recurrent image of hope in the films of Angelopoulos and of what I see as a signification of the new nomads.¹³ The search for a home becomes an existential journey and the director seems suspended between a nostalgic lament for the familiar, which is passing, and an astonished desire for the new. During the night ride on the bus, we see cyclists pass by in yellow raincoats – a sight already familiar from *Landscape in the Mist* and *The Suspended Step of the Stork*. Unable to sustain their function in the narrative, they seem to embody the impossibility of embracing life with a total theory. Their elusive presence, far from rendering the sublime astonishment and terror of a Romantic poet, turns them into signifiers of hope – familiar yet alien at the same time. Their cheap, mass-produced plastic overcoats, added to the minor scale they occupy in the frame, prevent them from evoking any sense of heroism or grandeur. Their presence, on the contrary, is one of humility. It is the same humility Angelopoulos demonstrates towards the immigrant issue.

Lasse Tomassen points out, through his reading based on Ernesto Laclau's notion of hegemony and the heterogeneous, that in Angelopoulos' *Trilogy of Borders*:

...refugees occupy the place of the heterogeneous, of those persons which are neither simply excluded nor simply included, but who cannot find their place in a Europe divided into national communities by political borders.¹⁴

Citing Laclau, Tomassen refers to heterogeneity as that which is suppressed in order to make clear the homogenous identity of the community. The heterogeneous is not merely what is excluded. Every sense of community is constituted on exclusion. The heterogeneous goes beyond the dialectic of inside/outside, us and them. It fails to be grasped within traditional dialectical notions. It resists ontological identification. It becomes elusive, always an excess upon which the community is built. The heterogeneous is what fails to be represented.

The heterogeneous becomes visible if one thinks how the representation of a community takes place in terms of government. Each community consists of differential elements, groups and individuals. Each representative body of a community aims at articulating the common grounds that transcend the differences of those involved. Simultaneously, it tries to suppress the fact that the representative body itself is another differential element among others inside the community. Each representative establishes his/her authority on empty signifiers that appeal to the community as a whole. The idea of freedom is one of the most common. Yet there is always an element inside the community, usually a group that feels it is not being represented and thus challenges the notion that the rights of a community are accessible to all its members. What becomes apparent is that there is always a possibility for a different representative to take the place of the former. According to Tomassen, what becomes clear is that the concrete representation of a community is the result of contingent hegemonic articulation. It is the result of social struggle, which is in turn historical and thus subsequent to change. The stable and clear identity of the community becomes challenged.

Immigrants belong to the sphere of the heterogeneous. They are neither inside nor outside the geographical borders of a national community. They do not pose an outside threat to the community yet they challenge the notion of its essence, which is based on ethnic purity. During the first encounter between Alexandros and the boy what we actually see is the police chasing the illegal immigrant children at the traffic lights of a main street in Thessaloniki. Faced with this operation, Alexandros saves the boy but Angelopoulos also makes visible what the community tries to suppress: the issue of mass immigration. The boy is a symbol of hope, but he also embodies the subjects of mass illegal migration, of those who are not represented by any international law or local

community institution. The only refuge is that of asylums where the immigrants are jammed together and reduced to a passive state, as we saw in *The Suspended Step of the Stork*.

What becomes important – and here I am following Assimina Karavadas' thoughts on her critique of Antonio Negri's *Multitude* – is that the film makes visible not the multitude of active social subjects who become unionised (in local, specific and autonomous ways) as a counterweight to the power of a global capitalist empire, but those who fail to become organised and remain passive.¹⁵ The boy in the film falls prey to the Albanian mafia. It is merely chance that brings Alexandros to his rescue. However, this individual act is not and cannot be elevated into a symbolic act on behalf of the national community to which he belongs. Furthermore, as Tomassen points out, Alexandros has to resort to the existing symbolic structures of the capitalist world.¹⁶ He buys the boy off the *mafiosi*. Alexandros remains bound to the existing social structures and his power remains more than limited. Yet in this limiting structure, the film offers a space of opening towards the other.

One could say that both Alexandros and the boy are equated under the banner of *ksenitis*. When the boy returns to the aching Alexandros at the port of Thessaloniki, after having bought a few new words from the passers-by, he also gives him the word *ksenitis* (ξενίτης) meaning “stranger”, a word that he knew already from his home. The word *ksenitis* is an obsolete word related to the Greek minority of Northern Epirus in Albania. The two characters, Alexandros and the boy, meet on a threshold and they both feel what Angelopoulos sees as the same angst, the angst of a stranger. Without losing sight of the incommensurable gap between the young immigrant and the dying intellectual in terms of culture and material well-being, Angelopoulos wonders if there is a common thread between them based on the pain they both feel.

Ksenitis is a word that denotes the existential anxiety of being always *a stranger to oneself and to the world* in a way that is similar to Albert Camus' notion of *The Stranger*. However, what we see in his book *The Stranger* is the clash between one man and the moralistic ethics of his contemporary French Algerians. The book portrays the hypocrisy of the colonial French against the protagonist, who is executed not because he

killed an Arab but because his subjectivity, his refusal to follow the norms of common sense made him a threat to their identity. The Arab who gets killed, meanwhile, remains invisible as does the whole community of non-French Algerians. The Arab does not return as a haunting presence. He remains an object who meets an absurd death. Not for a single moment does his presence return to the memory of the main character, whose rebellion against his society from within the confines of his cell while sentenced to death remains reclusively closed to the *other*.

In *Eternity and a Day* the world is presented through the point of view of Alexandros, which in turn mingles with the subjectivity of the camera – yet the other is not presented as a mere object. We should remember the sequence on the Greek-Albanian border, where the nightmarish barbed wire that seems to extend to infinity is also (and mainly) seen by the boy. Furthermore, it is the effect that the boy has on the old man that finally triggers the return of the spectre of Solomos. One could argue (and could in fact be right) that what we see in the film is not the Pasolinian ‘free indirect discourse’ we have thoroughly discussed in relation to *Voyage to Cythera*, where the point of view of the director mingles with that of *the other* who comes from a different social, economic and even historical background.

One could argue that the Angelopoulou hero is a mere stand-in for the director, a self-reflexive figure. On the other hand, we have argued against comparing *Voyage to Cythera* with *8½*, claiming that Angelopoulos places a distance between himself and his protagonist. The camera, through an impersonal point of view, escapes and transgresses the character’s subjectivity. Angelopoulos does not substitute his own vision for the point of view of *the other*; we never really see the world through the subjective viewpoint of the immigrants. What we do see – and this is probably more important – is the ethical stance of *caring for the other*. It is a form of caring that, as Blanchot puts it, does not reduce itself to consolation and remedy. It is not the caring of a philanthropic charity, based on an abstract universal humanism. It is the sort of caring that entails risk, the risk that Alexandros takes three times in order to save the boy. It is also one that entails responsibility. As Blanchot puts it:

responsibility for the Other presupposes an overturning such that it can only be marked by a change in the status of “me”...which withdraws

me from my order--perhaps from all orders and from order itself--responsibility, which separates me from myself (from the 'me' that is mastery and power, from the free, speaking subject) and reveals the other *in place* of me, requires that I answer for absence, for passivity. It requires, that is to say, that I answer for the impossibility of being responsible--to which it has already consigned me by holding me accountable and also discounting me altogether.¹⁷

What we see in the film, and in all three films comprising the *Trilogy of Borders*, are the stories of three individual wanderers. Yet, on the same plane, we witness the movement of uprooted immigrants being halted. These are not happy nomads wandering around the globe, forming a power against any established authority. Their stories are erased by the vagaries of nature – as when they are placed in rotten boats by the local mafia in order to cross borders, as we see at the opening of *The Suspended Step*.

Alexandros, and Angelopoulos by extension, do not give voice to the excluded under a homogenous universal claim. Angelopoulos' voice does not simulate the other. The other, imprisoned in its own passivity, does not need a 'hero' in social realist terms – a hero who, in the long run, is only imagined by a member of the sovereign citizen body as appealing to his/her sense of ethical consensus. One example is a sequence from *The Suspended Step*, where two immigrants are involved in a verbal argument and one suddenly slashes the veins in his right arm. The camera observes the scene as if it were struggling, like the viewer, to make out its specific details. We as viewers remain outside the event. Unless we happen to speak Kurdish, we have no way of understanding the quarrel. The sequence is deliberately left without subtitles, so that we remain within Alexandros' point of view.

In *Ulysses' Gaze*, when A. is crossing the Greek-Albanian border, he encounters a landscape dominated by groups of immigrants who stand in poetic formations and stare – silently and from a distance – into his car and, by extension, at the viewer. It is this incommensurable gap – this space between the car (where the camera is placed) and the triadic formations in the background – which dominates the frame. Angelopoulos is not

willing to pretend the gap is not there. A journey is not one of safety. The crossing of the border entails risk, the risk of searching for a home beyond the one that we know.

Like A. in *Ulysses' Gaze*, Alexandros in *Eternity and a Day* acts out of responsibility. Faced with the systematic erasure of the immigrant issue, Alexandros becomes accountable for his community. This is not a mere symbolic act to redeem the community as a whole – as it would be in a social realist film shot in either the U.S. or the Soviet Union, the two opposing global forces during the Cold War. In both cases, and always in relation to the historical specifics of each genre, we see a typified hero who embodies the imaginary social values of the community. What we have in *Eternity and a Day*, in contrast, is a singularity of discomfort, the discomfort of the stranger. This comes from the periphery since Greece is at the periphery of Europe or – in relation to the immigrant issue – the borders of Fortress Europe.

To the Sea

The director commented that he would want the viewers of the film to feel it with their skin rather than merely reflect on its subject matter.¹⁸ Perhaps this is a positive way to describe the presence of the cyclists or the return of the poet, but it certainly carries with it the sense of an afternoon breeze that is constantly present in the personal memories of Alexandros. Each encounter with the past is shot in partial daylight next to the sea. Even a shower of rain has a completely different function from the moody atmosphere of the previous films. It is not an element that adds to the contemplative mood of the film and the characters' psyches, and it is definitely not the rain that pours as Spyros leaves the country in *Voyage to Cythera*. In this film, rain brings a sense of redemption, but this is still a momentary feeling.

Alexandros' decision not to go to the hospital takes him to the beach in front of the family house, where he is reunited once more with his wife and friends on the very same day his daughter was born. Alexandros returns there for the final dance. The non-diegetic waltz leads the dance closer to the shore, and Alexandros feels joy from his choice to act against the inevitability of time. Yet the ending of the film finds him

alone facing the immensity of the sea. The dying intellectual stands face to face with what he most desires – the innocence of an image – and yet he is alone.

The image of the sea is not a new image, but it is one that signifies the flux of time unlike any other. It is as if the sea can still stir up the imagination, lending itself with difficulty to the stereotypical. One could argue that the journeys of the Angelopoulou hero take him inevitably – one way or another – to the edge of the sea. Although the action may take place deep in the interior or mountainous north of Greece, the characters invariably find themselves by the sea, if only for a fleeting moment. In *The Travelling Players*, we see the troupe performing for British forces on a sandy beach and the resistance fighters galloping at the edge of the sea to liberate Greece from the Nazis. *Megalexandros* emerges from the depths of Cape Sounio and, during his procession towards the commune, dispatches a letter to the governor from what appears to be the same beach as in the earlier film. In *Voyage to Cythera*, the old man returns from the sea and disappears back into it at the end, while in *The Beekeeper* the three friends pay a momentary nostalgic visit to the seashore. In *Landscape in the Mist*, the troupe is seen yet again rehearsing *Golfo the Shepherdess* on a sandy beach, and the gigantic iconic hand of Michelangelo's *Creation* (with its index finger missing) emerges from the deep waters of Thessaloniki's bay.

The presence of the sea, and of water generally, alternates in Angelopoulos between signifying time as flux and time as endurance, but also signifies human time as a wish for redemption. In Angelopoulos, water moves from physics to metaphysics and provides depth for contemplation and the desire to transcend the present moment. Such transcendence, though, is always from the perspective of mortal consciousness. This consciousness will not sketch the apotheosis of nature, as the plane where the subject can free itself from the restraints of culture and reunite with it in through some ecstatic experience.

Similarly, it is not the transcendence of a ferocious physical element, portrayed in large dynamic waves ready to swallow its innocent victims and needing to be tamed

by a pioneering technological subject. Nature appears indifferent to the action and the will of humans, whose sense of time and history seem to be limited in its presence. The sea carries a sense of duration that transcends the history of men and nations. The characters of Angelopoulos always reach the edge of the sea and the sea becomes a limit – not a limit to be tamed, but one from which the Angelopoulou hero reflects upon his life and on the present historical milieu.

We could argue that this is another space between, a space between the present historical moment and the open – that which knows no boundaries. When Alexandros visits his mother, he reveals a life full of regret and shattered dreams. Before his final exodus, Alexandros aches to leave a trace that will remain and take on new life through the boy. The boy finds in Alexandros a temporary shelter for a day, just before embarking illegally on a ship to Italy. It is in this space between that the two characters manage to create a feeling of being at home, and this is what the director himself seems to long for throughout the film.

A question then arises: How long does this feeling last? The last sequence in the family house, which is the final long take in the *Trilogy of Borders*, leads Alexandros back to the sea. The camera moves beyond the interior of the building, making a slow vertical track towards the sandy beach.¹⁹ It is there, during the last waltz with his wife and after he has announced that he will not go to the hospital but will carry on making plans for the following day as if nothing had happened, when Alexandros asks: “How long does tomorrow last?” His wife, receding slowly towards the right of the frame, remarks in a fleeting, spectral voice: “An eternity and a day.” It is as if her voice has become one with the afternoon breeze. Alexandros remains, his hand stretched towards the space where she has vanished.

This absence of a categorical answer leaves space for the suspended question to remain. Alexandros refuses to stop projecting towards the future. Yet again this is not the apotheosis of spirit over the decaying body. The question is explicit. Alexandros knows that tomorrow cannot last forever yet he cannot stop desiring it. The surplus *and a day* becomes a reminder that one cannot reach a permanent state of fulfillment.

Angelopoulos marks the desire to be at ease with oneself and with the world, a desire that always moves 'beyond' as a surplus without ever being exhausted. Still it might also mean that this desire can never be satisfied and that the feeling of being at home is unattainable. Home then ceases to be an object or a geographical plane, giving its place to a ceaseless journey driven by desire: and the permanence of eternity gives way to an image of time as flux, time as an image moving beyond closure.

The last shot in the *Trilogy of Borders* is an image of time in which past, present and future bifurcate each other in a single long take. The shot, opening on the veranda, starts with the baby in the cradle. The narrative may point towards the past, yet the presence of the newborn baby points directly towards the future. Alexandros moves in between, in a present that points simultaneously towards past and future – where the slow tracking movement of the camera unites time with space and allows the passing of time to be felt.

In the cinema of Angelopoulos, we do not see the return of a monumental time, a Golden Age that has marked the histories of men. It is only time itself that is monumental, an ever-changing flow like that of the sea. The final tracking shot closes in on the sweaty back of Alexandros' head. Right before the final cut, we listen to his mother's voice calling him from afar. Her voice seems to come from some atemporal space beyond the frame. In the face of his own death, Alexandros stares at the immensity of the sea. Redemption makes her final all-embracing return, calling him out of the present and into the beyond.

¹ See Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia' in the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol.14, ed. James Strachey, Hogarth Press, London, 1957, p. 243.

We should note after David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (see endnote 2) that Freud himself in his subsequent essay *The Ego and the Id* questions the disparate nature of the two states as well as the possibility of absolute redemption through mourning. Still the emphasis on the pathological nature of melancholia remains.

² See David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, 'Mourning Remains' in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, University of California Press, London Berkley California 2003. pp. 1-5.

³ David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴ See Michel Ciment, 'Η Μελαγχολία στο τέλος του Αιώνα' in *Βλέμματα στο κόσμο του Θόδωρου Αγγελόπουλου*, Εκδόσεις Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης, 2001, p. 71-75. See also Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης in 'Το Παρθένο Βλέμμα in Το Βλέμμα του Ποιητή', Αθήνα, Αιγόκερως, 1996, pp. 43-51.

⁵ Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in *Illuminations*, London: Fontana Press, 1992, p. 247.

⁶ Quoted from David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁷ See Paola Minucci, 'Η Μόνη Πιθανή Επανάσταση', in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα 2000, p. 320.

⁸ John Orr, *The Art and Politics of Film*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, pp.50 -63.

⁹ John Orr, *The Art and Politics of Film*, *ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁰ The term Wagnerianism, that has taken its name from 19th century composer Richard Wagner, is used to refer to the fusion of different works of art in a grand operatic spectacle: what Wagner himself called a 'total work of art'. Music, setting, performance, delivery of speech and song come together in perfect harmony in order to serve the essential vision of the work. Wagnerianism denotes a monumental vision that propagates mysticism and eternal essences. See Austin Harrington, *Art and social theory: Sociological Arguments in Aesthetics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 133-135.

¹¹ Vassiliki Kolokotroni, 'Monuments of Time: The Works of Theo Angelopoulos' in *Post-War Cinema and Modernity: a Film Reader*, ed. John Orr and Olga Taxidou, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, p. 104.

¹² Interview with the author, unpublished, June 2005.

¹³ Vassiliki Kolokotroni, 'Monuments of Time' in *Post-War Cinema and Modernity: a Film Reader*, *ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁴ Lasse Tomassen, *Heterogeneity, Representation and Justice: Borders and Communities in Angelopoulos' Balkan Trilogy*, <http://www.isak.liu.se/content/1/c6/03/03/13/lassethomassen.pdf>, p.2.

¹⁵ Assimina Karavanta, 'The Global, the Local and the Spectral: Contemplating Spectral Politics' in *Global Babel: Questions of Discourse and Communication in a Time of Globalization*, Eds. Samir Dayal & Marguerite Murphy, Cambridge Scholars Press, London, 2008, pp. 163- 188.

¹⁶ Lasse Tomassen, *ibid.*, p.5.

¹⁷ Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln Nebraska 1995, p.25.

¹⁸ Theo Angelopoulos in Paola Minucci, 'Η Μόνη Πιθανή Επανάσταση' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης, *ibid.*, p. 319.

¹⁹ What actually happens is that the crew of Angelopoulos built a simulation of the far end interior of the house facing the sea that would slice open as the camera proceeded in a forward tracking movement. The camera was mounted on a dolly crane. The simulation consisted of three layers. The one stood for the interior walls, the second simulated the floor of the last room together with the back wall and the exit and the third stood for the veranda. The layers of the house were also placed on tracks that ran vertical to the tracks of the dolly that were in turn pointed towards the sea. In the film the camera adopts an absolute point of view standing for Alexandros' vision. As the crane moves forward and the frame closes in on the exit for the veranda, each layer is slowly removed to allow the movement of the dolly to continue. When the camera is finally outside the house the crane reaches down on ground level and proceeds on top of the path with the wooden cords. Two men from the crew removed each cord that was no longer inside the frame so that the camera could keep moving forward until it reached a standstill.

Conclusion: A History of Ruination

This thesis has traced the development of Angelopoulos' singular aesthetic through a time span of three decades. I have placed Angelopoulos in a social and historical context while alluding to previous and contemporary cinematic works from world cinema, works that have left their imprint on Angelopoulos' work, thus constituting a map of exchange between ideas and images – reworked, remodelled or expanded in a continuous process. Another of my main objectives has been to demonstrate the political value of Angelopoulos' films, a value that can only be addressed if one treats the films through the poetics of the image rather than focusing exclusively on their narrative content.

Angelopoulos emerged as a filmmaker at the end of the sixties. This was a period of intense political struggle in Europe as a whole (shaken as it was by the events of May '68 and the Prague Spring) and particularly so in Greece, as the country fell under the control of a military junta known as the 'junta of the Colonels'. A preoccupation with politics is predominant throughout the first period of the director's work, running up until the end of the 1970s and finishing with *Megalexandros* (1980).

Unlike previous theorists and critics, I have placed this film at a pivotal place in the Angelopoulos' work. This runs counter to the standard view, where *The Travelling Players* (1975) is considered to be the quintessential film that lies at the heart of his *oeuvre*. My own view, in contrast, sees his work in a 'triangular' structure – with *Megalexandros* at its apex and two other key films, *The Travelling Players* and *The Suspended Step of the Stork* (1991), at either side.

For me, this 'triangle' is made up of equidistant spaces – by which, reversing any angle, one may find a new vantage from which to view the other two. Each view will necessarily have a different focus and reveal different aspects of a given work. It is a view that disengages the viewer from a linear perspective on time and history. Rather than seeing *The Travelling Players* as a work that informs all the rest, I see the entire

corpus of the work and its ideas and aesthetic implications as they reappear and are reworked from film to film. This creates a palimpsest of time, a continuing present that carries with it traces of the past – a past that is not ‘lost’ but reworked and returned to, a past that exists in the present as an image of memory. It is this view that sustains what I will call ‘a history of ruination’.

Memory becomes the driving force that propels an image towards the future. We have seen how the tracking shot in *The Travelling Players* delivers a viewpoint based on ‘impersonal subjectivity’. The presence of the camera, which is felt throughout the movement, I compared to the movement of Benjamin’s Angelus Novus. Driven towards the future with his eyes fixed towards the past, the angel keeps piling up wreckage after wreckage. Similarly, the point of view in all three films that make up the *Trilogy of History*, and in its coda *Megalexandros*, is one that has its eyes fixed on ruin. Angelopoulos presents a palimpsest of memory, recreating the events that shaped the entity that is Modern Greece. If there is a unique event whose traces are deeper and more keenly felt than others, it is the Civil War – which, during the seventies, survived still in popular memory as an open wound. Angelopoulos maps a popular movement towards socialism: a movement that had many facets and, as we eventually see in *Megalexandros*, was led towards its own ruin by a Stalinist faction.

The most characteristic aesthetic feature in the *Trilogy of History*, the sequence shot, becomes a ‘vessel of memory’ that directs the camera’s gaze in a journey through time, whereby distinct historical periods are united/contrasted within the confines of a single space. In the opening sequence of *The Travelling Players*, for example, we see the troupe as it walks down an alley at the streets of Aigio in 1952 only to reach the central square back in 1939. Space becomes a generator of memory, and the camera records the movement of the troupe that brings the past into the present.

With *The Travelling Players*, Angelopoulos presents a time span of thirteen years as an image of a vast cycle of history. The film starts with a dictatorship in 1939 and returns to a state of dictatorship in 1952, following the defeat of the democratic army during the Civil War. The film ends with a static shot of the troupe in its original

line-up from 1939. This closing of the circle has a double resonance: one of duration and one of stasis. The movement halts, bringing forth a stillness like death, one that can be traced in the use of the static frame within the sequence shot. The emphasis on *mise en scène* rather than cutting – through the use of a slow pan or tracking shot, which gradually shifts into a static shot only to acquire movement again once an action has been completed – only serves to underline this dialectic between movement and stasis. Movement carries duration; it unites different chronological events as they occur in a single meta-historical space.¹ The sequence shot also brings forth a material world in full view through its emphasis on natural elements, old architectural planes and gigantic factories – derelict cement buildings in contrast to derelict stone houses.

At the same time, the long duration of the static shot and the elliptical arrangement of the *mise en scène* bring the cinematographic image closer to the qualities of the still frame. It is this stillness, often expressed through the stillness of the actors themselves, which carries with it an image of death. It is at this point, when the static frame encompasses the stillness of the actors, that the cinematographic image moves towards the photographic. If we accept Roland Barthes' dictum that the time of the photographic image is fixed in the past, even as it appears to the eyes of a viewer in the present, then this fixity automatically becomes a reminder of death.² This time has passed and shall be no more. Likewise, I too – I who am holding this picture – will also pass. The cinematographic image animates the past into the present through movement. Yet at the same time, it is through stillness that the event remains distant, locked in an irretrievable past, as the image points towards death and mortality. This double movement, I have claimed, generates an image of melancholia, one that is embedded in the form of the films.³

The other salient characteristic of the 70s films is that the human subject lacks a psychological status. Angelopoulos' characters are seen from a social and historical perspective. *Being* gives way to *doing* and the human agent is seen through his/her actions. In this way, they echo the Brechtian aesthetic of the *Gest*, by which the movement of the actor is defined as critical of the character he/she embodies and also

reflective of the social relations that surround him/her. (This in marked contrast to the traditional dramatic focus on psychology and individual character traits.) In effect, the character is seen as a product of his time and of the social relations he/she is subjected to, rather than as a carrier of a unique personality feeding off an eternal human essence.⁴

The camera, on the other hand, does not follow the characters' movement. It maintains an autonomous function relative to the action as it unfolds, observing from a distance as the characters walk in and out of frame. Angelopoulos incorporates a type of 'inner montage', where the edit is transferred within the frame and the action is seen in its full process. This echoes André Bazin's dictum of placing emphasis on the *mise en scène* through the use of long takes, in contrast to an excessive fragmentation of the profilmic space through montage. It is the use of montage that the French critic saw as generative of a manipulative avant-garde gaze.⁵

Throughout Angelopoulos' work, space becomes predominant and the image inscribes the passing of time beyond the characters' own perception. Time thus becomes autonomous and ceases to reflect the diegetic gaze of any one character. Space is treated as a space between two or more actions, an intermediate state where the figures in the frame acquire an almost spectral presence, as in a canvas that incorporates a broad field of vision. The frequent use of a telephoto lens somehow annuls, but also maintains, this illusion of depth and objects appear as if on the same visual plane.

The human agent also loses his predominance, becoming rather an element in the composition of the frame. Through this visual technique, Angelopoulos moves beyond the painterly into the realm of the metaphorical. Each human figure is not simply a visual element, but also a being subject to a given state of social and historical relations.

With the advent of the 80s, Angelopoulos closes his tetralogy of History with his magnum opus, *Megalexandros*. The film is a blow to the heart of the established

Left, and a total and radical deconstruction of its heroic imagery. The whole action takes place in an allegorical space situated at the dawn of the twentieth century, a focus for the international revolutionary movements that erupted throughout Europe at that time. Yet it also provides a direct allusion to the movement of the popular Left in Greece and to the myths feeding into that movement and also generated by it. In so doing, the film lays bare the processes by which the myth of a homogeneous national identity is constructed.

In the film, Megalexandros is a rebel chieftain who leads an agrarian uprising. His image is a direct allusion to the leaders of the Left during the Greek Civil War and to the mythic figure of the great leader. Angelopoulos makes visible the complex power games involved at a given historical moment that becomes fetishised *a posteriori*, under the banner of a unifying concept, in order to serve a nationalist or other ideological agenda. In that case, the era of Megalexandros is not one marked by the return of the King – in order to redeem the present and deliver the nation, or some other collective body, towards redemption. Angelopoulos portrays the struggle between different agents of power as yet another circular game, where one circle is embedded in another. We, as viewers, are continuously confronted with the motif of the circle, one that is endlessly repeated – both graphically, in the *mise en scène*, and thematically, in the narrative.

As I have remarked, the film is a direct indictment of Stalinism and, by extension, the high idealism of the Left as a whole.⁶ By seizing power over the communards, Megalexandros turns into a despot. The mythical hero turns from a radical image of negation, a point of militancy against the established order of capital, into a new power over the people that he represents. From an avant-garde point of view (which aims at the dissolution of power) Megalexandros finds himself recuperated into the status quo.

In the landscape of *Megalexandros*, there is no safe ground and no avant-garde point of view. The communards of the utopian village, where Megalexandros finds refuge, are not above criticism. In a sequence that is seldom discussed, we see the president

of the assembly conducting a meeting in an empty hall after everybody has left the room. What it shows is the inability of the communards to think on the spot, and their need to follow a directive at all times

Megalexandros becomes a complex map between human agency and structure. At the end of the film, we find out that Megalexandros has been used, that his power is limited and that he is unable to deliver redemption. The film ends on an image of ruination, followed immediately by one of hope. The villagers (in a reverse image of Cronos eating his children) allegorically surround and consume Megalexandros before the commune is destroyed. All that remains is a fragmented statue of Megalexandros, lying in the middle of the village square and signifying the end of an era. One little boy, however – Megalexandros' son, Alexandros – manages to escape. In a final allegorical image, we see him ride into Athens on a donkey in 1980, the year in which the film was made.

It is from this image of ruination that the post-80s films will emerge. The director becomes more personal as he moves into the 80s. From here onwards, Angelopoulos focuses on the disillusioned movement of a solitary hero (with the exception of *Landscape in the Mist* (1988) and *The Weeping Meadow* (2004) – where the main characters are, respectively, two children and a woman). The films turn towards semi-autobiographical narratives and the predominant motif is that of the journey. What in the first period was the movement of collective bodies, mapped through the distant gaze of the sequence shot, now turns into the wandering of the individual in a present milieu marked by defeat and an omnipresent sense of melancholia.

With *Voyage to Cythera* (1983) Angelopoulos makes an inward shift, yet the social outlook does not disappear, nor does it turn into a background for an a-historical existential angst. The old man in *Voyage* and Spyros in *The Beekeeper* (1986) are remnants of a past struggle that has known defeat. Their melancholia is not the effect of a universally meaningless cosmos, but is seen as arising from the failure of past struggles and dissolved ideals. Wandering thus becomes the major feature of the director's second period. As Vassiliki Kolocotroni points out, the cinema of

Angelopoulos does not attempt to fix history on the screen. Rather, it records a wandering deprived of a metaphysical existential plight.⁷ History is seen as a process of change, and the cinema of Angelopoulos records the anxieties and the struggles of a given collective as it tries to establish itself in a given present. In the second period, it is the individual confronted with an ever-increasing level of exploitation, loss of orientation and a breakdown of borders different from that envisioned by any socialist international movement. Angelopoulos marks the crisis of the subject from the periphery of Europe, in a world where the reign of the free market seems absolute. It is in the face of free-market enterprise that Angelopoulos lays bare the terror induced by capitalism. One of the darkest facets of this terror is the bombing of Yugoslavia, as we see in *Ulysses' Gaze* (1995).

Angelopoulos marks a space where the anxiety caused by globalisation induces a new search for identity throughout the Balkans. This search for identity, and the need to map a direction for the future, creates a struggle where the present confronts the past, where the new is haunted by iconic images and past identities. This haunting becomes a virtual image for the wandering in Angelopoulos' second period. The confrontation with the past can be an element of nostalgia, as in the hero's return to his birthplace seen in *The Beekeeper* and *Ulysses' Gaze*. In such cases, his return marks the desire for a new beginning, and a change in direction on the map that leads to the future. The return may seek to reconstruct a fragment of the past, which will acquire a new meaning in the present and thus provide a new point of departure. The search for the three lost reels in *Ulysses' Gaze* is one such attempt. The refusal of Spyros, in *Voyage to Cythera*, to sell his property to a multinational is yet another act that acquires political connotations of dissent in the present. The return here signifies an unfinished project that may lie buried in the past, but whose remains can still be traced in the present. It is from these remains that a new beginning must arise.

Yet the return to the past can also take on shadowy and menacing connotations. It can be reactionary, marking the return to the realm of the myth and to the mystifying processes of religion, those same processes and mythical resurrections that allowed *Megalexandros* to become the fetishised image of power. The past as a haunting

image is mostly conjured in the allegorical image of the Father that becomes predominant in its absence/presence, to quote Vassiliki Kolocotroni, and carries with it a double register.⁸ It is the lament for a universal safety that was lost together with the demise of the grand ideologies of the Left, but it is also a warning that totalitarianism can return in dark and ever-changing forms.

For this reason, I see *The Suspended Step of the Stork* as a film that stands out in this second period. In this film, Angelopoulos moves to the borders of Greece, borders that will be crossed in his subsequent film *Ulysses' Gaze*. Angelopoulos marks the trail of the new nomads, the waves of immigrants who swarm to the borders of Fortress Europe in search of a new home. In *The Suspended Step*, a left-wing politician who disappeared returns as a man without identity. His return, however, does not mark the return of a monumental era, that of the heroic narratives of the Left progressing towards the future. The Mastroianni *no man* is born out of the ruins of an international socialist movement. His return is one of drifting, beyond the static boundaries of state and property – beyond even the realm of action itself. Mastroianni is not a figure to be imitated. Faced with the young Alexandros, who searches in him for the static image of the Father, Mastroianni recedes into silence and flight. The Father returns as a wandering immigrant and his journey is not that of the avant-garde, but one of observation and contemplation. Like Benjamin's Angelus Novus, he keeps his distance and records the piling of wreckage upon wreckage.

Migration is a theme that is dealt with in all the films of Angelopoulos. In his first feature film, *Reconstruction* (1970), the father is an emigrant returning from Germany. Agamemnon in *The Travelling Players* is an immigrant from the coast of Asia Minor. The Anarchists in *Megalexandros* are wandering immigrants in search of a new cosmos that never comes. Spyros in *Voyage to Cythera* the last ghost of the Civil War, returning from exile in the Soviet Union to exile at home.

Angelopoulos, however, does not place these figures under a single mythical banner drawn from some universal essence. Their search for home does not form a coherent identity or rule out the historical and social differences between them. With *Ulysses'*

Gaze, Angelopoulos also makes visible the new waves of migrants forced out of their homes due to the war in former Yugoslavia, and the Greek expatriates forced to leave Constanța in Romania due to the Stalinist purges of the 50s. Like the rootless migrants in *The Suspended Step* – stuck on immobile trains at a border town in northern Greece – and the Albanian children in *Eternity and a Day*, these new nomads cannot be seen as a collective fighting its way into the future. Rather, they provide an image of loss, a reminder of terror in everyday life, of people who do not have the luxury of being united and may easily be drowned in the open seas – as we see at the beginning of *The Suspended Step*.

Nevertheless, the image of migration – and I will call it a fragmented image because of its many different historical facets – does appear in the films of Angelopoulos with one degree of certainty. That is the principle of movement and change, which in turn acquires dangerous connotations for a monumental idealist view of history that refuses change. A nationalist history, for that matter, sees the presence of the immigrant as a threat simply because the immigrant lays bare the fundamental myth of nationalism, that of racial and national purity. Angelopoulos moves beyond national borders and it is on this premise that he has called himself a humanist, on the premise of *wandering*. In *Eternity and a Day* – without losing sight of the cultural, social as well as ontological gap that exists between the young boy and the dying intellectual – Angelopoulos marks the plight of ‘caring for the other’. Both characters are united under the banner of ‘ksenitis’ (stranger). This is not an ideological banner, nor does it carry a political agenda. It fails to acquire universal connotations, for it is rooted in locality. Yet the image of ‘the wandering stranger’ that it denotes alludes to totality in a manner similar to a Japanese *haiku*, which aims to encompass a deeper unified realm beyond its fragmented image.

It is from this realm of the *haiku* that the wandering stranger (played by Marcello Mastroianni) appears in *The Suspended Step of the Stork* only to disappear again at the end of the film, which ends with the return of the Gaze from the side of *the other*. Throughout the film, the camera has followed the main character, Alexandros, in his quest to identify this ragged immigrant as the missing politician. At the film’s finale,

the camera frames Alexandros as he stands by the river that serves as a natural border between two states. It then recedes diagonally and withdraws into the river, as if adopting the point of view of *the other* who stands beyond all borders – sustaining the question that has haunted the film throughout, the question by which the missing politician's book ends: 'How can we find a new collective dream?'

If we were to see the director's late period as a quest towards this dream, we should take note that this quest is not free of contradictions. These contradictions are more visible than ever in his latest film *The Weeping Meadow* which, as noted in the Introduction, this thesis has omitted as part of a trilogy that is not yet complete. However, it is necessary to make a brief mention of this film in relation to the director's previous work.

The story of *The Weeping Meadow* starts in 1919 and ends in 1949 with the end of the Civil War. It follows the fate of Eleni, who has come to Greece with her family and other expatriates from Odessa, fleeing the purges of the Red Army. The refugees build a village near Thessaloniki in the north of Greece. The two children – Eleni and Alexis – grow up and fall in love, finally fleeing the village to escape from Alexis' father, who plans to make Eleni his own bride. The film follows the couple as they try to establish a life of their own, all the while avoiding the father's pursuit. After managing to create a family, the couple is separated by the events of the Second World War. The film ends during the subsequent Greek Civil War, in which Eleni's two sons die while fighting on opposite sides.

In a motif familiar from *The Travelling Players*, Angelopoulos provides another fresco of Modern Greece. Eleni becomes a witness to all the major events that shook Greece in the period from 1919 to 1949. As in *The Travelling Players*, Angelopoulos uses the structure of an ancient Greek myth. This time it is the myth of the 'House of Lavdakides', which includes the Oedipus myth and (most notably) that of his sons Eteocles and Polynices, who kill each other in the battle for the succession of his throne in Thebes. However, the only element of the myth that is played out

significantly in the film is the killing of the two brothers during the Civil War; any further mythic are not fully elaborated.

Nevertheless – in contrast to Angelopoulos' previous work and despite the epic proportions of the film – history appears as little more than a backdrop to the psychological drama of the main characters. The film lapses into excessive sentimentality, and continuous reference to the director's previous work in terms of imagery seems unfounded. Furthermore, the use of Eleni's character as a stand-in for the Greek nation reinforces static binarisms by which the feminine is associated with passivity and innocence and, most importantly, an eternal image of motherhood. We should note here that the image of Greece as a woman starts to appear as a constant in Angelopoulos as early as *The Beekeeper*. This tendency rules out the woman as a physical entity, or her life as a lived experience, and turns her into a screen on which ideas can be projected. This method also feeds in to ideas generated by nationalism, which the director unwillingly plays out. By associating Greece with the feminine, Angelopoulos gives the nation an essence that runs counter to his previous work and proves to be his blind spot. Ultimately, in contrast to *The Travelling Players*, this new film confers on Greece a psychological profile – furthermore, that of the victim.

How, then, to conclude? Having established that the use of myth can possibly reinforce static binarisms, we should bear in mind that Angelopoulos, as a filmmaker, presents us with a grand vision in terms of both imagery and narrative content. Preoccupied with the concept of *community*, he is one of the last European filmmakers who still dare to make films on such a vast scale. His films constantly pose the question of *how* one can represent this communal feeling. While the images he creates may inspire us to awe, his is not a monumental view of life and society. As a social being, Angelopoulos grew up with the grand narratives of the Left and its teleological view of the road to Socialism. In terms of filmmaking, he belongs to the aftermath of the period of great art-house *auteurs* such as Antonioni and Bergman – a realm to which he sees himself as belonging. His films attempt to capture life on a large scale, and his imagery is monumental in composition. Dealing with major

historical events and haunted by the dream of the Left, he sees life as composed of equal parts of history and myth.

All this does not add up, however, to a monumental view on life. While his films may encompass the dream of the Left, they do so on new and different terms – in which the traditional Marxist teleology is replaced by hope. Angelopoulos' films record the passing of time and the process of wandering. In so doing, they make visible that which has long failed to be represented, namely the concept of Utopia – which is now transferred from some distant and nebulous future into the here and now. This image of Utopia, marked by a hope, is inseparable from a melancholic attachment to ruin – a vision that once was whole but is now broken and cannot, even with the best of intentions, be put back together. Nor is it possible to form any definitive image of what that total vision might be like. All that remains to us is imagination or dreams. If the dream of a better future has given birth to nightmares, and if the safety of a teleological narrative has elapsed, that is not in itself a reason to despair – even if we retain the right to lament a dream that has shattered into fragments. If the ruin is all we have, then it is that ruin which must give birth to a new hope.

Afterword.

Throughout this thesis, I have drawn a map materialising from the principle of a history of ruination and its political implications for the social life of today. I have abstained from drawing binarisms between the cinematic and the social, as I wanted to show that watching a film is not a break from life and history but, rather, a process that feeds into and from it. What these films contain, among other attributes, is the power of translation – a power that is embedded in any important work. One cannot address a film and hope to translate it into one's own life unless one is already equipped with the desire for knowledge and love and the willingness to struggle.

This does not mean that one has to have reached an accumulated state of knowledge in order to properly understand the message of the films. For that matter, great films do not convey messages. One must, however, desire to be involved in society and one cannot expect to be guided towards it by a film. It also means that one's desire is affected, restricted or expanded by social and cinematic forces. Only through a dialectical process between society and the self can we hope to build a solidarity that overcomes exploitation and terror, a space in which human action can flourish, a space that will also allow these films to come into full communion with their audience. This thesis has been written in the modest hope of contributing, however slightly, to that process.

¹ Angelopoulos does not recreate an objective landscape that rules out the process of his interpretation. Angelopoulos transcends an objective realist aesthetic that rules out whatever came after the events depicted on screen and where the past appears unmediated. Yet he maintains a view that is at once inside and outside the period depicted on screen with the attempt to explain the period as a whole. See the Introduction p.10 and also the chapters on *The Travelling players*, *The Hunters* and *Megalexandros*.

² See the chapter on *The Travelling Players* pp.105-108.

³ See the chapter on *The Travelling Players* pp. 105-109.

⁴ See *The Travelling Players* pp. 94-97.

⁵ For further analysis between the aesthetic of the long take in relation to montage see *Days of '36* pp. 65-71.

⁶ See *Megalexandros* p. 152-159.

⁷ Vassiliki Kolocotroni, 'Monuments of Time: The Works of Theo Angelopoulos' in *Post-War Cinema and Modernity*, ed. John Orr & Olga Taxidou, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, p. 405.

⁸ Vassiliki Kolocotroni, *ibid*, p. 400.

FILMOGRAPHY

FORMINX STORY (1965)

Remains incomplete.

BROADCAST / Η ΕΚΠΟΜΠΗ (1968)

Greece. Black & White. 23'.

Written and Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.

Cinematography: Giorgos Arvanitis. *Editing*: Giorgos Triantafyllou. *Producer*: Theo Angelopoulos. *Cast*: Thodoros Katsadramis, Lina Triantafyllou, Nikos Mastorakis, Mirka Kalatzopoulou.

1968: Thessaloniki Film Festival, Critics' Prize.

RECONSTRUCTION / ΑΝΑΠΑΡΑΣΤΑΣΗ (1970)

Greece. Black & White. 110'.

Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.

Screenplay: Theo Angelopoulos with the participation of Stratis Karras, Thanasis Valtinos. *Cinematography*: Giorgos Arvanitis. *Editing*: Takis Davlopoulos. *Sound*: Thanasis Arvanitis. *Cast*: Toula Stathopoulou (Eleni), Giannis Totsikas (Rural Guard), Thanos Grammenos (Eleni's brother), Mihalis Fotopoulos (Eleni's husband), Petros Hoidas (District Attorney).

Producer: Giorgos Samiotis. *Production Management*: Christos Paligiannopoulos.

1970: Thessaloniki Film Festival – Best Director, Best Cinematography, Best Film, Best Actress, Critic's Prize

1971: Georges Sadoul Prize (Best Film of the Year Shown in France).

1971: Best Foreign Film at the Hyères Festival.

1971: 'Special Reference' by FRIPESCI (International Film Critics' Association) in 'Forum' at Berlin Festival.

DAYS OF '36 / ΜΕΡΕΣ ΤΟΥ '36 (1972)

Greece. Colour. 110'.

Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.

Screenplay: Theo Angelopoulos with the participation of Petros Markaris, Thanasis Valtinos, Stratis Karras. *Cinematography*: Giorgos Arvanitis. *Editing*: Vasilis Spyropoulos. *Production Design*: Mikes Karapiperis. *Sound*: Thanasis Arvanitis. *Music*: Giorgos Papastefanou. *Cast*: Kostas Pavlou (Sophianos), Petros Zarkadis (Lukas), Christoforos K. Nezer (Director of the Prison), Yiannis Kandilas (Kriezis), Vangelis Kazan (Executioner).

Producer: Giorgos Papalios. *Production Management*: Giorgos Samiotis.

1972: Thessaloniki Film Festival – Best Director Best Cinematography.

1972: FRIPESCI (International Film Critics' Association) Best Film, Berlin Fest.

THE TRAVELLING PLAYERS/O ΘΙΑΣΟΣ (1975)

Greece. Colour. 230'.

Written and Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.

Cinematography: Giorgos Arvanitis. *Assistant Cinematographer:* Vasilis Christomoglou, *Production Design:* Mikes Karapiperis. *Editing:* Takis Davlopoulos, Giorgos Triantafillou. *Sound:* Thanasis Arvanitis. *Music:* Loukianos Kilaidonis, Original songs selected by Fotos Lambrinos. *Cast:* Eva Kotamanidou (Elektra), Alikh Georgouli (Mother), Stratos Pachis (Father), Maria Vasileiou (Chrysothemis), Vangelis Kazan (Aigisthos), Petros Zarkaris (Orestes), Kyriakos Katrivanos (Pylades), Grigoris Evangelatos (Poet).

Producer: Giorgos Papalios. *Production Management:* Stephanos Vlachos.

1975: FRIPESCI (International Film Critics' Association) Best Film Award, Cannes Festival.

1975: Thessaloniki Film Festival – Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Actor (Vangelis Kazan), Best Actress (Eva Kotamanidou), Best film according to the Greek Critics' Association.

1975: Interfilm Prize (Best Film in 'Forum' at Berlin Festival).

1975: Âge d' Or Prize (Best film of the Year Shown in Belgium).

1976: Figueira das Foss Prize, Portugal.

1979: B.F.I. Prize (Best film of the Year Shown in the U.K.)

Italians Critics Association: Best Film in the World, 1970-1980.

FRIPESCI: 44th Top Film in the History of Cinema.

THE HUNTERS / OI KYNHΓΟΙ (1977)

Greece. Colour. 165'.

Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.

Screenplay: Theo Angelopoulos with the participation of Stratis Karras.

Cinematography: Giorgos Arvanitis. *Production Design:* Mikes Karapiperis. *Editing:* Giorgos Triantafillou. *Sound:* Thanasis Arvanitis. *Music:* Loukianos Kilaidonis.

Cast: Vangelis Kazan (the Hotel Owner), Betty Valasi (his wife), Giannis Danis (the Industrialist), Mary Chronopoulou (his wife), Ilias Stamatiou (the Publisher), Alikh Georgouli (his wife), Nikos Kouros (the General), Eva Kotamanidou (his wife), Stratos Pachis (the Civil Engineer), Christoforos K. Nezer (the Politician), Dimitris Kamperidis (Giannis).

Producer: Theo Angelopoulos with the participation of INA and ZDF. *Executive*

Producer: Nikos Angelopoulos. *Production Management:* Stephanos Vlachos.

1977: Cannes Film Festival, Special Recognition.

1977: Chicago Film Festival, Golden Hugo (Best Film).

1977: Thessaloniki Anti-Festival - Best Film, Best Director.

1977: Prize from the Greek film Critics' Association.

MEGALEXANDROS /O ΜΕΓΑΛΕΞΑΝΤΡΟΣ (1980)

Greece - Italy. Colour. 210'.

Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.

Screenplay: Theo Angelopoulos with the participation of Petros Markaris
Cinematography: Giorgos Arvanitis. *Production Design:* Mikes Karapiperis. *Editing:* Giorgos Triantafillou. *Sound:* Argyris Lazaridis. *Cast:* Omero Antonutti (Megalexandros), Eva Kotamanidou (his daughter), Grigoris Evanelatos (the Schoolteacher), Michalis Yannatos (Dragoumanos), Laura de Marchi - Francesco Ranelutti - Brizio Montinaro - Norman Mozato (Italian Anarchists), Christophoros K. Nezer (Landowner Tzelepis).
Producer: R.A.I., Z.D.F., Theo Angelopoulos Productions, Greek Film Centre.
Executive Producer: Phoebe Stavropoulou, *Production Management:* Stephanos Vlachos.
1980: Golden Lion and International Film Critics Award (FIPRESCI), Venice Film Festival.
1980: Thessaloniki Film Festival, Greek Critics' Association Prize.

ONE VILLAGE, ONE VILLAGER / ΧΩΡΙΟ ΕΝΑ, ΚΑΤΟΙΚΟΣ ΕΝΑΣ (1981)
Greece. Colour. 20'.
Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.
Screenplay: Theo Angelopoulos based on an idea of Kostas Revanis.
Cinematography: Giorgos Arvanitis. *Editing:* Giorgos Triantafillou. *Sound:* Thanasis Arvanitis.
Producer: YENED (Greek Television).

ATHENS: RETURN TO THE ACROPOLIS / ΑΘΗΝΑ ΕΠΙΣΤΡΟΦΗ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΚΡΟΠΟΛΗ (1983)
Greece. Colour. 43'.
Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.
Cinematography: Giorgos Arvanitis. *Production Design:* Mikes Karapiperis. *Editing:* Giorgos Triantafillou. *Sound:* Thanasis Georgiadis. *Music:* Manos Hadzidakis, Loukianis Kilaidonis, Dionysis Savopoulos. *Poetry:* Giorgos Seferis, Tasos Levaditis.
Producer: Trans World Film, ERT-RTV ELLENICA, Theo Angelopoulos.

VOYAGE TO CYTHERA / ΤΑΞΙΔΙ ΣΤΑ ΚΥΘΗΡΑ (1984)
Greece. Colour. 137'.
Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.
Screenplay: Theo Angelopoulos in collaboration with Dimitris Nollas; special collaboration also by Tonino Guerra.
Cinematography: Giorgos Arvanitis. *Production Design:* Mikes Karapiperis. *Editing:* Giorgos Triantafillou. *Music:* Eleni Karaindrou. *Cast:* Manos Katrakis (Old man Spyros), Giulio Brogi (Alexandros), Mary Chronopoulou (Voula), Dionyssi Papayannopoulos (Antonis), Dora Volanaki (Katerina, old woman - Spyros' wife), Athinodoros Proussalis (Police captain).
Producer: The Greek Film Centre, Z.D.F., Channel 4, R.A.I., Greek Television, Theo Angelopoulos Productions. *Production Management:* Giorgos Samiotis, Pavlos Ksenakis, Phoebe Stavropoulou, Vera Likouresi.

1984: Cannes Film Festival, Best Screenplay
1984: FRIPESCI (International Film Critics' Association) Award, Cannes Film Festival, Best Film.
1984: Greek National Award, Best Film, Best Script, Best Actor (Manos Katrakis), Best Actress (Dora Volanaki).

THE BEEKEEPER / Ο ΜΕΛΙΣΣΟΚΟΜΟΣ (1986)

Greece. Colour. 120'.

Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.

Screenplay: Theo Angelopoulos, Dimitris Nollas. Special collaboration by Tonino Guerra.

Cinematography: Giorgos Arvanitis. *Production Design:* Mikes Karapiperis. *Editing:* Takis Yannopoulos. *Music:* Eleni Karaindrou (Saxophone: Jan Garbarek). *Cast:* Marcello Mastroianni (Spyros), Nadia Mourouzi (the girl), Serge Reggiani (the sick man), Jenny Roussea (Spyros' wife), Dinos Iliopoulos (Spyros' friend – Cinema owner).

Producer: Greek Film Centre, ERT-1 TV (Greece), Paradis Films (Paris), Basicinematografica (Rome), Theo Angelopoulos Productions. *Production Management:* Aimilios Konitsiotis.

LANDSCAPE IN THE MIST / ΤΟΠΙΟ ΣΤΗΝ ΟΜΙΧΛΗ (1988)

Greece. Colour. 125'.

Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.

Screenplay: Theo Angelopoulos with the participation of Thanasis Valtinos and Tonino Guerra.

Cinematography: Giorgos Arvanitis. *Production Design:* Mikes Karapiperis. *Editing:* Yannis Tsitsopoulos. *Music:* Eleni Karaindrou. *Cast:* Tania Palaiologou (Voula), Michalis Zeke (Alexander), Stratos Tzortzoglou (Orestes).

Producer: Greek Film Centre, Greek Television (ERT-1), Paradis Films (Paris), Basicinematografica (Rome) and Theo Angelopoulos Productions. *Production Management:* Aimilios Konitsiotis, Dominique Toussaint.

1988: Silver Lion Award for Best Director, Venice Film Festival.

1989: Felix (Best European Film of the Year) Award,

1989: Golden Hugo Award for Best Director,

1989: Silver Plaque for Best Cinematography, Chicago Film Festival.

THE SUSPENDED STEP OF THE STORK / ΤΟ ΜΕΤΕΩΡΟ ΒΗΜΑ ΤΟΥ ΠΕΛΑΓΓΟΥ (1991)

Greece. Colour. 138'.

Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.

Screenplay: Theo Angelopoulos with the participation of Tonino Guerra, Petros Markaris, Thanassis Valtinos.

Cinematography: Giorgos Arvanitis. *Production Design:* Mikes Karapiperis. *Editing:* Yannis Tsitsopoulos. *Music:* Eleni Karaindrou. *Cast:* Marcello Mastroianni (the

politician who disappeared), Jeanne Moreau (his wife), Gregory Karr (Alexander, the journalist), Ilias Logothetis (the colonel), Dora Chrysikou (the young bride), Dimitris Poulikakos (television cameraman).

Producer: Greek Film Centre, Theo Angelopoulos Productions, Arena Films (France), Vega Films (Switzerland), Erre Produzioni (Italy). *Production*

Management: Emilios Konitsiotis, Pier Alain Shatzman.

ULYSSES' GAZE / TO BAEMMA TOY OΔΥΣΣΕΑ (1995)

Greece. Colour. 176'.

Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.

Screenplay: Theo Angelopoulos with the participation of Tonino Guerra, Petros Markaris.

Cinematography: Giorgos Arvanitis. *Production Design:* Giorgos Patsas, Miodrag Mile Nolic. *Editing:* Yannis Tsitsopoulos. *Music:* Eleni Karaindrou. *Cast:* Harvey Keitel (A), Maia Morgenstern (woman in Florina/Penelope, Kali/Calypso, widow/Circe, Naomi Levi/Nausica), Erland Josephson (Ivo Levy), Thanassis Vengos (taxi driver), Giorgos Michalakopoulos (Nikos), Dora Volanaki (old lady in Albania), Mania Papadimitriou (the mother in A's memory).

Production: Theo Angelopoulos Productions, Greek Film Centre, MEGA Channel, Paradis Film, La Generale d'Images, La Sept Cinema, with the participation of Canal +, Basic Cinematografica, Instituto Luce, RAI, Tele-Muenchen, Concorde Films, Herbert Klotzer and in association with Channel 4. *Producers:* Giorgio Silvagni, Eric Heumann, Dragan Ivanovic-Hevi, Ivan Milovanovic. *Executive Producer:* Phoebe Economopoulos, *Production Management:* Kostas Lambropoulos.

1995: Grand Jury Prize and International Critics' Prize, Cannes Film Festival.

1995: Felix of the Critics (Film of the Year).

ETERNITY AND A DAY / MIA AIΩNIOTHTA KAI MIA MEPA (1998)

Greece. Colour. 130'.

Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.

Screenplay: Theo Angelopoulos with the participation of Tonino Guerra, Petros Markaris.

Cinematography: Giorgos Arvanitis, Andreas Sinanos. *Production Design:* Giorgos Ziakas, Kostas Dimitriadis. *Editing:* Yannis Tsitsopoulos. *Music:* Eleni Karaindrou. *Cast:* Bruno Ganz (Alexander), Fabrizio Bentivoglio (the Poet), Isabelle Renauld (Anna), Achilleas Skevis (as the boy), Eleni Gerasimidou (Urania), Iris Hatziantoniou (Alexander's daughter), Nikos Kolovos (the doctor).

Producer: Theo Angelopoulos, Greek Film Centre, Greek Television ET1, Paradis Films, Intermedias S.A., LA SEPT CINEMA A Greek-French-Italian Co-production.

Executive Producer: Phoebe Economopoulos. *Production Management:* Lefteris Charonitis, Nikos Sekeris.

1998: Palme d'Or, Cannes Film Festival.

TRILOGY 1: THE WEEPING MEADOW / ΤΡΙΛΟΓΙΑ 1: ΤΟ ΛΙΒΑΔΙ ΤΟΥ
ΔΑΚΡΥΖΕΙ (2004)

Greece. Colour. 300'.

Directed by Theo Angelopoulos.

Screenplay: Theo Angelopoulos, Tonino Guerra. *Special collaboration in the script:* Petros Markaris, Giorgio Silvagni.

Cinematography: Andreas Sinanos. *Editing:* Giorgos Triantafyllou. *Production*

Design: Giorgos Patsas, Costas Dimitriadis. *Music:* Eleni Karaindrou. *Cast:*

Alexandra Aidini, Nikos Poursanidis, Giorgos Armenis, Vassilis Kolovos Eva Kotamanidou, Toula Stathopoulou.

Producer: Theo Angelopoulos, Greek Film Center, Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation ERT S.A., Attica Art Productions (Athens), BAC Films S.A, Intermedias S.A, Arte France. *Executive Producer:* Phoebe Economopoulos.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Αγγελόπουλος, Θόδωρος, *10 ¾: Σενάρια – Πρώτος Τόμος*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1997

Aitken, I., *European Film Theory and Cinema: A Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2001

Amengual, Barthélemy, *Μια ποιητική της Ιστορίας* in Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, μετφ. Αντώνης Ιωάννου, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 23-37

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1983

Αντωνόπουλος, Τάκης, *Κινηματογράφος-Επιστήμη-Ιδεολογία*, Αντίλογος, Αθήνα, 1972

Arecco, Sergio, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, μετφ. Τζίνα Λαμπαδαρίου, Ηράκλειτος, Αθήνα, 1985

Arecco, Sergio, 'Στοιχεία για μια Συζήτηση' in Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, μετφ. Τζίνα Λαμπαδαρίου, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 252-255

Arnheim, Rudolf, *Film as Art*, trans. by L. M. Sieveking and Ian. F. D. Morrow, London, Faber, 1958 (first published 1932)

Aumont, Jacques, *Montage Eisenstein*, trans. Lee Hildreth, Constantine Penley and Andrew Ross, BFI Publishing Indiana University Press, London Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1979

Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, Vintage, London, 1993

Barthes, Roland, *Camera Lucida - Reflections on Photography*, Vintage Books, London, (1981) 2000

Bazin, André, 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema' in *What is Cinema?*, University of California Press, Berkley and Los Angeles, 1967, pp. 23-40

Bazin, André, 'The Myth of Total Cinema', in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy & Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 199-203

Bazin, André, 'De Sica: Metteur-en-Scene' in *Film Theory and Criticism* ed by Leo Braudy Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press 1999 pp. 203-211

- Benjamin, Walter, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, Fontana Press, London, 1992, pp. 245-255
- Benjamin, Walter, 'The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov' in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, Fontana Press, London, 1992 pp. 83-107
- Benjamin, Walter, 'The Work of Art at the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy-Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford, 1999 pp. 731-751
- Berger, John, *Ways of Seeing*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972
- Blanchot, Maurice, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln Nebraska 1995
- Bloch, Ernst, *The Spirit of Utopia*, trans. Anonym Nassar, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2000
- Bordwell, David, 'Modernism, Minimalism, Melancholy' in *The Last Modernist*, ed. Andrew Horton, Flicks Books, Wiltshire, 1997, pp. 11-26
- Bordwell, David, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Routledge, London, 1998
- Bordwell, David, *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging*, University of California Press, Berkley Los Angeles London, 2005
- Branigan, Edward R., *Point of View in the Cinema*, Mouton Publishers, 1984
- Brecht, Bertolt, 'The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre' in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willet, Methuen Drama, 1978
- Caughie, John and Kegan, Paul, (eds), *Theories of Authorship: A Reader*, London, Routledge, 1981
- Castoriadis, Cornelius, 'The Imaginary: Creation in the Social-Historical Domain' in *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Psychoanalysis and the Imagination*, ed. and trans. David Ames Curtis, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 1997, pp. 3-18.
- Castoriadis, Cornelius, 'The Retreat from Autonomy: Postmodernism as Generalized Conformism' in *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis and the Imagination*, ed. and trans. David Ames Curtis, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 1997, pp. 32-43.
- Castoriadis, Cornelius, 'The Revolution Before the Theologians: For a Critical/Political Reflection on Our History' in *World in Fragments – Writings on Politics, Psychoanalysis and the Imagination*, ed. and trans. David Ames Curtis, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 1997, pp. 70-83

Castoriadis, Cornelius, 'Phusis and Autonomy' in *World in Fragments – Writings on Politics, Psychoanalysis and the Imagination*, ed. and trans. David Ames Curtis, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 1997, pp. 331-341

Ciment, Michel, 'Η Μελαγχολία στο τέλος του Αιώνα' in *Βλέμματα στο κόσμο του Θόδωρου Αγγελόπουλου*, μετφ. Ζωή-Μυρτώ Ρηγοπούλου, Εκδόσεις Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης, 2001, pp. 71-75.

Connerton, Paul, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge University Press, 1989

Cordelli, Franco, 'Η Σκηνοθεσία του Αγγελόπουλου' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, μετφ. Βιολέτα Σωτηροπούλου-Καρύδη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 37-41

d' Allonnes, Fabrice Revault, 'Ο Ελληνικός Κύκλος' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, μετφ. Τιτίκα Δημητρούλια, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 277-278

Deleuze, Gilles, *Cinema 1-The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, The Athlone Press, London, 1986

Deleuze, Gilles, *Cinema 2- The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, The Athlone Press, London 1989

Eagleton, Terry, *Sweet Violence –the Idea of the Tragic*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden-Oxford, 2003

Eisenstein, Sergei, 'The Montage of Film Attractions' in *Eisenstein Writings Volume 1: 1922- 34*, ed. and trans. Richard Taylor, BFI Publishing / Indiana University Press, London Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988, pp. 39-58

Eisenstein, Sergei, 'The Dramaturgy of Film Form' in *Eisenstein Writings Volume 1: 1922- 34*, ed. and trans. Richard Taylor, BFI Publishing / Indiana University Press, London Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988, pp. 161-180

Eng, David L. and Kazanjian, David, 'Mourning Remains' in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, University of California Press, London Berkley California 2003, pp I- XXV

Freud, Sigmund, 'Mourning and Melancholia' in the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol.14, ed. and trans. James Strachey, Hogarth Press, London, 1957 pp. 243-258

Γεωργουσόπουλος, Κώστας, "Εισαγωγή" in *Δραματική Ποίηση*, Οργανισμός Εκδόσεων Διδακτικών Βιβλίων, Αθήνα, 1985, pp. 5-36

Giddens, Antony, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity, 1990

Gould, John, *Myth, Ritual, Memory and Exchange: Essays in Greek Literature and Culture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001

Hardt, Michael & Negri, Antonio, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge-Mass, 2000

Harrington, Austin, *Art and social theory: Sociological Arguments in Aesthetics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2004

Holloway, John, *Change The World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*, Pluto Press, London 2002

Horton, Andrew, *The Films of Theo Angelopoulos: A Cinema of Contemplation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1997

Jameson, Fredric, *Signatures of the Visible*, Routledge, New York/London, 1992

Jameson, Fredric, 'Theo Angelopoulos: The Past as History the Future as Form' in *The Last Modernist: The Films of Theo Angelopoulos*, ed. Andrew Horton, Flick Books, Trowbridge, 1997, pp. 78-95

Jay, Martin, 'Against Consolation: Walter Benjamin and the Refusal to Mourn' in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jay Winter & Emmanuel Sivan, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 221- 239

Jordan, Isabelle, 'Για ένα Επικό Κινηματογράφο' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, μετφ. Ινώ Ρόζου, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 232- 240

Karavanta, Asimina., 'The Global, the Local and the Spectral: Contemplating Spectral Politics' in *Global Babel: Questions of Discourse and Communication in a Time of Globalization*, Eds. Samir Dayal & Margueritte Murphy, Cambridge Scholars Press, London, 2008, pp. 163-188

Kellner, Douglas, *Ernst Bloch-Ideology and Utopia*,
<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/Illumina%20Folder/kell1.htm>

Κολοβός, Νίκος, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, Αιγόκερως, 1990

Κολοβός, Νίκος, 'Ο Οδυσσέας στη Χώρα των Νεκρών' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης – Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη , Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 289-291

Kolocotroni, Vassiliki, 'Monuments of Time' in *Post-War Cinema and Modernity: a film reader*, ed. John Orr & Olga Taxidou, 2000, pp. 399-409

Κορδάτος, Γιάννης Κ., *Προλεγόμενα στο Ομηρικό Ζήτημα (Μέρος Τρίτο)*, <http://www.mikrosapoplous.gr/homer/kordatos3.htm#fn32>

Lapsley, Robert and Westlake, Michael, *Film Theory: An Introduction*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1988

Makrigiannakis, Evangelos, personal interview with Theo Angelopoulos, June 2005, unpublished

Μάρκαρης, Πέτρος, 'Ιστορία και Ιστορική Απόσταση-Οι Μπρεχτικές Αναφορές στο έργο του Αγγελόπουλου' in the periodical *διαβάζω*, τεύχος 457, 2004, pp. 79 – 83

Micciché, Lino, 'Ο Αισθητικός Υλισμός του Αγγελόπουλου' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, μετφ. Βιολέτα Σωτηροπούλου Καρύδη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 127-143

Minucci, Paola, 'Η Μόνη Πιθανή Επανάσταση' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα 2000, pp. 319-322

Μπακογιαννόπουλος, Γιάννης, 'Το Πρόσωπο της Επιστροφής' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 208-218

Orr, John, *The Art and Politics of Film*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000

Orr, John, 'A Cinema of Poetry' in *Post-War Cinema and Modernity*, ed. John Orr and Olga Taxidou, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, pp. 133-141

Ξανθόπουλος, Λ., 'Ο Μεγαλέξαντρος-Τραγωδία και Μύθος' in Sergio Arreco, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, Ηράκλειτος ε.π.ε., 1985, pp. 141-151

Παπαχελάς, Αλέξης., *Ο Βιασμός της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας: Ο Αμερικάνικος Παράγων 1947-1967*, Εκδόσεις Εστία, Αθήνα, 1997

Pasolini, Pier Paolo, 'The Cinema of Poetry' in *Heretical Empiricism*, trans. Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett Bloomington, Indianapolis, 1988, pp. 167-186

Perez, Gilberto, *The Material Ghost: Films and their Medium*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1998

Ραφαηλίδης, Βασίλης, 'Ο Θίασος της Ελληνικής Ιστορίας σ' ένα Ομιχλώδες Τοπίο' in *Το Ομιχλώδες Τοπίο της Ιστορίας (5 Κείμενα για τον Αγγελόπουλο)*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1990

Ραφαηλίδης, Βασίλης, *Ιστορία (Κωμικοτραγική) του Νεοελληνικού Κράτους 1830-1974*, Εκδόσεις Εικοστού Πρώτου, Αθήνα, 1993

Ραφαηλίδης, Βασίλης, *Οι Λαοί των Βαλκανίων*, Εκδόσεις Εικοστού Πρώτου, Αθήνα, 1994

Ραφαηλίδης, Βασίλης, ‘Ταξίδι στα Κύθηρα’ in *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος: Κριτική 1965-1995*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1995, pp. 73-80

Ραφαηλίδης, Βασίλης, ‘Αναπαράσταση’ in *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος: Κριτική 1965-1995*, Αιγόκερως, 1995, pp. 22-26

Ραφαηλίδης, Βασίλης, ‘Ο Μελισσοκόμος’ in *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος: Κριτική 1965-1995*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1995, pp. 139-147

Ραφαηλίδης, Βασίλης, ‘Το Μετέωρο Βήμα του Πελαργού’ in *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος: Κριτική 1965-1995*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1995, pp. 255-258

Ραφαηλίδης, Βασίλης, ‘Το Παρθένο Βλέμμα’ in *Το Βλέμμα του Ποιητή*, Αθήνα, Αιγόκερως, 1996, pp. 43-51

Ραφαηλίδης, Βασίλης, ‘Οι Προϋποθέσεις για την Ανάπτυξη του Νέου Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου στην Ελλάδα’ in Γιάννης Σολδάτος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου: Τόμος Β’ (1967-1990)*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1999, pp. 60-61

Roufos, Rodos, ‘Culture and the Military’, in *Greece Under Military Rule*, ed. Richard Clogg and George Yannopoulos, Secker and Warburg, London, 1983

Sabouraud, Frédéric, ‘Ο Δρόμος των Μελισσών’ in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, μετφ. Ινώ Ρόζου, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης – Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 283-286

Silverman, Kaja, ‘From The Subject of Semiotics [On Suture]’ in *Film Theory and Criticism* ed. by Leo Braudy Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 137-147

Σολδάτος, Γιάννης, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου: Τόμος Β’ (1967-1990)*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα, 1999

Sontag, Susan, ‘Bergman’s Persona’ in *Styles of Radical Will*, Vintage, London, 2001 pp. 123-145

Stam, Robert, *Film Theory – An Introduction*, Blackwell Publishers, Malden Massachusetts, 2000

Στάθη, Ειρήνη., *Χώρος και Χρόνος στο Κινηματογράφο του Θόδωρου Αγγελόπουλου*, Αιγόκερως, Αθήνα 1999

Στάθη, Ειρήνη, 'Με το χρωστήρα του Θόδωρου Αγγελόπουλου', in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 169-172

Στάθη Ε. (edited), *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000

Σωτηροπούλου, Χρυσάνθη, *Ελληνική Κινηματογραφία 1965 – 1975: Θεσμικό Πλαίσιο – Οικονομική Κατάσταση*, Εκδόσεις Θεμέλιο, Αθήνα, 1989

Tarkovsky, Andrei, 'Time, Rhythm, Editing' in *Post-War Cinema and Modernity: A Film Reader*, ed. John Orr and Olga Taxidou, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, pp. 181-187

Tomassen, Lasse, *Heterogeneity, Representation and Justice: Borders and Communities in Angelopoulos' Balkan Trilogy*, <http://www.isak.liu.se/content/1/c6/03/03/13/lassethomassen.pdf>

Τρικούπης, Μάκης, 'Μπροστά σε μια κλειστή Πόρτα' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 226-230

Θέμελης, Κωνσταντίνος, *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος: Το παρελθόν ως Φόρμα, Το Μέλλον ως Ιστορία*, Ύψιλον/βιβλία, Αθήνα, 1998

Virilio, Paul, *The Vision Machine*, Indiana University Press London: British Film Institute, Bloomington, 1994

Wilmington, Michael, 'Η Δύναμις και η Δόξα' in *Θόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος*, ed. Ειρήνη Στάθη, μετφ. Πέτρος Μάρκαρης, Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης - Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, Αθήνα, 2000, pp. 81- 89.

Žižek, Slavoj, *The Fright of Real Tears-Krzysztof Kieślowski- Between Theory and Post-Theory*, BFI, 2001

Žižek, Slavoj, 'The Myth of Postmodernity' in *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? :five interventions in the (mis)use of a notion*, Verso, London, 2001