

The sense of epiphany in Theo Angelopoulos' *Ulysses' Gaze*

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In Ulysses' Gaze, a film made in response to the Balkan crises following the break-up of Yugoslavia, the Greek director Theo Angelopoulos several times makes use of the trope of the sudden appearance of a divine presence. The most visually striking epiphany is when a statue of Lenin is shown being taken through Romania on a barge and the local inhabitants rush to the canal bank to pay their respects. This scene is based on similar scenes in Angelopoulos' work, that are in turn influenced by earlier European films. There are also poetic precedents, particularly in modern Greek poetry to which the director alludes, that syncretize classical and modern Greek religious values. Whereas one might be tempted to see this system of allusions as reflecting modern Europe's cultural links with ancient Greece, closer examination shows that Angelopoulos is instead claiming continuity between the ancient and modern Greek worlds and, in a film about an Odyssean journey, expressing a nostalgia for a shared Balkan world that may perhaps be recreated once more.

In 1995, Theo Angelopoulos' film *Ulysses' Gaze* (*To Vlemma tou Odissea*) premiered at the Cannes Film Festival where it won the Grand Prize of the Jury, in effect second prize to Emir Kusturica's *Underground*. Both films were highly topical, even controversial in the aftermath of the breakup of Yugoslavia and the Balkan conflicts that followed, but represented different visions, comic and tragic, of the region. In *Underground* Kusturica created an allegory in which his characters, initially Yugoslav partisans fighting against the Germans after 1941, are literally kept in the dark after Tito's assumption of power after the end of the war. The freedom fighters' paternalistic, swindling leader, Marko, leads them to believe that the war is still continuing and so they remain in underground tunnels, only emerging into the light and a world of real warfare after Tito's death. In so presenting the construction and disintegration of Tito's Yugoslavia, the director presents an Orientalist depiction of the Balkans as an exotic land that is populated by childlike individuals unable to conform to ordinary western codes of conduct. Left to their own devices, his

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characters will naturally swindle and murder one another, although at the film's conclusion, in an Aristophanic celebration of community, they are reunited in death, feasting and dancing in the afterworld. Angelopoulos' film, in contrast, had rejected such comic stereotypes in search of an historical basis for co-existence on the peninsula, in the hope of finding an original view of the Balkans. This desire is encapsulated in the work of the cinematic pioneers in the region, the Manaki brothers, whose three undeveloped rolls of film become the object of a quest by the protagonist A., a Greek American film-maker. This in turn leads to his journey through the modern states of the Balkans in the aftermath of the break-up of the Yugoslav federation, concluding in the tragedy of Sarajevo under siege. Dina Iordanova, in a review of films made in the region in the 1980s and 1990s, goes so far as to claim that, among all the directors under review, Angelopoulos is the only one 'daring enough to assert that universal problems lurk within the peculiar Balkan universe'.¹ My intention in this article is to show, through examination of a particular scene in Angelopoulos' film (the passage of a barge carrying a monumental statue of Lenin along the Danube) and its antecedents, that what may appear to be international themes in West European literature and films are subjected to a modern Greek sensibility in Angelopoulos' work. I believe this also has a wider applicability to classical reception studies, since what may appear to classicists as universal truths from Greek and Roman civilization often turn out to be simply particular interpretations in time and place that need to be located in the context of their creation.²

Ulysses' Gaze shows its classical antecedents throughout. As the title indicates, A.'s journey from northern Greece through Albania, the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Serbia, ending in the war zone of besieged Sarajevo echoes the travels of Odysseus seeking to return to his home in Ithaca.³ The modern Odysseus (Harvey Keitel) meets various women (all played by the Romanian Jewish actor, Maia Morgenstern): a Penelope remembered at Florina, the Macedonian film archivist Kali (Calypso), a woman who clothes him, welcomes him to her bed, and helps him on his way to his destination/the underworld of Sarajevo (Circe), and, finally, Naomi (Nausicaa), the young daughter of Ivo Levy, the film archivist who possesses the three lost reels.⁴ None of this would surprise anyone who knows Angelopoulos' biography. Although the director, like many

1 Iordanova (1996: 899).

2 For instance, Hall (2002: 134–5) compares Tony Harrison's *Prometheus* (1998) with Angelopoulos' film to the disadvantage of the latter, since *Prometheus* offers a 'more vibrant and class-conscious view of the role of cinema' and is superior as a 'verse film/poem'. I suspect English left-wing politics (represented by Thatcher-era striking miners) and the elements of Harrison's classical education at Leeds filtered through Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* were more familiar to the author than Greek politics of the twentieth century and the tradition of modern Greek poetry with which Angelopoulos is associated.

3 For a useful map of this journey, see Ciment (1995: 24).

4 Angelopoulos in Horton (1997c: 102).

others, had disliked his early education in classical Greek, as an adult he had discovered the music of Homer when reading the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the original language.⁵ A poet as well as a film-maker, Angelopoulos has also been deeply influenced by a mix of European (Dante, Rilke, and Eliot among others) and modern Greek writers (especially Cavafy, Seferis, and Elytis),⁶ whose works have encouraged him to return to traditional Greek themes such as Odysseus' wanderings, the murderous family feuds of the house of Atreus, and the internecine strife associated with the Seven against Thebes. Burdened with such cultural weight, it is not surprising that Angelopoulos' films have been more popular with critics than with the general audience.⁷ Classicists too have taken note of Angelopoulos' contribution to the modern reception of ancient Greek culture, as indicated by articles on *Ulysses' Gaze* from Françoise Létoublon and Martin Winkler, a section in my study of the ancient world in film and television, and a book length study of *Voyage to Cythera* (1983) by Létoublon's student, Sylvie Rollet.⁸

The scene from *Ulysses' Gaze* that I will analyse in this article is particularly striking: to make his way to Belgrade from Constanta in Romania, A. gains passage on a barge that is taking a disassembled colossal statue of Lenin to a new home in Germany. As the barge and its contents proceed slowly along the canal to the Danube, scores of local inhabitants rush down to the shore to observe the event in wonder. Some appear to genuflect and make the sign of the cross, while others run alongside the vessel as if in a procession. The sequence, as often in Angelopoulos, is composed of extended takes (about eight in over three minutes, a far cry from the average present Hollywood shot length of around four seconds)⁹ and, although there is no dialogue, the mournful orchestral music of Eleni Karaindrou (*Ulysses' Theme*) provides an emotional counterpoint to the images on the screen.¹⁰ Angelopoulos has spoken of the origins of this pageant, bordering on ceremony. He had observed the reaction of a local couple when the statue of Lenin he was using in his film suddenly came into view: they reacted with astonishment, covering their eyes and making of the sign of the cross, perhaps to ward off a threat or through an instinctive reaction such as when encountering a funeral procession.¹¹ However, the strength of this scene lies not only in its fusion of religious, historical, and literary themes. As I will demonstrate, this episode in itself encapsulates much of the reaction to the past and

5 Andrew (2003).

6 Horton (1997b: 107).

7 Horton (1997a, 1997b); Fainaru (2001), with extensive bibliographies.

8 Létoublon (2007); Winkler (2005); Pomeroy (2008: 82–93, 131–4); Rollet (2003). See also Eades *et al.* (2002: 186–91).

9 Nothelfer *et al.* (2009: Fig. 2).

10 In *Ciment* (1995: 26), Angelopoulos speaks of the film's main theme being played here 'in a funereal tone' (dans un registre funèbre).

11 Fainaru (2001b: 97–8).

present that Angelopoulos, as screenwriter and director, was seeking to capture in his film through its allusions to repeated receptions of the classical world.

To set the stage: A. has arrived in Constanta in his search for the three lost reels of film made by the Manaki brothers at the start of the twentieth century. There is nothing in the Romanian archives and in the hotel A., who has been accompanied to Romania by Kali, like Odysseus on Calypso's island, 'lies beside her of necessity . . . unwillingly next to one willing', (*Od.* 5.154–5). He must depart on the next stage of his journey alone and at the harbour, he starts to cry, 'because I cannot love you.' The separation is shot as a four-minute take, as the lovers are startled by something unseen, which is finally revealed to be a huge head of Lenin being loaded by crane onto a barge. The statue has been shipped to Constanta from Odessa,¹² a geographical location that by itself recalls one of the major Greek tragedies of the twentieth century, the migration of Greek refugees from the Crimea to northern Greece in the wake of the failed allied intervention in the Russian civil war in 1919. The modern Calypso thus is sending off her lover, not on a raft, but on a near equivalent, a barge that is on its way up the Danube, laden with the weight of twentieth century history.¹³

Such a scene is very much in line with Angelopoulos' style. I will style this scene an 'epiphany', since it reveals to the viewer a previously unseen and unsettling power and indeed in Angelopoulos' script it is described as a *théama entiposiakó*, an 'amazing sight'.¹⁴ In classical literature, the figure that becomes visible, whether in everyday life or during a specific ritual, is usually a divinity or hero and may usually be interpreted as indicating supernatural concern for the viewer. In Christian literature, the term comes to be associated in particular with the angelic announcement to Mary of the forthcoming birth of the Christ.¹⁵ But in Angelopoulos' films, the religious element is transformed into a more general numinous effect. In *Megalexandros* (1980), the inhabitants of the village that the title character has first set up as a utopian state and then terrorised turn on the brigand. After they descend on him in a mob, the only sign of his existence that is left behind is, magically, a blood-stained marble bust that suddenly manifests itself in the town square. The 'Great Alexander' has thus been turned into one of the burdens of history in the Greek landscape, broken but still pressing on later generations.

12 The Greek name of the city, Odessós, of course also recalls the voyages of Odysseus.

13 The canal from Constanta to the Danube along which A. supposedly travels would also be significant to those aware of Balkan history, since the waterway was created with great suffering by gulag labour in the years after World War II. It thus represents a continuing monument to a historical tragedy in a film about the burden of history. In actual fact, however, as the script notes indicate, Angelopoulos filmed the scene on another canal considerably to the north, in the Danube delta between Tulcea and Sulina (Angelopoulos 1995: 120).

14 Angelopoulos (1995: 45).

15 For a general overview of the topic, see Graf (2003).

The image evokes Poem 3 of Seferis' *Mythistorema* ('I awoke with this marble head in my hands / which exhausts my elbows and I do not know where to set it down.').¹⁶ Seferis, in turn, alludes to a much earlier example of the tragedy of the past when he prefaces his poem with an epigraph from Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* 492 ('Remember the bath by which you were slain'). In this manner, Angelopoulos can both refer to the modern Greek experience through Seferis and through the modern poet to a distant Greek past.¹⁷

A similar epiphany occurs in Angelopoulos' *Landscape in the Mist* (1988). There the two protagonists, two young children on a quest for their father, and their guide, Orestes,¹⁸ suddenly stop and are then shown to be gazing in wonder as a colossal hand carried by an unseen helicopter slowly rises above the harbour of Thessaloniki and moves across the city. This hand points anywhere and nowhere, signifying the loss of direction that has come over Greece after the fall of the Colonel's regime despite the electoral triumph of the Left. While Angelopoulos has been reluctant to explain this scene in detail, it is clearly indicative of the disappointment that he and other Greek intellectuals felt in this period. This disillusionment is also evident in the other two films of the director's 'trilogy of silence', in *The Beekeeper* (1986) and, especially, in the depiction of the return of Odysseus as a Greek civil war exile in *Voyage to Cythera* [1983]. In the latter film, the past still exists strongly for the protagonists but is generally regarded by other characters as irrelevant in the present. So, although Odysseus returns to his homeland, he soon becomes a nuisance, a mere symbol of old struggles to his compatriots who at the conclusion of the film tow him out to sea on a raft once more.

At the same time, the hand that is carried across the city in *Landscape in the Mist* links Angelopoulos' film with earlier cinema, specifically with the work of Fellini. The latter's *La dolce vita* (1960) begins with a lengthy depiction of a statue of Christ being transported by helicopter across Rome to the Vatican. The sight draws the

16 In *Four Greek Poets*, trans. Keeley and Sherrard (1966: 44).

17 In *Ulysses' Gaze*, a film that has numerous quotations from and allusions to Seferis' poems, Angelopoulos also reverses the process by starting with an epigraph from Plato, *Alcibiades* 133b ('And thus the soul too, if it wishes to know itself, will have to look into the soul'). An alert viewer might recognize this Platonic quotation, apparently a declaration of the philosophical necessity of introspection, as also the beginning of Seferis' *Mythistorema*, Poem 4 ('The Argonauts'), which adds 'the stranger and the enemy, we've seen him in the mirror'. The journey (*nostos*) in search of knowledge repeats, but with different emphases between classical and modern times. For Seferis and Homer, see Padel (1985) and Alexopoulou (2006); Greenwood (2009: 58–68) offers an interesting discussion of the parallels between Seferis' and Derek Walcott's views of *nostos*, especially the impossibility of return.

18 This Orestes is himself a more modern version of the rebel Orestes who had appeared in *The Travelling Players* (1976), a mid-twentieth century version of the *Oresteia*: this suggests that not only does ancient tragedy repeat itself in modern Greece, but also that the same tragic influence continues through to the present day.

attention of children playing football and women sunbathing on the rooftop of a wealthy apartment building, yet it is in itself nothing more than an entertainment for a society that lacks any clear codes of morality. The appearance of the divinity is an irrelevance to 1960s Italy; the rest of the film shows a search for meaning amid the hedonism of the times. Although Angelopoulos has not to my knowledge ever explicitly linked the scene in his film with that in Fellini's, his general debt to the Italian director (for instance, the story of the director that frames *Voyage to Cythera* is derived from *8½*), their shared use of Tonino Guerra as script advisor and Marcello Mastroianni as actor, and the use of the helicopter (significant in Fellini's film since it carries the protagonist, but hidden as irrelevant in Angelopoulos' scene) make the link certain. Still, while Fellini's depiction of Christ flying across Rome is closer to a classical definition of an epiphany as the sudden manifestation of the actual divine, Angelopoulos' epiphany, lacking any clear religious revelation, is perhaps closer to James Joyce's idea of an epiphany as a secular emotional response that can profoundly change the viewer. Indeed Joyce is one of the modernist writers who have had the greatest impact on the director and his *Ulysses* is said by the director to have had as much influence on his film as Homer's epic.¹⁹ If Seferis and Homer illustrate the Greek side of Angelopoulos, Fellini and Joyce are indicators of classical themes within a wider European culture. This is typical of the oeuvre of a man who has resolutely restricted himself to filming Greek subjects, nearly always on Greek locations, yet is clearly working in the tradition of modernist European cinema.²⁰

These Hellenic and European influences are worth stressing, since they reveal the dual status of modern Greece. For its people, Greece is the historical outcome of the national liberation of the nineteenth century and Hellas has been defined as the area inhabited by Greek-speaking persons who are united by their adherence to the Greek Orthodox church. For western Europeans, since the Enlightenment and especially since Romanticism, the true Greece is encapsulated in the art and literature of the classical age, while the inhabitants of the modern nation, speaking a debased form of the language and lacking the historical power of their antecedents, are simply degenerate descendants of what had once been a great race. Angelopoulos himself has vividly portrayed the gulf between these two ideals in *Megalexandros* (1980), where a party of English industrialists who mock their hosts' inability to understand classical Greek and make their way to the Temple of Poseidon at Sounion to observe the dawning of the first day of the twentieth century are captured while reciting lines from Sophocles' *Antigone* by Greek brigands/revolutionaries and forced to march into captivity at Alexander's stronghold.²¹

19 Horton (1997a: 102, 107).

20 Cf. Jameson (1997). That *Ulysses' Gaze* was Angelopoulos' first film made partly outside of Greece in itself reinforces its depiction of a close Greek-Balkan nexus.

21 The co-existence of historical and modern Greece may also be perceived in an epiphany scene from the more recent *The Weeping Meadow* (2004), when the lovers Alexis and Eleni, returning to their village, suddenly stop. The object of their gaze turns out to be a

One modern Greek reaction to outsiders' disparagement of their popular culture has been to attempt to combine more recent folk and religious elements with classical themes. This is particularly visible in the work of the poet Angelos Sikelianos in the 1920s to revive the Delphic idea at Delphi, using a specific geographical setting to revive not only Greek drama and sports after the Olympic model, but also including other periods of Greek history through the production of Byzantine music and the exhibition of folk art. Greek culture could thus offer a spiritual model for all other peoples, just as the Olympic games had done in sport.²² Other attempts to combine ancient and modern have been less benign. After his coup d'état in 1936, Metaxas proclaimed the advent of a 'Third Hellenic Civilization', based on Byzantine orthodox religion and classical (particularly Spartan) models. His regime also welcomed Joseph Goebbels to Greece in 1936 and the ceremonial lighting of the Olympic flame (as imagined by Karl Diem) and torch relay to Munich were undertaken at Olympia for the first time.²³ In the context of the Greek Civil War, the communists and their allies (real or suspected) were regarded as atheistic opponents of the Greek state and on the prison islands were subjected, among other indignities, to a process of rebirth through immersion in classical culture.²⁴ It is not surprising that Nikos Zahariadis, general secretary of the Greek Communist Party from 1931 to 1956, should denounce ancient Greek society as slave-based and the Byzantine Empire as a civilization of Asiatic despotism, and stress that both had collapsed because of their exploitative nature. Modern Greece, he declared, had no historical links with these past systems. Yet, partially because of feelings of national pride and also because of the influence of Greek thought on Marx and Hegel, most Greek socialists continued to believe that they had inherited specific Hellenic values from their forefathers.²⁵

The scene of the passage of Lenin's statue along the Danube that follows the separation of A. and Kali must thus be understood as part of a tradition that recognizes the past in its marble ruins and feels the power of both religion and political ideology. It becomes a second epiphany of the same presence, since Lenin's statue on the barge now no longer simply indicates a possible escape route from Constanta and a lover to A. himself, but provides an enigmatic message to the observers on the river banks.²⁶ As Angelopoulos has indicated, the scene was a late addition after the

tree festooned with the slaughtered sheep that had belonged to Alexis' father, an Aeschylean touch in line with the Theban tragedy themes of this film.

22 A vivid account of Sikelianos' efforts and the sometimes-comic results is given in Eva Palmer-Sikelianos' autobiography (1993).

23 The classical aspirations of the Metaxas regime are briefly mentioned and mocked in Angelopoulos' *Days of '36* (1972) and *Travelling Players* (1975).

24 Hamilakis (2002); Van Steen (2011); G. Van Steen, *Theatre of the Condemned: Classical Tragedy on Greek Prison Islands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011).

25 Hamilakis (2007: 190–5).

26 Since my interest here is in classical reception, I will sidestep the debate over *mise en scène* in relation to the presentation of Lenin, represented on one side by Bordwell (2005), who offers a formalist interpretation of Angelopoulos' cinematic staging, and

intention to have multiple busts of Lenin was scrapped in favour of a single 22-metre statue and the strength of the image of a single colossus floating down the Danube became apparent to the director.²⁷ By the addition of spectators, the collective vision of the local populace now replaces the traditional (Hollywood) individual gaze of the protagonist, as in A.'s reaction in the previous scene. The statue happens not to be that of a Greek and the people who view it are definitely not Greeks. Yet Angelopoulos' intention, here as elsewhere, is clearly to display a Balkan gaze, a sensibility that could unite all that live in the peninsula. This ideal is seen at the start of the film when there is a showing of the excerpt 'Weavers at Avdela' made in 1906 by the Vlach brothers, Iannaki and Milto Manachia.²⁸ At the same time, since Lenin is making his way to Germany, the original home of Karl Marx and the communist manifesto, this is no funeral parade following the 'death of history' as proclaimed by neo-conservatives, no triumph of capitalism. Possibly, Angelopoulos was aware of Derrida's response to Fukuyama in his *Specters of Marx* (1993), with its punning invention of Hauntology (pronounced 'Ontology'), the ghost of Marxism still hanging over Europe as a shade that will not go away. Certainly, as a left-wing intellectual he will have been conscious that the struggle for a better society continued, particularly in the face of the internecine strife unleashed by the break-up of Yugoslavia. The god whose funeral is being celebrated will be reborn: as A. has already declared early in the film, quoting T.S. Eliot, 'In my end is my beginning'.²⁹

Earlier in *Ulysses' Gaze*, A. had told of another epiphany that had instigated his quest. At Delos, in the heat of the day, the traditional time for the manifestation of the divinity, Apollo suddenly appears when an ancient olive tree topples over and reveals a bust of the god that rises up and rolls through the town to the sea.³⁰

on the other by Rutherford (2002), who critiques earlier work by Bordwell from the viewpoint of German aesthetic theorists such as Kracauer and Benjamin.

- 27 Ciment (1995: 22); in his script, Angelopoulos (1995) specifies that the finger of the great leader should point to nowhere in particular.
- 28 In Angelopoulos' film, the brothers are referred to by the Greek forms of their name, Yannakis and Miltiades Manaki(a)s; the names could also be given their Macedonian form, Yanaki and Milton Ianaki/Manaki. Aromanian speakers born into the Ottoman Empire at Avdela, Yannakis died in Thessaloniki (a scene that opens *Ulysses' Gaze*), while his younger brother died at Monastir (Bitola) in Macedonia. In brief, they, as well as their work, encompass the shifting identities of the Balkans in the twentieth century.
- 29 It seems likely that Angelopoulos is deriving this ultimately Frazerian ritualist mythology from Eliot, whose indebtedness to *The Golden Bough* is well recognized. The suggestion that Angelopoulos might be influenced by J.S. Campbell's mythology seems to me merely to be based on Hollywood practice (in particular George Lucas' *Star Wars*: Rogers 2011: 74) and far removed from the Marxist materialism of the Greek director.
- 30 This marvel that A. narrates to Kali appears to be indirectly derived from the description of the wondrous young palm tree that Odysseus tells Nausicaa that he saw when visiting Delos (*Od.* 6.160–3). Angelopoulos thus can be seen as acknowledging the ancient literary tradition of the epiphany to which he normally gives visual form by (unusually) providing a verbal description instead.

Attempts to photograph the scene were futile: the divine light was too strong for the event to be recorded. The possibility of obtaining the Manaki brothers' undeveloped reels thus becomes a substitute, recovering a human gaze on film when the Apolline vision cannot be captured.³¹ For viewers with knowledge of Greek literature, A.'s story would recall a particular poem of George Seferis, 'Engomi' from *Logbook III*. The poem tells of the narrator's visit to the archaeological site close to Farmagusta on Cyprus in 1953. Suddenly he feels that time has stopped, but the body of one young female worker seems to rise out of the trench, half-Aphrodite and half-Virgin Mary, and ascend into the sky. This is an amalgamation of both the Cypriot mother goddess and the mother of Christ: 'Her belly now shone like the moon / and I thought the sky was the womb / that bore her and now took her back, mother and child. / Her feet stayed marble still / and vanished: an Assumption' (41–5).³² The scene is very much structured around the epiphany that occurs in the apocryphal *Gospel of James*, Chapter 18, when time ceases at the moment of birth of the holy child. Birds are fixed in the air, lambs stopped at the point of drinking, while humans are transfixed in their tasks. Thus Seferis links a present day event to a Christian epiphany, but also gives it a pagan, Hellenic significance as well. The message that Greek culture is an amalgam of Christian and classical is clear.³³ In Angelopoulos' films, marble forms suddenly appear, but they seem to attest to a lack of spiritual certainty, as with the marble hand that passes over Thessaloniki or the head of Apollo that cannot be captured in film. The women who 'spun, but the spindles didn't turn' (Seferis, 'Engomi' 34), however, can perhaps be captured. The Manaki brothers' oldest surviving film, of their 114-year-old mother spinning wool at Avdela (1906), featured at the beginning of *Ulysses' Gaze*, shows this magic and offers the possibility of another epiphany for A. if he can view their missing reels.³⁴

31 Cf. Winkler (2005: 396–7).

32 Seferis (1981), trans. Keeley and Sherrard; for the more mundane erotic charms of the young labourer, see Beaton (2003: 308–9).

33 For Seferis' views on Hellenic Hellenism as opposed to European Hellenism, see Seferis (1966: 92). Seferis' linking the Cypriot Bronze Age with modern Greece was, of course, also an indirect political statement in the 1950s atmosphere of Enosis on Cyprus (cf. Beaton 2003: 304–28).

34 In the film, it is unclear whether the missing reels have been successfully developed at Sarajevo by Ivo Levi. They are playing indistinctly behind Harvey Keitel during his final cathartic monologue that makes it clear that the journey is not finished, even if Odysseus should succeed in returning home. Cf. the remarks of Angelopoulos on this scene (Horton 1997a: 105). It is tempting to associate the footage of the missing reels with the brief silent scene Angelopoulos later filmed using a primitive Lumière camera, where a bedraggled Odysseus emerges from the sea and asks 'On what strange shore have I arrived?' (*Lumière and Company* [1995]). By quoting *Od.* 13.200 where Odysseus fails to identify his Ithacan homeland, Angelopoulos suggests that the effect of film is to present known material in a way that is new and initially unrecognizable. In any case, the quest for a true Balkan gaze still continues.

Angelopoulos' indebtedness to Seferis should not, however, blind us to a lengthy tradition of combining Hellenic and pagan motifs in modern Greek poetry. Indeed, Seferis is himself probably influenced by Angelos Sikelianos, with whom he became good friends after World War II. As already mentioned, Sikelianos' programme of 'Delphism' sought to combine the Apolline and Dionysiac ideals of western thought, perhaps best represented in the work of Nietzsche, with contemporary Greek folk practices and beliefs. These aims can be recognized in a number of Sikelianos' poems from the 30s. In 'The Sacred Way' (1935), the narrator sets out from Athens to Eleusis, crosses the river Kephisos, and sits on what appears to be the 'laughless rock' of the Eleusinian Mysteries. At this point, he is approached by a gypsy who has with him two chained bears, a mother and her cub. The mother bear is compared to the Great Goddess, the Eternal Mother, who also took the form of Demeter, Alcmena, and the Virgin Mary protecting her unsuspecting child. The cruelty of the bears' dance leaves the narrator depressed: 'Will the time, the moment ever come when the the bear's soul / and the gypsy's and my own, that I call initiated, / will feast together?' Yet as night falls, a cry seems to fill the air: 'It will come.'³⁵ This mystical syncretism of paganism and Christianity is also visible in the poem 'Dionysus in the Cradle' from 1942, where the narrator is seen as a sentry freezing in the snow or as a Corybant protecting the newly born child, 'my Dionysus and my Christ', from the wolves that threaten.³⁶ The allusions to the political situation in Greece at this time are obvious. And perhaps most striking in its depiction of epiphany is 'At St. Luke's Monastery' (1935) where the weeping at the burial of Christ at the Epitaphios is simultaneously the mourning for Adonis. At the conclusion of the poem, the wailing changes to a cry of 'Christ has risen'. It is at this moment, that the young villager, Vangelis, believed to died in the war, makes his sudden, terrifying reappearance.

Clearly, Angelopoulos is working within a strong modern Greek tradition when he has the onlookers treat the image of Lenin passing before them as a divine apparition. The Christian element is restricted to those spectators who make the sign of the cross,³⁷ yet Lenin is no pagan god. Or is he? The recumbent leader with hand raised, a giant on his tiny barge, bears a striking resemblance to the voyaging Dionysus as depicted on the famous vase by Exekias now in the Staatliche Antikensammlung, Munich. The epiphany of the god of the Balkans (the rites of

35 All translations of Sikelianos are by Keeley and Sherrard in Sikelianos (1979).

36 On Sikelianos' fusion of Dionysus and Christ, see Hirst (2004: 255–80).

37 In *Ciment* (1995: 23), Angelopoulos recounts the story of a journalist in Bosnia who saw the local population making the gestures appropriate to their religion (Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, or Moslem) as they passed a grand public toilet in the centre of their town. A twelfth-century orthodox basilica had later been turned into a mosque, then a Catholic church, before being torn down and replaced by a toilet in an anti-religious drive by the communist authorities. Despite that, a sense of the numinous nature of the place clearly survived in the community, whatever their particular religious beliefs.

Dionysus, like the mythology of Orpheus, were often associated with the area north of Greece) would indeed be very much in line with modern Greek literary themes. Needless to say, both Lenin and Dionysus represent power far beyond that of ordinary mortals and both, it might be suggested, have the ability to be torn apart and reborn. This might be taken to be idle speculation, yet the argument is strengthened by an examination of the shooting script. There are three subsequent scenes, filmed but deleted from the final cut of an already long movie. First, the barge stops to pick up a party of gypsies that are to be smuggled to Germany. As the party passes the Iron Gates ('leaning as though to meet like the Clashing Rocks'), 'the statue of Lenin seems to sway and panic breaks out. The gypsies untie the statue and start to laugh. Their nostalgic song-invocation becomes a dance, a celebration.'³⁸ Angelopoulos is clearly thinking of Greek mythology with his reference to the Argonautica here, and the behaviour of the gypsies seems modelled on Dionysus' satyrs, that of the crew on the pirates who are turned into dolphins in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* and also depicted on Exekias' vase.

From this evidence, there can be no doubt that Angelopoulos was cognizant of the traditions, literary, and cinematic, within which he was working.³⁹ The continuing influence of the past is not only evident in the mystical revelation of the head of Apollo, but also in the contemporary appearance of Lenin's statue. Furthermore, the substitution of a Marxist figure for a Hellenistic-Christian fusion shows the director's ability to update Greek mythologies, just as the figure of Megalexandros the revolutionary had supplanted the earlier classical and Byzantine figures associated with that name. *Ulysses' Gaze* is a film about journeying, the *nostos* of Greek literature ancient and modern, but it is also about the loss along the way, the *nostalgia* that Angelopoulos has emphasized in interviews and in his supplementation in his film of Seferis' 'The first thing God created was the journey' with 'and then came doubt and nostalgia'.⁴⁰

Despite Jordanova's insistence on the universal values encapsulated in Angelopoulos' vision,⁴¹ it would be wrong to read the scene of Lenin on the Danube as specifically promoting a wider *European* vision. *Ulysses' Gaze* does not, for instance, see the Danube as uniting central and western Europe with the Balkans.⁴² Angelopoulos, by contrast, seeks to see a multicultural Balkans before

³⁸ Angelopoulos (1995: 120).

³⁹ It might be argued that this depth of tradition also limits his audience to festival viewers and art houses. For instance, according to IMDB, *Ulysses' Gaze* grossed a miniscule \$42,202 at theatres in the USA.

⁴⁰ On nostalgia: Andrew 2003 ('Time and Myth'); *nostos*: Seferis, 'Stratis Thalassinou Among the Agapanthi' (1942), originally published in *Logbook II* (Alexandria 1944); the additional line: Pomeroy (2008: 133, n. 82).

⁴¹ Note 1, above.

⁴² Such as, the viewpoint of Barison and Ross' *The Ister* (2004). The origin of the latter film in Heidegger's lectures on Hölderlein's poem not only firmly links ancient Greek philosophy with its modern (west) European progeny, but also erases the present-day

nationalisms tore this world apart and so treats the break-up of Yugoslavia not as an isolated occurrence, but as one of a chain of historical events in the area. In many ways, then, *Ulysses' Gaze* is a history of the Greek experience in the twentieth century. At the beginning of the film, conflict breaks out at Florina in northern Greece over the director's depiction of the artificiality of modern borders [it is actually Angelopoulos' *The Suspended Step of the Stork* (1991) that is playing]. On his way to Skopje, A. takes an elderly Greek woman to find her long-separated sister in southern Albania. When she arrives, she can no longer recognize the town and the sound of the muezzin calling the locals to prayer highlights the loss of Greek identity. A visit to the Manaki brothers' ruined theatre at Monastir [now Bitola in the (Former Yugoslav) Republic of Macedonia] and the vision of Yanakis' imprisonment in Bulgaria that takes place at passport control at Phillipoupoli (Plovdiv) in Bulgaria recall the Balkan wars and the displacement of the Greek communities in those areas. So too, A.'s memory of New Year festivities in Constanta after the Second World War and the forced repatriation of his family, as well as an unfiled scene of A. passing by Braila, a once-important Greek port on the Black Sea ('once a harbour, now deserted, a corpse'),⁴³ suggest that in the past the Balkan identity had possessed an essential Greek component. That this is not a nationalist but multi-cultural vision of the region can be seen from the inclusion in the film of gypsies and Jews, the two ethnic groups that have suffered the most from local nationalism. The multiplicity of languages and religions that A. encounters on his journey also shows the impossibility of creating boundaries based on such categories. It is, for instance, notable that A. and his Serbian host, Nikos, are united not by a shared Greek Orthodox Christian tradition, but by their recall of Seferis⁴⁴ in addition to their shared love for modernist film-making (Murnau, Dreyer, Welles, and Eisenstein).

In brief, however much one may seek to reconcile Angelopoulos' film with the humanistic tradition of western Europe, it has at its heart a modern Greek view of the Balkans. Whereas a common western European stereotype of the Balkans is as 'the East', an area of profoundly different cultural values visible in feuding and petty conflicts, modern Greeks have often viewed the area as sharing common values with their state, offering not only economic opportunities, but also the possibility of a 'Balkan Way', bridging Europe and Asia.⁴⁵ In his use of classical themes, generally in the film's use of Homer, but also in specific scenes such as the Lenin epiphany, Angelopoulos may seem to be highlighting the modern world's debt to classical Greece. Yet, by filtering his classical sources through modern Greek sensibilities

intellectual ideas of the peninsula. If anything, Angelopoulos' vision can be seen as derived from the pan-Balkan idea of liberation from the Ottomans championed by Rigas Ferraios in the aftermath of the French revolution.

43 Angelopoulos (1995) 119.

44 See n. 40, above.

45 To choose but one representative example, see the 2006 press release by the Greek consul to the USA (Mallias 2006).

he also makes the claim that the continuous effects of geography on the inhabitants of the Balkans are more important than their political, religious, or even linguistic differences. The means of expressing this vision may be a west European invention (so too the Manaki brothers had travelled to London in 1905 to purchase their first cinematic camera), but the gaze reflected in the camera, of oneself and one's enemy, is, as indicated by the film's epigraph,⁴⁶ indigenous to the region.

46 See n. 17, above.

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