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**Mythical Films of Theo Angelopoulos:  
Retelling with Greek Romance**

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**Mýtické Filmy Thea Angelopoulose:  
Převyprávění s Řeckou Romantikou**

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Mythical Films of Theo Angelopoulos: Retelling with Greek Romance

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## Abstract

Theo Angelopoulos establishes his film category with his distinctive long takes and epic storytelling. His films won international recognition with a strong mythical tone created through all aspects of character, cinematography, and narration. As a filmmaker in the 21st century, Angelopoulos sets an example of retelling regional traumas to the global audience with an unconventional style. By comparing Angelopoulos' films with Bakhtin's Greek romance, the thesis will analyze his approach to reshaping personal stories into modern myths. The correlations between his characters, cinematography, and narrations establish a surrealistic world rooted in reality. The struggle for self-identity and the passivity of an individual become Angelopoulos' primary concern. He further amplifies and externalizes them through wide shots, the long lens, and consistently moving long takes. Compressing several historical times into one sequence shot, he blurs the boundary between reality and memory, the past and the present, consciousness and subconsciousness. Emphasizing on the expansion of time, his stories contain flexible time and space that allow more influence of chance instead of a causal effect. With these artistic choices, Angelopoulos allows more ambiguity in his films and finds the collective memory and emotions shared by the global audience. He connects and encourages his audience by providing a common dream with space to fill and imagine.

## Abstract

Theo Angelopoulos zakládá svou filmovou kategorii prostřednictvím výrazných dlouhých záběrů a epického vyprávění. Jeho filmy získaly mezinárodní uznání díky silnému mýtickému tónu vytvořeným prostřednictvím všech aspektů postavy, kinematografie a vyprávění. Jako filmař 21. století Angelopoulos je příkladem převyprávění globálnímu publiku regionálních traumat v nekonvenčním stylu. Prostřednictvím srovnání Angelopoulosových filmů s Bachtinovou řeckou romancí bude v diplomové práci provedena analýza přístupu režiséra k přetváření osobních příběhů do moderních mýtů. Propojení mezi jeho postavami, kinematografií a stylem vyprávění vytváří zakořeněný v realitě surrealistický svět. Boj o vlastní identitu a pasivita jednotlivce se stává Angelopoulosovým hlavním zájmem. Dále je zesiluje a externalizuje prostřednictvím širokých záběrů, teleobjektivu a dlouhé záběrů důsledným pohybem. Pomocí komprese několika historických časů do jednoho sekvencního záběru stírá hranici mezi realitou a pamětí, minulostí a přítomností, vědomím a podvědomím. Přes důraz na expanzi času jeho příběhy obsahují flexibilní čas a prostor, který umožňuje větší vliv náhody namísto kauzálního účinku. Díky těmto uměleckým rozhodnutím umožňuje Angelopoulos ve svých filmech více dvojznačnosti a sdílí kolektivní paměť a emoce globálnímu publiku. Svě publikum spojuje a povzbuzuje tím, že poskytuje mu společný sen s prostorem k naplnění a představě.

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## I. Introduction

In 2022, the UCLA Film and Television Archive held a retrospective of Theo Angelopoulos in Billy Wilder Theater, including many of his feature films and selective shorts. Malina Stefanovska, a professor at UCLA who visited the program, wrote in her review:

The full house of the Billy Wilder theater, the rapt attention of the audience during the many hours of watching, and all the diverse languages spoken around me, made it obvious that his admirers are not only Balkan born, but also a younger generation of film buffs from all over the world.

Theo Angelopoulos is one of the most significant writer-director in modern cinema. His film *The Traveling Players* establishes his distinctive style featuring moving long takes that frame both actors and their landscape in wide shots. It is included in “The Best Very Very Long Films” by *Film Comment* in the May to June 2010 issue. His other films also have won many premier awards in international film festivals such as the Palme d’Or at the Cannes film festival and the European Film Awards. As his films are screened in more and more countries, he is considered not only the most important director of his generation but also “one of the true last masters in a dying tradition of 20th-century European modernism” (Foundas). In a comment included in *Sight and Sound*, he joins the rank of Tarkovsky and Kalatozoc as “one of the irrepressible horsemen of art-film apocalypse” (Atkinson). UCLA Film and Television Archive suggests the constant need to rediscover Theo Angelopoulos’ films, because of “the idiosyncrasies of [his] formal and thematic concerns” (“Landscapes of Time”).

Theo Angelopoulos’ films are adventures set in harsh reality with an occasional glimpse of magic. While the story is set in a realistic world and the settings are real locations in the towns, there are numerous surrealistic moments created through the perception of time, the change of acting style, and the usage of chance and nature. The landscape unfolds itself as the camera steadily moves; time freely flows across the story place. A spectator becomes a personification of time who watches everything passing by. With the usage of wide shots to present characters in the situated world, Angelopoulos combines multiple times and various levels of consciousness within a single image. A single image may consist of both past and present, reality and its subconscious representations like memory, dream, and imagination. Thus, the audiences experience wonders that are deeply embedded into the realistic images as if those of a myth.

Theo Angelopoulos' mythical approach to representing personal struggles within a historical context separates his films from those of other auteurs. Even today, his films reach global audiences including people who are not familiar with Greek history. At *Douban*, a Chinese version of *IMDB*, his films are averagely rated 9 out of 10. At *Filmmarks*, the biggest film review website in Japan, his films have an averagely scored of 4 out of 5. At *CSFD*, a Czech film rating website, his films are rated from 78 to 80%.

Theo Angelopoulos' films are worth rediscovering today because of his effective portrait of personal struggles that intertwine with the turbulent changes in society. However, his films are more worthy of a close examination especially because of the precise cooperation between his character setup, cinematography, and narration. As the social and political situation intensifies, especially inside China, my generation of filmmakers is struggling to present their personal experiences under growing censorship. The specification in visual storytelling becomes dangerous since it could involve politically sensitive issues. Thus, Theo Angelopoulos' approach developed under strict censorship may provide insights. By analyzing three of his films, I will analyze how Angelopoulos retells a personal experience under a regional historical context to the global audience through a mythical tone that is constructed with similar features of Greek romance, and how his choice of characters, cinematography, and narration allow his film to go beyond the cultural barriers.

## **1.1 The Life of Theo Angelopoulos**

Theo Angelopoulos was born in Athens in 1935 to a family of merchants. He describes himself as a "war child" since he grew up during the German Occupation in World War II and the Greek Civil War (1945 - 1949) (Angelopoulos 125). In 1944, his father was arrested without warning due to the report of his cousin. Nine months later, his father returned as suddenly as he has disappeared. This sudden absence of his father seems to leave a significant mark on his life and later is reflected in his films. In *Ulysses's Gaze*, A's father suddenly returns after a sudden disappearance. In *Landscape in the Mist*, the children look for their father who never truly exists. In *Eternity and a Day*, the audience is only introduced to Alexander's mother without any mention of his father.

Angelopoulos initially studied literature, filmology, and anthropology at Sorbonne University in Paris. He later entered IDHEC as a filmmaking student but soon moved to Jean Rouch's film courses after a conflict with his previous teacher. In 1964, he decided to give up his potential career in Paris and returned to Greece after encountering a student demonstration during a

trip back home (Angelopoulos 132). Greece was at the beginning of a period of the military junta. Although Angelopoulos possessed various knowledge, he still could not comprehend the tormenting changes in his country. With this kind of confusion, he began his career as a journalist and a film critic first, then, as a film director after 1967 when strict censorship was enforced in Greece under a military dictatorship.

Beginning in 1970, Theo Angelopoulos attracted attention as a film director on the international stage. His first feature film *Reconstruction* was special mentioned of the International Film Critics at the Berlin Film Festival. In 1974, *The Traveling Players* won awards worldwide including Cannes, Berlin, Japan, and Brussels. In 1977, *The Hunters* was invited to the official competition in Cannes; a year later, it was awarded a Golden Hugo in Chicago. From *Voyage to Cythera* which is finished in 1984, Angelopoulos focused more on personal struggles than politics. The next two films *Landscape in the Mist* and *The Suspended Step of the Stork* continue to be what he calls “existential” (Angelopoulos xxi). In 1995, *Ulysses’ Gaze* won him a Grand Prix at Cannes. A few years later, *Eternity and a Day* further confirms his position as an art film icon when it was recognized with the Golden Palm in Cannes.

## 1.2 Literature Review

There are numerous articles suggesting the relationship between Angelopoulos’ films with Greek myths. Most researchers agree that there is a strong connection between them due to the similar motifs and character names. His film *Voyage to Cythera* and the renowned Greek myth *The Odyssey* both include “a kind of confusion between individual history and political history” (Rollet 222). Andrew Horton also describes the film as a “reworking of the myth of the Return of Odysseus” (“National Culture” 31). He also notices in *The Traveling Players* that the members of the acting troupe share the same names of mythological characters, such as Electra, Aegisthus, Orestes, and Pylades (Horton, “Theo Angelopoulos” 19). Sylvie Rollet further remarks that there are figures from ancient myths that appear to speak for the present in Angelopoulos’ films (221). Greek mythology seems to be a primary vehicle for Angelopoulos to express his thoughts and feelings during the national chaos.

On the other hand, Theo Angelopoulos’ stories are often as epic as myths and are presented through his transcendental cinematography. Featuring one or a group of characters, the films present their journey wandering from one place to another, seeking meaning or an object that probably does not exist (Rushton 237). A character does not have the power to influence his surroundings. Instead, he can only “endure, live through” it and is very much subject to the



“willpower of external forces” (Iordanova 22). Personal dilemmas and confusion are embedded within the conflicts and the transformation of a nation. In this way, his films often portray individuals against society or self against everything.

To present the epic story, Angelopoulos often places his characters in a wide shot and rarely uses close-ups to emphasize the characters' emotions. Instead, the camera slowly and smoothly follows them without a pause, like a calm flowing river itself. The long take contains the silent moments between the dramatic beats and the transition that connects various times and realities. Many researchers relate his long takes to Deleuze's time-image and interpret its effect on the essence of the past:

As is well known, Deleuze makes a distinction between the movement-image and the time-image in cinema, where first of all the movement-image sees perception related to action, so that the actions of a hero in a movement-image film are responses to what the hero has seen. By contrast, films of the time-image feature a relationship between perception and memory: what the hero sees is no longer related to action; rather, it sends the hero back to the past, into memory. (Rushton 239)

In other words, the action of the hero reacts to his thoughts – memory, illusion, imagination – in a time-image film. In Angelopoulos' films, the past does not return as a factual event, but as a subjective memory. For instance, in *Ulysses' Gaze*, the camera pans from the protagonist to the outside of the train as he stands still at the exit, and reveals passengers wearing in the 1950s. A's mother appears in her 20s, gets on the train, and talks with him who is in his forties, at present. As A follows her mother to another carriage, his environment has changed to the old train style. He returns to the past without physically transforming into a kid while the mother's age stays faithful to the past time. Thus, the mother looks younger than A himself in the sequence. This return to the past is presented in one shot through continuous camera movement. Because the character is allowed to remain in the present time while he interacts with his past as an adult in the film, he has new reactions and reflections to the same scenario. Thus, Rushton claims that “the past remains open” and “the past can be rediscovered and reinvented” in Angelopoulos' films (Rushton 242). This revisiting of the past would change how the present is perceived and how the future will be due to the change in the character's perspective. It not only connects the past and present tighter but also blurs the boundary between the real and the virtual, the fact and imagination.

I acknowledge myths as one of the inspirations of Angelopoulos' films. In addition, Deleuze's time-image is an effective interpretation of the versatile nature of his moving long takes. However, I consider the connection with myths and his cinematography as parts of the

comprehensive mythical approach that involves all filmmaking aspects, from character building to narration, and to cinematography. Instead of locking himself with particular myths, Angelopoulos transforms the literary structures, ideology, and elements into his cinematic work that features a mythical tone. This creative approach introduces a more imaginative version of realistic landscapes and events.

Theo Angelopoulos himself acknowledges the connection between myths and his work. However, he explains he “had to use the form of myth” instead of “authentic facts” because a film must be “a poetic event before anything” (70). In other words, Angelopoulos chooses to focus more on the abstract feeling of the chaotic period instead of the historical facts, the definition of good or evil, or survival in the harsh period. His urge to express abstract feelings through the form of myth may relate to its nature as a representation of human collective understanding of their history. Angelopoulos based his work on collective memory, specifically on “collective historical memory” (71). Myths reflect the same rationalization of human existence. From an anthropological perspective, many scholars share their opinion on the definition of myth as a type of folklore together with other literary types such as legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, and verse (“Definitions of Folklore” 256). Theodor H. Gaster also argues that folklores express “the temper and genius of a group rather than of an individual” (“Definitions of Folklore” 258). Thus, as a type of folklore, myths also express the perception and cognition of a group of people. They generalize and summarize individual experiences, condense collective feelings, and rationalize a sequence of events; they express them through the form of myths. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell also stresses the connections between collective emotions with myths, fairytales, and dreams after examining Sigmund Freud and Carl G. Jung’s theories. He summarizes, “[D]ream is the personalized myth, [the] myth [is] the depersonalized dream” (Campbell 14). Because the pattern of myths is often found corresponding to dreams, they also share and represent the collective emotions that are contained by dreams (Campbell 219).

Besides its close connection with collective emotions, Angelopoulos' decision on using myths as the primary inspiration may be due to frequent discussion of existence. Many myths provide explanations for the origin of human beings or explore the identity issue. Angelopoulos also declares that “the purpose of [his] films is to find a reason to exist” (69). To discuss the existential question and reinforce the mythical tone, Angelopoulos employs a set of audiovisual devices including wide shots, continuously moving long takes, and symbols. They not only establish a conversation between past and present, the conscious and the subconscious but also offer the audience a means to re-rationalize events with the characters. Through a perspective of a subjective time of an individual, Theo Angelopoulos invites the audiences to re-discover and identify themselves through mythical experience.

To understand the mythical approach, I will use Bakhtin's theory on Greek romance and Jen Eder's method of character analysis as major guidelines to analyze three of Angelopoulos' films: *Landscape in the Mist*, *Ulysses' Gaze*, and *Eternity and a Day*. They are the milestones in his career that created an international impact. His skills are also more deliberate and sophisticated compared to his other films. I will deconstruct these films from the character, narrative, and cinematographic aspects, discussing their correspondence with Greek romance's characteristics and the interplay among them. Supporting and strengthening one another, together they reach a fine place of ambiguity and create a mythical tone. It not only provides enough information for the audience to resonate with the emotional aspect, but also leaves unknown space for the audience to imagine, fill in with their experiences, and complete the story.

Mikhail M. Bakhtin's Greek romance will be a theoretical foundation to interpret Angelopoulos' mythical approach. It explains his mythical style not only as a narratological element but also as a cohesive cinematic presentation that involves all characters, narration, and cinematography. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, in a Greek romance, a hero is driven by his intense passion and travels for a long time in broad geological places. He encounters a series of events that test his passion. The story ends with fulfillment, usually as a union of lovers. Supernatural powers also play a role as a part of the unpredictable nature in the adventure — named "the power of chance" by Bakhtin. The characters in the story usually treat supernatural phenomena as normal. Without questioning its possibility, they accept its existence and focus on achieving their goal.

Angelopoulos' narration parallels this literary genre and uses cinematography to reinforce it. His constantly moving long takes not only present a form of time-image but also reveal the characters' subconsciousness projected on reality. The manifold of time within one shot creates surrealistic moments that provide the audience with a similar experience of reading a myth. Through the use of time-image, the audience also becomes a personification of time. They experience the story in an extended view that is unlimited by time, however, still subjective due to the nature of memory and imagination. It further reinforces the passiveness of characters that I will explain in the later chapters. Thus, the audiences see a mythical but harsh realistic world in his films where wonders and mundane life co-exist.

Jen Eder's "clock of character" will be another guideline to comprehend characters in Angelopoulos' films. The clock provides four aspects to examine characters as 1) artifacts, which questions how the character is represented through the audio-visual devices; 2) fictional beings, which describes the feature and relations the character possesses including his behaviors and mental state; 3) symbol, which examines the indirect meaning the character

may stand for and convey to the audience; 4) symptom, which the causes and corresponding effects of the character (21). Through the four aspects, Jen Eder encourages the viewer to study characters not only as an independent resemble of humans in real life, but also as a product of the audio-visual construction. Moreover, he further analyzes the characters in their thematic and casual context. His method becomes applicable to characters in both mainstream films and art films. Thus, it provides a comprehensive approach to analyzing the characters in Angelopoulos' films in comparison to those of mainstream films.

As a writer-director myself, I believe that the character is a primary base of a film, where the narration rests, and the cinematography builds. The character setup will influence the development of the plots. The failure to create a believable character with a cohesive personality may also threaten the plausibility of the story. Thus, the character is often the first aspect to consider and elaborate on before the narration.

In addition, the audience can only comprehend the narration through the framing, compositions, camera movements, and the order of the shots (the revealing order of information). The character's emotions, inner needs, and relationship to his situated story world may also influence the approach of the cinematography. A director can decide if the film should be shot with handheld camera movements or still frames to reflect how uncertain and anxious the character is. He can also place the character at the edge of the frame to reflect his lack of power or displaced mood. While the actions introduce a character through the social aspect (how he interacts with others), the cinematography reflects the mind of the character. As the foundation of both narration and cinematography, the character is a necessary starting point to begin the analysis to comprehend Angelopoulos' creative approach.

Therefore, I structured the paper in the following way: character, cinematography, and narration. As a consequence of the causal factors of the story world, the character is the first and final element that the audience sympathizes with. It directly reflects how the audience may relate to a film. By beginning with the character aspect, we can see how Angelopoulos relates to his audience through a particular type of characters and their inner desires.

In this thesis, I will begin the analysis of the character from its fictional aspect before I deconstruct it as an artifact. From the audience's perspective, the characteristics of a fictional being are more dominant and tangible at first glance. They include the three domains of property: corporeality, sociality, and the mind (24). The corporeality describes the external appearance and body language of the character. It includes facial expressions, gestures, postures, hairstyles, clothes, and other elements that are related to the external traits of the

body. Secondly, the sociality of the characters describes the relationships with their group, such as friendship, partnership, and nationality. It defines their social roles, power dynamic, and social status in relation to the group members. Finally, the mind of the characters indicates their inner life and personality. It defines their perception, cognition, motivation, and emotion. These three properties also exist in the cognitive process of an individual in real life. Thus, they are more intuitively perceived by the audience compared to the artifactual aspect of characters. Therefore, I will first analyze the characters as fictional beings and discuss their artifactual aspect with the analysis of the cinematography before discussing the characters as symbols and symptoms.

I will elaborate on Theo Angelopoulos' creative approach to achieving the mythical tone by examining his characters, cinematography, and narration and comparing them with the characteristic of Greek romance. By analyzing *Landscape in the Mist*, *Ulysses' Gaze*, and *Eternity and a Day*, I will present his approach to transforming the concepts of Greek romance into cinematic works. The employment of passive characters, the interchangeable time and space achieved by cinematography, and the power of chance in narration acknowledge the insignificance and vulnerability of an individual in a changing environment. It also justifies the ambiguous nature of his characters and narrations. Ambiguity, as an effective tool of Theo Angelopoulos, allows the imagination of the audience to complete the stories, thus, helping convey a richer and more condensed collective emotion through personal struggles. With a persistent character who acts against the changing external forces, Angelopoulos' films become modern myths that represent the vitality of human beings in an isolated cruel environment.

## II. Characters in Angelopoulos' Film

The characters in Theo Angelopoulos' films are often loners wandering in the world. During the journey, they are isolated, lack support, and are relatively private about their feelings. In *Landscape in the Mist*, Voula and his little brother run away from home to look for their purported father in Germany. They travel alone in the unfamiliar adult world. After they are caught by the police, their uncle refuses to take care of them. Their mother never visually appears. The audience only knows her as a voice and a shadow that suggests her presence at home. After the children run away, she never appears to look for them either. When they meet Orestes, a young man who befriends them, the children are silent about their destination and purpose. They never reveal that they are looking for their father to anyone on the road.

The same isolation also happens to the adult character. In *Ulysses' Gaze*, a Greek director A returns to his hometown after leaving for America for 35 years. His arrival and the screening of his film stimulate local conflict. However, he insists on embarking on a journey of searching for three undeveloped film reels by the Manaki brothers, which he believes could be the first gaze in the Balkan area. He appears to be isolated from support. His meetings with friends are always temporary and he also rejects anyone to join his journey. Moreover, A has trouble articulating his feelings. He does not comprehend why he is obsessed with the undeveloped reels. He also cannot explain his behaviors. For instance, when he reports his destiny to the officer at the border, he is surprised that he answers "Philipoupolis", an ancient city where Plovdiv is in Bulgaria.

The protagonist in *Eternity and a Day* embodies a sense of isolation and privateness. Alexander, as a poet who is absorbed by his work, not only misses the words to finish his writing but also misses his connections with his wife Anna. Although he still lives in his hometown, he cannot rely on his family to take care of his dog when he leaves. He also disappears from the rest of the family during their gathering. In addition, he hesitates to make connections. He often wonders about the unknown neighbor who responds to him with the same music he listens to. Although he calls this neighbor "[his] only contact with the world," he still prefers to imagine him instead of meeting him in real life. Furthermore, he avoids talking about his destiny with others, including his daughter. When Alexander wants to send the refugee boy away, he also only explains that he is leaving, concealing the fact that he will be in the hospital the next day because of a terminal illness.

Unlike characters in many mainstream films, Angelopoulos' characters often have weak or unspecified social relationships with others. They also miss distinctive personal habits, traits,

dispositions, and corresponding behaviors. In mainstream films, the protagonist often has a very specific social relationship. Taking *Joker* as an example, Arthur has situated as an illegitimate child of an ordinary mother and a political public figure. He works as a clown performing on the streets and regularly taking medicine because of his mental illness. Moreover, he has a mental condition that causes him to laugh when he feels miserable. All these conditions portray him as a very specific and unique individual in his story world. Sherlock Holmes in the renowned BBC TV series *Sherlock* (2012 - 2017) is also an example of a character in mainstream work. He investigates criminal cases with his roommate John Watson while his older brother works for the British government. He is also a drug addict and will shoot walls with his gun when he becomes bored ("The Great Game"). On the contrary, Angelopoulos only defines his characters through their social types (their profession, their roles in their family): a girl who misses her father (in *Landscape in the Mist*); a director who has left home for 35 years (in *Ulysses' Gaze*); a poet who regrets about his wife and cannot find his words (in *Eternity and a Day*). The audience does not know more than their basic social roles and professions. Compared to characters like Arthur and Sherlock Holmes, the characters in Angelopoulos' films lack the traits or experiences that separate them from the majority of individuals. This generality makes them a closer portrait of ordinary individuals in real life.

Compared to the mainstream characters, Angelopoulos portrays his protagonists in a more passive way. The passiveness of a character in a film is often interpreted as "not taking action" in a situation. Instead of actively seeking a solution, a character may sit aside, wait, or observe the situation without any attempt to make changes. The usage of a passive protagonist is often discouraged in the industry since is considered less appealing to the audience. However, Angelopoulos presents another type of passiveness in his films. While his protagonists are occasionally acting as observers, they are also lacking more control over their situation. The initiation of a new event is not because of their decision, but other external causes, such as sudden change of weather, war, or incidents that lacks direct relations to their pursuits. This lack of initiation is also a sign of passiveness which was increasingly seen during the covid time when personal plans were often interrupted by the sudden change of policies and increasing infection cases. Thus, the passiveness of a character is not only measured by the frequency of actions but also measured by the source of the initiation of the event and the action. Characters can appear more passive or active in different stages of the story. The activeness and passiveness of a character can be judged by the density and frequency of the conscious decision-making moments.

In mainstream films, the protagonists' distinctive personalities and dispositions are the crucial attributions of their actions. As Jens Eder suggested, "[T]he mainstream film ... conveys an

image of humanity that pictures humans as active, reflective, rational, emotional, morally unambiguous, comprehensible, coherent, and autonomous” (Eder 28). An individual should appear to be autonomous under the value of mainstream films. The will of an individual is more effective in the development of the events than other external factors.

In *Parasite*, for instance, the Kims family constantly plots their way towards their goal despite the obstacles. A friend of their son brings the opportunity of tutoring in a rich family to the poor Kim family by chance. Because the son desires to become an undergraduate student and become a person with a higher social status, he decides to fake a diploma to take the offer. The entire Kim family eventually schemes into the rich family and each gets a job in the house. The decisions are made out of their will without being imposed on them. When their scheme is threatened to be revealed by the previous housekeeper and her husband, the Kims still return to the rich household to attend the party the next day while each tries to solve the situation separately. Knowing that the previous housekeeper and her husband are locked in the secret underground bunker, the son tries to kill them while the mother attempts to serve them food to keep them alive. However, because of the son’s attempt, the husband has a chance to escape from the bunker and initiates fatal chaos in the house.

On the contrary, the characters in Angelopoulos’ films often become observers in a memory or sudden incident. The attribution of their actions is also often an external force (the threat of the surroundings) that enforces them to escape and take a quest. Compared to the Kims in *Parasite*, the children in *Landscape in the Mist* often find themselves in a passive situation beyond their control. They encounter a dying horse that they cannot save. They encounter the traveling players who are at the end of their careers, but they do not have the power to help. They also have to escape from the ticket inspectors and a rapist due to their lack of money and physical strength. Ultimately, they often have to follow the instructions of their temporary caregiver at that moment. They either witness the change in their life with little strength to interfere, or they have to escape due to the threat.

While *A* in *Ulysses’ Gaze* flounders through the incidents caused by war and weather, he reveals his passiveness in his perplexing encounters with memories. He often wakes up in an unknown place and faces a woman with a familiar face. Instead of immediately escaping from it, he simply follows her lead and allows things to happen. He only returns to his journey later after a certain amount of time. *A* suddenly encounters his young mother on the train and re-experiences his past. He seems to be dominated by his time instead of him dominating it. Failing to comprehend it as the audience, *A* touches his young mother’s face to test if it is real. Compared to characters like Arthur, *A* lacks a full understanding of his actions. The



reason behind his actions is ambiguous. His journey is often influenced by external forces, including his body.

Alexander in *Eternity and a Day* is relatively more active compared to the children and director A. However, he also becomes an observer of the refugee boy's story after he sends away his dog. He experiences the death of Selim, a very good friend of the refugee boy. They also become pure observers in the last bus ride, simply watching the excerpts of the passengers' life. As director A, Alexander is often taken away by the sudden interruption of Anna's memory. Although he shows less confusion than A does since he returns to a peaceful family reunion, Alexander remains an observer most of the time in those memories.

When the changing surroundings restrain the characters in Angelopoulos' films, their ambivalent state also contributes to their passiveness. Although they have various ages and genders, these characters all struggle in the transition between the two stages of their lives. Voula, the older sister in *Landscape in the Mist*, is challenged to behave as an adult in their journey. Without her parents, she has to mimic the adults' behavior around her to board the train, earn money, seek help on the road, and take a ride. In her early teenage year, she is also physically becoming a young lady with sexuality but mentally remains like a child. This complexity positions her in an ambivalent role when she confronts an older male character alone. Their attitudes towards her are ambiguous; it is often a question if they see her with sexual intention. Meanwhile, Voula also develops an ambivalent attitude towards herself. After being raped once, Voula attempts to earn money with her sexuality. She determinedly follows a young soldier to an isolated space between the trains when he shows a clear sexual intention towards her. In the middle stage of being a half-child and half-adult, Voula becomes ambivalent existence for herself and the people around her.

The ambivalence between the two roles also exists in A in *Ulysses' Gaze* and Alexander in *Eternity and a Day*. Returning to his hometown after 35 years, A becomes a foreigner in reality although he was born there. He sees the entire town has changed. When he mentioned how it used to be, the young generation does not resonate at all. The return to the town is supposed to be a return to home, an event with a warm loving nature. However, his return incites an ideological conflict and his film is driven out of the local cinema. Thus, he has an ambivalent role as both a local and a foreigner; the perception and attitude of the local citizens towards him are ambivalent, even contradictory. Moreover, he suffers from his role as a lover and a fanatic film director. On one hand, his obsession with the undeveloped film reels urges him to travel across the Balkans and search for it. He feels restless when this potential first glance is still missing. On the other hand, he bears the burden of a forsaking lover. Before the journey begins, he sees a woman with her face at his hometown, he

narrates, "I wish I could tell you I've returned, but something is holding me back. The journey isn't over. Not yet" (00:16:24). Later, he sees her face on the women he meets during the journey and in his dream. The memory about her also haunts the present moment when the girl he meets in Sarajevo suddenly acts like the woman in his memory. A naturally holds her and promises his return. He urges to leave for the undeveloped reels but feels the pain to leave his lover behind. This conflicting feeling reveals his ambivalent self-identify.

The same ambivalence also emerges when Alexander in *Eternity and a Day* struggles between his professional role and his domestic role. As a poet, he cannot find the words he needs to finish his poetry. As a husband, he regrets that he did not spend more time with his wife Anna. He returns to the memory of Anna on the day of their family reunion and re-experiences the day. However, he eventually irritates Anna again because he will not spare some time for her. His passion as a writer still calls him away from his family and lowers his presence as a husband and father.

The ambivalent attitude is manifested in their actions through the discontinuation of their course of the journey. In *Landscape in the Mist*, the children often diverge from their journey, linger on their encounters, and postpone their departures. When they meet someone, they may stay with them for a certain long time and observe their events before they finally decide to return to their journey and search for their father again. Orestes says to the children, "[you] don't care about time going by...and yet I know you're in a hurry to leave...It's as if you're going nowhere" (00:45:59 - 00:46:27).

Similarly, the characters in *Ulysses's Gaze* and *Eternity and a Day* are distracted by their memory and imagination, diverging from their main course. In addition, they do not reveal an immediate urge to return to their main course and pursue their goal. The Manaki brothers' memory suddenly interrupts A's reality when he is taken to border control on the way to Plovdiv (00:45:46 - 00:50:06). As a consequence, he is taken away by the soldiers and is about to be executed. He follows the arrangement until the soldiers disappear themselves. He returns to the border again and the inspector asks him the same question as if nothing has happened before. His memory of his family interrupts reality in the same way. He is taken away by his mother back to their home and celebrates New Year(s) with the entire family. The celebration ends with him waking up in bed. Similarly, Alexander is taken away by Anna's memory. He often hears the sound of their family reunion and finds himself returned to that day and the house next to the beach.

Despite diverging from their journey, Angelopoulos' characters still possess strong motivations. They always resume pursuing their goal even though they may linger with other

characters for a while. However, their motivations are internal and intangible. The character often searches for a thing or an individual that is believed to be lost or missing. The children in the *Landscape in the Mist* search for their father which, according to their uncle, is a lie. However, Voula refuses to believe it and continues the journey after the revelation of this news. Director A in *Ulysses' Gaze* searches for the undeveloped film reels that are believed to be lost. Alexander in *The Eternity and a Day* has been searching for the words to finish his poems for a long time when the film begins. He cannot find his words until the refugee boy brings them to him.

In a mainstream film, the character's primary motivation is often a concrete desire for love, higher social status, and accomplishment. These motivations remain at the personal level and will be fulfilled by changing their relationship, social positions, or rewards from others. However, the missing things or individuals as motivations are more intangible and reflect the inner need of a character. A person is unsure of the precise way to fulfill it. Their existence is also often a question to the majority of the story. When they are revealed in the film, they emerge more as a metaphor or a concept. At the end of *Landscape in the Mist*, the children successfully cross the border and hug a tree in the field as if it is their home. The father never appears in any form. In *Ulysses' Gaze*, A finds the undeveloped reels of the Manaki brothers and plays them in the cinema alone. However, the content of the reels remains secret in the film. Similarly, in *Eternity and a Day*, Alexander has been trying to finish the poetry but misses the words. Although the audiences hear the words he gains from the boy, the poem never appears. Thus, the pursuit of a missing thing or individual is merely a disguise of the represented concepts — the origin, the innocence, value of oneself. These concepts can be summarized as self-identity.

In *Landscape in the Mist*, the father represents one's origin. He defines the existence of a person in a biological way. The children's endless search for their father implies a journey of understanding their origin and establishing their existence apart from their mother. The undeveloped film reels become a symbol that reflects one's innocence — the initial way of being before the interference of the social system. In *Ulysses' Gaze*, A feels his gaze is lost since he could not capture an olive tree he saw with his Polaris. Thus, when he learns about the undeveloped reels by the Manaki brothers, he thinks they are "the lost glance, the lost innocence" (00:38:40 - 00:43:00) as if his first glance that is lost long ago. In *Eternity and a Day*, the missing words are the missing expression that Alexander wants to deliver. It is a part of him that he fails to identify and label until he finds those words with the refugee boy. The identification of the missing words parallels the process of his self-identification. With the words regained, he can continue with his writing, and his existence as a poet.

The perseverance of the characters functions as a foil to their obsession, passion, and love. Their ambivalence becomes a counterpart of their passion, constantly pulling them away from their goal. Only by repeatedly diverging and returning to their initial journeys, do the characters reinforce their belief one time after another. Thus, instead of the transformation of the character, their stories emphasize on the self-affirmation of the character, which I will discuss in a later chapter.

The characters in Angelopoulos' films are often isolated and private individuals traveling across a wide space, searching for a purported missing thing or an individual. They often hold an ambivalent identity caused by dual social roles. Besides, they act in a relatively passive way due to the unfamiliarity of their situation. Thus, they often diverge from their journey and experience events as observers. They are also forced to react to unexpected threats initiated by external factors. However, they still return to their journey and continue pursuing their goal in the end. The repetitive process of diverging and returning functions as a means to affirm their belief and strengthen their faith. The same characteristics also reveal in the characters of Greek romance mentioned by Mikhail Bakhtin.

## **2.1 Bakhtin's Greek Romance**

While the distinctive characteristics of the narrative in Greek romance will be discussed in the later chapter, the introduction of its general patterns of plots is necessary before the discussion of its characters' traits. Bakhtin considers the Greek romance as the "adventure novel of ordeal" (Bakhtin 86). The plots are similar to a love story where two lovers have affection for each other at first sight and try to overcome all the obstacles to reach a union. Thus, the passion between the two parties becomes the indispensable disposition of the protagonist and the drive in the story. This passion is being tested under ordeals, evolves as something sempiternal, and is finally fulfilled by the union of the two parties in various forms. Angelopoulos allows his characters to share the same intensity of passion, however, he extends it beyond the perspective of a romantic relationship. The passion between the two parties in Angelopoulos' films exists not only between the lovers but also between parents and their children, a person and his beloved object. More importantly, this love also exists between a person and a conceptual idea.

The character's perseverance in searching for the missing things reveals an intense passion as it exists in Greek romance. The characters insist on their belief despite the objections from others and dangers in the journey. Voula in *Landscape in the Mist* refuses to believe in their uncle when he disavows the existence of the father. She continues embarking on the journey

afterwards. When the children successfully cross the border and run to a tree, the physical existence of the father seems insignificant. Instead of the actual physical father figure, they seem to retain the idea of him throughout the film. Director *A* in *Ulysses' Gaze* never abandons the thought of the undeveloped reels even though it is first believed to be lost. Then, after he learns that it may be in Sarajevo, he decides to leave for it immediately regardless of the war. Like the father in *Landscape in the Mist*, the audience never has a chance to learn about the reels. The content of the reels remains a secret till the end. Throughout the film, *A* seems to be chasing a mere concept of the undeveloped reels that represents the first gaze in the Balkan countries. His faithful passion for the film reels parallels the enthusiastic love in a romance. Similarly, Alexander in *Eternity and a Day* continues searching for his words on the last day before admitting to the hospital. Words, as language, are intangible concept that possesses the significance of complex emotions. This complexity may be lost during the translation of the words. Reversely, Alexander misses the words that indicate his complex emotions, and thus, cannot precisely express his feelings. However, he hears the words from the refugee boy and resonates with them. Through the boy's words, Alexander rediscovers his language and identifies his feelings. He eventually decides to continue his job as a poet regardless of his terminal disease. This chemistry stimulated by the resonation of words assembles the moment in an encounter between lovers. This persistence in a concept reflects their passion and empowers them to confront an isolated lonely journey, even though it means acting against the world.

This extreme passion and persistence also exist as a critical drive in many other Greek myths. For instance, the story of Narcissus tells about a beautiful young man's obsession with himself. He falls in love with his reflection in the water and eventually dies from it. The story is driven by his extreme passion for his image. Phaeton is also a hero who is passionate about the new identity — a more privileged existence. The story begins with him learning that he is the son of Apollo and asks Apollo for affirmation. Apollo must prove their relationship by allowing Phaeton to drive his chariot. Furthermore, his love of this new identity drives him to seek further affirmation by exercising his right as the son of a god.

The unusual passion — on both the personal and internal level — allows Angelopoulos to create a rare but still seemingly possible situation, distancing the audience from everyday life even though the story world is not fictional. With these forlorn characters as the foundation, Angelopoulos tints his films with the same epic poignant tone — one of the common impressions of mythical stories.

While describing Greek romance, Bakhtin also considers passiveness as one of the critical qualities of a character. Because the incidents are driven by the “force of chance” in this type

of story, which I will explain more in the later chapter, an individual can only be “a mere physical subject of the action” (105). In other words, a character becomes a carrier of the action that is initiated by external forces, such as nature, authorities, divine forces, or other side characters. When a character reacts to an incident instead of initiating it, Bakhtin considers him a passive character even if he makes choices to solve the problems:

In essence, all the character’s actions in Greek romance are reduced to enforced movement through space (escape, persecution, quests), that is to a change in spatial location. (105)

Thus, active actions such as escape, persecution, and quests that force a character to change his location will also be indicators of passiveness.

The passiveness and activeness of a character are opposite but not contradictory. They are relative qualities that may coexist within one character depending on a reader’s approach to viewing the events. For instance, Odysseus can be considered as passive because he is often forced to react to divine power or consequence caused by other people’s deeds on his journey back home. The entire process is interrupted and delayed several times before he can reach his homeland. However, a reader like Joseph Campbell could also argue that Odysseus is an active character because he is always in action solving problems. The statement is true when a reader separates the entire book of *The Odyssey* into sections based on the antagonists. When Joseph Campbell uses *The Odyssey* as evidence of his hero’s journey in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, he considers it as “a number of independent cycles of [the hero’s journey] into a single series” (212). In other words, only when the readers dissect the entire book into multiple segments of stories based on the location, do they recognize the necessary feature of a hero defined by Joseph Campbell, seeing him as an active autonomous individual who completes a transformation. Therefore, the passiveness and activeness of a character depend on the perspective of the readers. A character may possess both qualities to various extents especially when the story contains a long period of time and broad spatial changes.

Based on the previous analysis, the protagonists in Angelopoulos’ films share the same passivity. Although they are taking action to proceed with their journey, they are often forced to react to sudden unexpected changes. When they encounter a supporting character and his events, they remain as observers without the urge to leave or interfere. Compared to the characters in mainstream films, they often pause their journey to experience other characters’ lives before they resume again. They allow other unrelated events to interrupt their pursuit; thus, they appear to be more passive than the mainstream characters. This ability to return to their initial goal after numerous interruptions become evidence of their unchanging self.

An unchanging self-identity differentiates characters in Greek romance from those in other story types. Bakhtin explains, “[t]he character keeps on being the same person and emerges from this game, from all these turns of fate and chance, with his identity absolutely unchanged” (105). In other words, the character plays against the changing situations by remaining his identity while, in contrast, the character portrait in mainstream films often emphasizes the transformation of a character. The hero has to achieve certain changes in competence, social status, relationships, financial situation, and so on. Besides the insistence on the initial thoughts, the persistence of self-identity is also revealed through other common devices that externalize internal concerns about identities. The motif of meeting and separation, which identifies this story structure, could influence a character’s definition of himself. Many other devices — such as recognition, disguise, temporary changes of dress, presumed death, and presumed betrayal — also reflect the trait of human identity (Bakhtin 106).

Angelopoulos’ character arc is closer to Bakhtin’s approach rather than the mainstream approach. The characters pursue an affirmation of their identities instead of transformations. The happy ending is not about the hero achieving a new stage of his life, but remaining the initial self from the beginning of the story. In *Landscape in the Mist*, they always persist on the journey to Germany although Voula considered giving up. “What’s the use of carrying on?” she exclaims during the journey (01:09:59). However, her brother disavows the idea of giving up so they continue traveling. In the end, they arrive at a field with only one tree standing alone in the middle. It assembles the image of the Garden of Eden. Voula’s brother announces that they are in Germany and tells the same story that Voula tells at the beginning of the film, “In the beginning was darkness, and then there was light” (02:01:43). The repetition of the story functions as a ritual to confirm their return to their father, their origin, and their initial selves in a symbolic way.

At the end of *Ulysses’ Gaze*, Director A finally screens the undeveloped reels. It only shows white flickers on the screen. Watching it, he declares his unchanging inner self with a statement:

When I return, it will be with another man’s clothes, another man’s name...If you look at me...and say, you’re not here, I will show you signs and you will believe me. I will tell you about the lemon tree in your garden. The cool window that lit in the moonlight. And then signs of the body, signs of love. And as we climb, trembling to our old room...I will tell you about the journey, all the night long, and all the nights to come...(2:44:30)

A affirms that his memory, passion, and the historical marks on his body will tell his true identity even though his physical appearance may change. He is still the man in love, remembering the details of his lovers and his home. The endless ordeals never change him.

In *Eternity and a Day*, Alexander's statement of his unchanging self reveals when he meets Anna in his memory for the last time. He tells her:

I won't go to the hospital...I'd like to make projects for tomorrow. The unknown neighbor will always answer to me with the same music. And there will always be someone who sells me words. (2:09:10)

Alexander is ready to continue his previous work and the same life he has been having since the beginning of the story. This time, the neighbor and the missing words are hope that waits for him to pursue and fulfill. He returns to the same enthusiastic poet who revives things through words.

The passivity of a character and the identity issue are both crucial elements to construct the mythical tone of a story. Passiveness implies unpredictable and unknown external situations; identity issue implies the potential loss of direction, because of the internal uncertainty of one's purpose or misjudgment of oneself.

The constant change of space in Greek romance, especially the change to an unfamiliar location to the characters, increases the passivity in them; thus, the sense of unsettling and mystery rises. As the protagonist is generalized and becomes more of an ordinary human in Angelopoulos' films, the audience faces the unknown with the protagonist and explores the alien situation alone. The same pattern often repeats in Greek mythologies where the hero or heroine has to travel into an unknown world alone to accomplish a certain task. Psyche, as a mortal, travels to different worlds alone to find Cupid, and confronts the challenge from the gods. The journey is filled with uncertainties and foreshadows hardships, especially when there is no promising support. The increasing sense of uncertainty and loneliness catalyzes a more mythical tone in a story.

In addition, identity is a common motif in Greek mythologies. Two distinctive examples are the stories of Phaeton and Odysseus. Phaeton is told by his mother Clymene that he is the son of Apollo, so he visits Apollo for proof of his identity. Apollo verbally confirms it and promises to provide him with a gift to end his doubt. When Phaeton wants to drive the chariot of the sun for a day, Apollo reneges on his promise, fearing Phaeton's power is too limited as a mortal to control the chariot. Phaeton insists and makes Apollo compromise. However,



when Phaeton rides the chariot, he loses control of it so heaven, earth, and sea perish because of its heat. All the animals, humans, and gods suffer from it. To stop the destruction, Zeus has to murder Phaeton with his thunderbolt (Bulfinch ch. 5). To seek proof of his identity, Phaeton brings himself into self-destruction as a consequence of an overestimation of his capability.

In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus finally reaches his homeland after 20 years of traveling. His identity is threatened by the suitors who occupy his house. He has lost all his crew and ships when he arrives in his homeland. To reclaim his position of chief from the suitors, Odysseus has to disguise himself as a beggar — a role that can be admitted into the hall at his time. Under the disguise, he proves his identity to his previous followers with a scar on his feet (Homer bk. 19). Facing the challenge of the suitors, he proves himself through his strength by stringing his bow and shooting his arrow (Homer bk. 20) — it was a bow that only he had the strength to master. When his wife Penelope doubts Odysseus' identity, he affirms to her by describing the immobility of their bridal bed which is built around the trunk of an olive tree (Homer bk. 23). Thus, he finally reclaims the loyalty and trust of his fellows and families with his physical appearance, strong capability, and personal memory. After the ordeals on the trip and the loss of all he has, he reclaims his position in his household through a series of affirmations of both personal and social identities. He is not only biologically the same person with the crucial physical marks, but also mentally the same person equipped with the same skills and memories. These internal traits of Odysseus do not change with his adventure. The similar motif creates an association among Angelopoulos' films, Greek romance, and mythologies, thus further providing a mythical tone to Angelopoulos' stories.

Angelopoulos attracts his audience through the same motif. Additionally, he increases the passiveness of an individual and emphasizes the unpredictable surroundings. In the context of historical changes, when people feel powerless against the drastic changes in society in general, more audiences could resonate with his characters and be further impressed by their persistence against adversity.

## **2.2 The Aesthetics and Symbolism of Characters**

Angelopoulos' protagonists are isolated, private, and passive individuals traveling in a foreign land or emotionally distant world with faith in their pursuits and belief. On one hand, they embody the shared loss and helplessness that human beings often experience in a variety of stages in their lives, especially in their early childhood, adolescence, and middle age. On the other hand, they convey the insignificance of individual value under the pressure of changing

social landscape of the 20th century. Under wars, dictatorships, and reforming society, the inner self becomes the only thing that an individual was capable to retain.

Moreover, his supporting characters also symbolize the prevalent characteristics of ordinary people. Orestes in *Landscape in the Mist* is a young adult who is drafted into the military and about to depart for his duty. He explicitly says to the children that he does not know where to go. As a young adult, he seems to have more control of his life than the children, however, he still feels the same insecurity about his future as many of the modern generations do. The traveling players, on the other hand, represent another group of a generation who refuses to change and forget. They always perform the same play regardless of the time and place. Their act of reciting lines from the play becomes a symbolic gesture of reinforcing memories, a certain narrative of their past that may be lost in time and the mass of misinformation.

In *Ulysses' Gaze*, the three women who share the same face become the most versatile symbol. They not only perform as part of the story's reality but also as a reflection of A's desire. The longing for a woman becomes many attempts in reality. Similarly, the refugee boy in *Eternity and a Day* also becomes a symbol of Alexander's inner feelings. Following the boy, Alexander experiences fear, loneliness, and sensitivity. More importantly, the boy helps him find the words that resonate with his feelings — his language. Besides existing as a real character in the story, the refugee boy also represents Alexander's inner self. The encounter with the boy also implies an encounter with one's pure state of being as an innocent and sensitive child.

The emotions carried in these characters are universal enough that can be comprehended by the audience without the context. The spectators can resonate with them on an emotional level without knowing the details of their personal history, their time, and the specialty of their culture. On the contrary, they can easily draw similar experiences based on their cultures and history. The wide application of symbolic characters is also a common trope in literature, especially in Greek myths. While each god represents a particular virtue (Athena as the god of wisdom) or a purpose (Hermes as the messenger), the mortals often embody the depravity or flaws of human beings. For example, Psyche is a mortal girl who cannot resist her curiosity. She also suffers from the separation from her lover Cupid because of it. In *The Iliad of Homer*, Helen of Troy, who is believed to be the most beautiful woman, also becomes the incite of the Troy War. She also symbolizes the primary desire of humans and implies the potential consequence of it. These mythological characters represent universal qualities of human beings that can be found in modern society. Although the stories are set in mysterious alien places in ancient times, the readers can still see their state of being in those characters.

In parallel, the spectators recognize their own emotions through the mythical symbolic characters.

Angelopoulos' character features a strong passion for their pursuit, passiveness, and an unchanging self. Their obsession with their goal allows them to ignore external influences, react in passive situations, and remain for initial purposes. These features correspond to Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of the characters in Greek romance, a literary structure that supports many of the Greek myths. It emphasizes the influence of unpredictable circumstances (as the power of chance refers to in the later chapter) over the willpower of the individual; it challenges its protagonists with external dangers that are often beyond their understanding. Although the protagonists seem to be ordinary people who lack distinct traits, their persistence in their initial goal and their purpose under severe circumstances make them heroic, thus, more than ordinary. Therefore, the seek for affirmation of their identity becomes the core of the story, which is also the repetitive motif in both Angelopoulos' films and many other myths. Moreover, Angelopoulos' characters are generalized but convey versatile meanings. Thus, they can be perceived and interpreted as mythological characters who are mysterious — due to the lack of concrete personal details — but symbolic. Besides existing as real characters in the story world, they embody a collective emotion, a state of being that is universal enough to be comprehended by the global audience. Angelopoulos' films are mythical in the most fundamental element of his stories. Separated from the moral values and political stands, his characters become accessible to audiences with a diversity of opinions. Their qualities as mythological characters allow the global audience to connect with them even without understanding the historical context of the stories and regardless of the distinctive beliefs of individuals.

### III. Angelopoulos' Cinematography

Angelopoulos' characters are private and isolated individuals. They are relatively passive, being forced to react to accidents. Unlike conventional characters who achieve their transformation at the end of the journey, they seek affirmation of their belief and are challenged to stay unchanged. Angelopoulos also supports these characters' traits by using long wide shots to stay distant from them and de-dramatize their actions. He emphasizes their perception of the world instead of the power of their will. Combined with the continuous slow but smooth movement of the camera, Angelopoulos generalizes his characters while portraying landscape and time almost like independent characters. In such a manner, he creates a mythical world that is greater than conventional reality, even though there is no perceivable magical power.

Angelopoulos is known for his long moving takes and long lens. He combines these two techniques and makes the landscapes become the center of his frame. The characters, instead, are placed in the landscape far away from the camera. Because the long lens flattens images, any movement in the frame will become rhythmically moving patterns and abstract geometries. The characters are also depersonalized as anonymous figures. They are not more specific than "a girl in the village" "a poet" or "a director who left home". This staging also amplifies the character's isolation and passiveness. Because Angelopoulos places the dramatic actions far away from the camera, the actors often need to deliver the emotions through physical actions instead of subtle facial expressions. As a result, the characters appear to be more private and isolated. In addition, these wide landscape shots emphasize the passive side of a character. Because there is barely a close-up of the character to show their realization moment or a change of recognition, the audience does not perceive the decision-making moments that prove the active side of a character. Thus, their actions become a forced reaction toward external changes.

This emphasis on an individual's passiveness and the power of the landscape could be a result of the Greeks' long struggles with their living environment. Garland explains:

It is a landscape that is unfriendly to humans... The mountains are forbidding, the vegetation sparse, the trees few, the soil poor and stony, and the climate harsh. Only a few of the valleys — one-fifth of the total land surface — are capable of supporting agriculture and cattle rearing on a significant scale. (37)

In addition to the brutal landscape, the climate and sea are also unpredictable. While the summers are hot and dry, the falls have frequent outbursts of rain (Garland 38). The sea is also a central motif in Homer's *The Odyssey*. He portrays the unpredictable sea as the wrath of the sea god Poseidon who prevented Odysseus from returning home for nine years (Garland 38).

The landscape not only provides a setting for the characters' backgrounds but also plays a critical role in changing the fates of the characters. As a significant element of the landscape, weather often suddenly changes in Angelopoulos' films and drives the plots. In *Ulysses' Gaze*, fog brings a brief moment of joy to the war zone in Sarajevo, but eventually causes the murder of the whole family in the mist. In *Landscape in the Mist*, sudden snow attracts every adult's attention and allows the children to escape from the police station. In *Eternity and a Day*, a sudden rain makes Alexander realize his love for his wife so he begins to look for her.

Functioning as both story background and changing environment, landscapes play the same crucial role as it does in Greek romance. The unpredictable coming events play as ordeals in adventure; it often tests the protagonists' ability, hindering them from their pursuit. Thus, their identity is challenged in the changing landscapes; the affirmation arrives when they persist on their journey regardless of the situation. This unpredictability also makes the landscape a substitute element for gods' power in myths. Paralleling Poseidon's raging waves in myths, which destroy the sailors' boats, the changing environment in Angelopoulos' films also affects the course of the journey, forcing a sudden twist in the plots. Besides, Angelopoulos occasionally moves the camera to a high angle, forming a wide shot of both the characters and the background from the same height of a building. The framing provides a more powerful perspective of the landscape, which is distant and detached from the events. Therefore, the landscape, as if a character, causes incidents with its changing weather and witnesses the protagonists' journey.

Moreover, the long takes present multiple dimensions of time together. The past and present flow into each other and provide the audience the possibility to view the perspective of time. In *Ulysses' Gaze*, the long take covers both the present and past without editing. The character A, who stays in his present appearance, walks into his past and meets with his mother who looks even younger than he is (00:53:55 - 01:07:13; see Figure 1). As the sequence continues, the audience watches the changes in his family during each New Year's Eve (see Figure 2) and does not realize it could be a dream or memory until the next shot when he suddenly wakes up in a warehouse. The sequence exists first as a part of reality because it unfolds as a continuation of the present time. In addition, the color and lighting are

also consistent. The characters from both past and present also interact with each other without too many surprises. Thus, the audience perceives the sequence as reality when they follow A's perspective and experience the scene as he does.



Fig. 1. Still from Angelopoulos, *Ulysses' Gaze* (00:55:23).



Fig. 2. Still from Angelopoulos, *Ulysses' Gaze* (00:59:24).

However, this moving long camera movement further enriches the meaning of reality. With a clear indication of the year during New Year's Eve, both character and the audience re-experience the past in the present moment. The characters will clarify the year number by exclaiming "Happy 1948" and "Happy 1950". Thus, the audience learns that this shot depicts several nights, instead of just one single night. Through the protagonist's eyes, the audience watches the past events through their present self. Thus, the images in this long take become a re-interpretation of the past event. In one single shot, there are both past and present, virtuality (memory, dream, and imagination) and reality without distinguishing them through color or lighting. Angelopoulos defines the past as an integral part of the present:

The past is not forgotten, it affects everything we do in the present. Every moment of our lives consists of the past and the present, the real and the imaginary, all of them blending into one. (98)

Therefore, the past shapes the present while the present also shapes the past; reality is the source of imagination but also influenced by it. This duality in Angelopoulos' cinematography sublimates the seemingly realistic shot into a surrealist image. These multi-levels of consciousness and reality are a substitute for the supernatural power in myths.

Furthermore, this duality also resembles a commonly seen feature in myths where the protagonists are challenged by creatures from different realms, including the human world, heaven, and hell. In parallel, Angelopoulos' protagonists have to experience the events from the past and their minds as part of reality. One of the primary functions of myths is to help human beings interpret and understand their past events through narration. Angelopoulos'

films show the audience this process of reinterpretation through a long take that contains multiple dimensions of time.

Angelopoulos asserts that his film language is based on “expanding the dimension of time” (64). Because of the nature of his cinematography, he transfers the perspective of the camera into a perception of “time” itself which is a mixture of different historical times, consciousness, and even unconsciousness. The audiences are usually subject to time, which is out of their control. However, in a film-watching experience, the camera becomes the audience's eyes; it moves for the audience and sees for the audience. As the camera captures the multiple layers of time within an image, the audience also sees it. Thus, as they observe through the camera, which is a perception of “time” itself, they see the reality within the film from the dimension of time. Therefore, the audience becomes the personification of time – one of the factors that allow them to perceive surrealistic experiences in films.



Fig. 3. Still from Angelopoulos, *Ulysses' Gaze* (01:17:07 - 01:17:42).

Angelopoulos' wide continuous long takes become less objective when he also insists on using only one camera angle for each scene (Angelopoulos 72). They represent the subjective perception of reality through the protagonist's eyes. Thus, the police officers in *Landscape in the Mist* suddenly freeze when the snow falls; the women in *Ulysses' Gaze* have the same face; the ancient poet appears as Alexander tells the story in *Eternity and a Day*. The surrealistic moments are justified by the subjective aesthetic.

### 3.1 Symbolism and Aesthetics of Cinematography

Angelopoulos's cinematography often has room for symbolic interpretations. It becomes more and more prominent as his films became known by the global audience. By using

symbolic images, he not only represents a collective memory to the audience but also creates a surrealistic tone that brings a mythical atmosphere to his films.

In *Ulysses' Gaze*, the first film he collaborated with an American actor, Angelopoulos constructed a scene where a broken Lenin statue is stored in a boat (see Figure 3). As it drifts down the river, the peasants follow it and make the sign of a cross. As this sequence represents an end of a period, the contrast of the sizes between the statue and the peasants may remind the audience of the imageries in myths, where giants and mortals confront each other. The mortals become insignificant and fragile in the images. The way people treat the broken statue also gives the moment a sense of divinity. Paradoxically, this magnificent cinematic moment was inspired by a realistic situation. Angelopoulos explained the inspiration for this scene:

I had prepared the sequence beforehand, but the idea of having the peasants watching it float down the Danube and crossing themselves as it went by originated with something I saw in Constanza, a Romanian port on the Black Sea. A crane was moving a huge head of Lenin from a ship to a barge, when a fishing boat just happened by. The couple on it, a man and a woman, stood up, shocked, as if Lenin had just come back to life. The woman covered the man's eyes and instinctively made the sign of the cross. (138)

To make it into a bigger-than-life moment, Angelopoulos increases the number of people who are watching. Instead of only the head of Lenin, he puts the entire dissected statue on a boat.



Fig. 4. Still from Angelopoulos, *Landscape in the Mist* (01:13:33).



Fig. 5. Still from Angelopoulos, *Eternity and a Day* (00:51:42).

A more implicit and conventional instance will be the huge factory machine that is activated as a gigantic monster in *Landscape in the Mist* (see Figure 4). It stands alone in silence, abandoned and isolated from civilizations. However, it suddenly illuminates and turns its gears towards the children as soon as they run closer. With the long siren sound, it animates



as if it hears them. More symbols fill in the major storyline — the piece of film that Orestes found on the ground, the unfinished spiral stairway that leads to nowhere, and the giant stone hand emerging from the river pointing to somewhere (01:20:17). To Angelopoulos, these symbolic elements are “means of escaping the confines of the simple narrative, exploration of surreal world” (63). They enrich the plots and allow people to ponder on the scene beyond the context provided within the film. These symbols cause the audience to contemplate and dive into their inner world, and their feelings towards life. However, there is no single interpretation of these symbols while they convey a certain mood and atmosphere. The inexplicability of symbols adds to the mythical atmosphere of the film. The human character often feels attracted to incomprehensible signs in front of them. These signs could be considered as a result of divine action but also could be seen as the trace of nature and history, or subjective perception of an individual mind. Angelopoulos takes advantage of this ambiguity and creates a mythical mood with relatively realistic settings.

In *Eternity and a Day*, Angelopoulos presents a surrealistic border in the scene where Alexander sends the refugee boy back to Albania. In the mist, a high fence with people’s silhouettes hanging on it creates a feeling of uncertainty, loss, and fear (see Figure 5). This surrealistic border not only reflects the protagonist’s emotion but also functions as a threshold between the familiar human world and the unknown non-human world in myths. Angelopoulos explains:

The border with this threatening wire fence is a frontier in Alexander himself. The boy only helps him to face his inner conflict, and the boy gives Alexander a reason to travel through the key moments of his life, to remember the happy moments he had with his late wife Anna. (118)

On one hand, the fence appears as a part of a materialistic world, representing the border of two nations. On the other hand, it represents Alexander’s border between his rational consciousness and inner feelings. Rationally thinking, he knows he should give up the poetry and goes to the hospital. However, his inner impulse tells him to continue working as a poet. As the hero in myths, Alexander is tested by this threatening fence in himself and undergoes a journey of self-affirmation. Like many of his long takes, Angelopoulos’ objects and settings in the film also contain the duality of reality and virtuality. They could both represent reality and the character’s imagination. As a result, a subtle alienation happens even though every objects and setting are similar to those in reality. This feeling accumulates and further leads to a mythical atmosphere.

Angelopoulos deliberately chooses the approach to present his characters and reinforce their passiveness and unchanging nature under the unpredictable environment. He first uses wide shots to emphasize the role of landscapes and underplays the will of the character. Then, he compresses several historical times into one long moving shot which transcends time to a more powerful being that exists in a separate plane of the character's experience. Thus, the images reveal a reality distorted by the character's memory and imagination. Through cinematography, Angelopoulos presents the audience with a world as he and his character perceive it instead of what it is.

## IV. Angelopoulos' Narrative

The will of an individual and his transformation are the drives of a mainstream cinematic story. The unfolding events are evidence of a hero exercising his willpower. The hero's decision leads to the next events and each plot has a strong causal effect connection. In addition, cinematographic techniques – such as close-ups, continuity of time and space, and the 180-degree rule – are used to stimulate emotions and clarify the connections between the cause and its results. On the contrary, Angelopoulos' stories are built on accidents and chances rather than a cause-and-effect connection. This narrative structure is close to a road movie where accidents and chances are embraced by the audience. However, it is more than a road movie structure since the time and space are much more flexible in Angelopoulos' films. The order of events is interchangeable. Because the events are driven by “chance”, they do not have to happen in a very specific order. There is room to make adjustments and the story will deliver the same meaning. The space in Angelopoulos' films has the same flexibility. The stories are still plausible if it happens in a different nation, a different city. In other words, the audience does not need the specific context of the particular location to comprehend the character's struggle. The selected events and the emotional arc are shared by the audiences regardless of their cultural backgrounds. These narrative characteristics match the elements of Greek romance and create a mythical undertone for the films when the images are realistic at first sight.

Mikhail Bakhtin considers Greek romance as the “adventure novel of ordeal” (86). It includes novels written between the second and sixth centuries A.D. under Greek influence. An example that exists in Russian translation is *Aethiopica* by Heliodorus, telling a story of a princess Chariclea born as a plausible adulterine child. After her birth, she is secretly abandoned by her mother, the Queen, and transported to a variety of places before she settles as a priestess of Artemis. Later, she falls in love with a noble man Theagenes. They go through many perils in order to be together. The story eventually ends with Chariclea's birth being revealed to the public and the lovers being married. Bakhtin summarizes the essence of plots of Greek romance as:

The first meeting of hero and heroine and the sudden flareup of their passion for each other is the starting point for plot movement; the end point of plot movements is their successful union in marriage...From the very beginning, the love between the hero and heroine is not subject to doubt; this love remains absolutely unchanged throughout the entire novel. (89)

In these novels, two people encounter each other by chance and have an instantaneous passion. As their normal course of life continues, they encounter obstacles and distractions that keep them apart. However, their passion stays unchanged and grows stronger as a result of ordeals. Finally, they reach a reunion after several encounters and separations (Bakhtin 89-90). Based on this story spine, Bakhtin emphasizes three elements that distinguish this narrative type from the others: 1) The actions are driven by the force of chance; 2) The story unfolds around meetings; 3) The expanse of space and time is abstract.

In addition, “chance” is the essential force to drive the plot rather than the protagonist’s will. The logic of the story is often connected by words and phrases like “suddenly” or “at just that moment.” The character is doing one activity, but suddenly, another event happens and forces the previous activity to end. In this narrative logic, the development from one thing to another does not necessarily have a strong connection. This random event interrupts the normal daily course and forces the character to react to it. A little earlier and later on the timing will make little difference.

In contrast, the narrative logic that is commonly seen in mainstream cinema is based on its cause and effect. The words “because” “so” and “then” are often used. In this narrative logic, the intention of the character drives the story forward and leads to the next consequential event. However, the force of chance in Greek romance breaks this pattern and creates a new logic that could be considered irrational in conventional visual storytelling; but in Angelopoulos' films, this irrationality contributes to his style. The force of chance acts as fate, gods, and demons in ancient mythologies and brings a feeling of magic, supernatural power, or things out of the ordinary world. Thus, Bakhtin considers Greek romance as an adventure in an abstract alien world (101).

Another significant element of Greek romance is the motif of meetings. While meetings are also indispensable devices to incite events and start a plot in the narration of mainstream cinema, the random nature of Greek romance depends on them, developing the story around them. An encounter may twist the plot and bring the story in a different direction. The entire story often unfolds when the character meets or fails to meet someone. Meeting with different people also leads to different types of meetings and therefore, other motifs, such as recognition, non-recognition, parting, loss, escape, etc (Bakhtin 98). These motifs are fundamental gateways that open a variety of possibilities for the theme and topic of a story.

Moreover, Greek romance has an abstract expanse of space and time. This story type is characterized by “a technical, abstract connection between space and time, by the reversibility of moments in a temporal sequence, and by their interchangeability in space”

(Bakhtin 100). The same event could happen in one place or another. It does not contain any distinction, endemicity, or territoriality. For instance, the abduction of a daughter could happen in China, but could also happen in Europe. The action of abduction does not happen based on any detailed characteristic of the location, the country, or the government type. The consequence of the action is mutually disastrous for families.

Without a cause-effect connection between the events, the order of the events in the story is also reversible. The storyline would stay the same even if the order of the events have changed. It is not to say that every part of the story can be reversible. Bakhtin explains: "Separate adventures, complete in themselves, are... interchangeable in time, for adventure-time leaves no defining traces and is therefore in essence reversible." (100) In other words, what is reversible is those events that have had their closure and stand alone from each other. The protagonist also does not change in any perceivable way as a result of the previous events, because any changes in external characteristics will invalidate the flexibility of time in Greek romance.

This interchangeability of space and reversibility of time limit the specificity and concreteness of the story world. The place and time of the story are portrayed as an alien world that is isolated from everyday life. Myths, fairytales, and legends also share this characteristic in their approach to time and space, which creates a transcendental atmosphere of mythical worlds.

Analyzing Angelopoulos' films, a person will find similar narrative elements to Greek romance. In his stories, the characters are often in an ambivalent state of life, in a limbo between two definite states. The stories develop highly depending on their encounters in this limbo. Moreover, the connections between those encounters are mainly based on chance, instead of causality. If the audience needs to articulate the film, they can only connect the plots with words like "suddenly" and "at that moment". In *Ulysses' Gaze*, director A simply wakes up with an unexpected woman who voluntarily provides him guidance. In *Landscape in the Mist*, Voula and her brother pass by the Orestes' bus on the road by chance when Orestes suddenly appears and invites them to take a ride. When they meet for the second time, Voula and her brother escape from the police and randomly see Orestes' motorcycle in the distance. So, Orestes takes them with him again. In *Eternity and a Day*, the refugee boy chooses to clean Alexander's car by chance when the police arrive. Thus, Alexander saves him by allowing him to jump into the car. At their second encounter, Alexander witnesses the abduction by chance. He follows the truck of the human trafficker and saves the boy again. In these films, chances play an essential role in all these meetings more than the will of an individual.

Time also becomes flexible not only because of the cohesion of past and present accomplished by cinematography but also because the power of chance is the main story drive. The two sequences of events can be reversed without changing the story. Angelopoulos is also aware of the same condition of the reversible time as Bakhtin suggests and fulfills it with his cinematography. He asserted in his interview with Tony Mitchell that he uses sequence shots to “create a complete, finished scene, with inherent dialectical counterpoints” (Angelopoulos 31). Thus, the scene is concluded when the sequence shot ends. he also prevents “any factual relationship between [the historical moments]” (72). Thus, the character will not bear any perceivable trace of changes as a result of the previous event. Angelopoulos deliberately pursues the same effects as Bakhtin suggests about Greek romance.

*Ulysses' Gaze* will be an effective example since the film is a mixture of past and present, as well as memory and reality. A re-experiences his memories as if they are a part of reality. The sequence order in *Ulysses' Gaze* can be broken down as such: 1) The film director A returns to his hometown and decides to seek the undeveloped films of the Manaki brothers. 2) He encounters a woman, Kali, in Skopje and falls in love with her. They travel together on the train while talking about the undeveloped reels. 3) A falls into the Manaki brothers' memory and is taken away when he crosses the border. 4) On the train again, A falls into his memory with his mother, re-living New Year's Eve in 1945, 1948, and 1950 with his family. 4) He leaves Kali and drifts down the river with a broken statue of Lenin. 5) He meets his friend and learns that the three undeveloped film reels are in Sarajevo. 6) A encounters a widow who takes him to her home and treats him as her husband. 7) A drifts down the river to Sarajevo and eventually finds the reels. Throughout the film, A's main course is often interrupted by irrelevant events that represent a memory or past. These events act as daydreams, interrupting reality without a harbinger or any transition. Thus, their timing becomes flexible because daydreams, as part of consciousness, could come and go at any time. Thus, alternatively, A could encounter his young mother after he learns that the film reels are in Sarajevo. He could also find himself with the widow before he saw the broken Lenin statue. The overall narration will be the same although some parts of the sequences are reversed.

*Landscape in the Mist* is another example. Its major sequences include: 1) The children attempt to ride the train without a ticket; 2) they are rejected by their uncle after being caught by the police; 3) they escape and meet Orestes and the traveling players; 4) they encounter a rapist; 5) they run away from the police and are saved by Orestes, eventually spending time with him; 6) they departure again for Germany and cross the border. When the meetings with Orestes connect the entire film, the order of some events can be reversed. For example, the

encounter with the rapist could happen before the first meeting with Orestes and the traveling players. The encounter with Orestes does not change Voula in any external way. The audience does not see any change in her appearance and behavior as a result of meeting Orestes. The same feature applies to the encounter with the rapist. Although the rapist has done a crime on Voula, the audience hardly sees its external consequences. Therefore, the story would still work if these two events were reversed. The overall meaning of the story would stay the same since the order of time does not matter without a strong causal effect connection.

In *Eternity and a Day*, the correlation between the events becomes weaker after Alexander allows himself to spend the rest of the day with the boy. They talk about a poet in the 19th century. Then, Alexander finds his care worker at a wedding and asks her to take care of his dog. After a flashback about Alexander's wife, he is with the boy again, mourning Selim's death. Then, he visits his sick mother in the hospital. The story remains the same meaning if, for example, he mourns for Selim's death before meeting his care worker at the wedding.

Like the generalized characters, the places of the stories also miss specific details and characteristics. His films usually define the place through the characters' dialogue. However, there is no clear exposition of the context of the cities. In *Ulysses' Gaze*, A returns to his hometown to screen his film but is interrupted by the local conflict. However, the audience is not introduced to the details of this conflict: who are the opposing sides? What are the main issues? In the image, the audiences only see people marching on a bleak night street with candles and chanting as a demonstration. The locations for his films are often unknown cities and streets that are not that recognizable to the audience. Therefore, the places in Angelopoulos' films are nothing more concrete than "once upon a time in a village." This lack of details helps reinforce the mythical tone in his films by allowing the audience to reposition the story in their geographical context. The ambiguity also leaves room for the audience to fill the world with their imagination.

By deducting information from the film and allowing the viewers to actively fill it, Angelopoulos utilizes a parallel technique called “留白” in ancient Chinese painting. “留白” literally means “leaving it blank.” In ancient Chinese scroll paintings, the sky and clouds in the distance are portrayed with white space – the blank paper – rather than layers of shades and colors. In the modern day, this technique is also widely used in other artistic areas such as photography, design, and literature and often is called “negative space”. In *The Elements of Graphic Design*, a negative space means “emptiness that serves a purpose...” (White 15). Emptiness, besides a blank paper in paintings, also refers to silence in music, an open field in the garden, or a barren room in architecture (White 13).

While it is not evident that Angelopoulos is familiar with any Chinese artist's concept, his ambiguous approach to narration parallels with the concept of negative space in Chinese art and Bakhtin's concept of interchangeability, thus, generalization of the location. By only suggesting the plausible world out of the images, out of the frame, Angelopoulos not only requires the audience to focus on the emotional core of the story but also invites his audiences to imagine the world beyond the frame:

The power of suggestions is exercised... in order to free the imagination of the audience, so they can create for themselves a picture inside the picture. The audience exists dynamically and not passively, when they add their imagination to that of the director. (73)

Thus, the audiences complete the story world themselves. Ambiguity reinforces the mythical nature of Angelopoulos' film. Watching his film is not about receiving facts and emotional stimulations or seeing an event in its true realistic nature. Instead, it is about imagining and dreaming according to one's perception of the world.

Angelopoulos is very conscious of the ambiguity in his films and intentionally not explaining it:

The basic structure of [*Landscape in the Mist*]...was similar to a fairytale, which gives you much greater freedom to introduce elements that are outside the logic of the plot. But one should not try to systematically unravel their meanings, for you risk losing the flow of the narrative (63).

Compared with the modern mainstream cinematic narration, Angelopoulos' films, like the Greek romance, acknowledge the power of external forces. Things that are out of individuals' control – incidents, uncertainties, effects of time on a person, changes in society – are the common elements in his stories. They resemble fate, god, and supernatural power that are out of human reach. With the fundamental motif of meeting and separation, the flexibility of time and space, and the generalization of the location, Angelopoulos is able to maintain a mythical undertone in his films while they are rooted in reality.



## V. Conclusion

Angelopoulos' films resonate with Greek romance in all aspects of character, cinematography, and narration. As in Greek romance, they emphasize the passiveness of the protagonist under external forces which are often beyond human control, such as nature, divine powers, fate, and chance. The protagonist's power of will appears more limited than it is in mainstream films today where the will of an individual becomes prominent. In addition, the protagonist seeks affirmation of self-identity more than a transformation. The character arc reflects the inner struggle of one's belief; the victory of the protagonist becomes the successful persistence of self under unpredictable external forces. In contrast, the character arc in a mainstream film story reflects one's transformation. The protagonist has to challenge his way of being and forms a new identity at the end.

Both traits of the character are further supported by his cinematography and narration. In order to represent the character in a passive way, Angelopoulos often frames them in a wide shot and allows the dramatic situation to happen far away from the camera. He also introduces time as one of the external forces. The past emerges from the protagonist's present time as a memory or imagination and forces him to retrospect his self-identity. The duality of his long takes makes them a divine power that influences a mortal's life. Experiencing these long takes, the audience becomes a personification of time itself, understanding the story from a higher perspective that surpasses the limitation of time but remains subjective. The unpredictable weather and incidents manifest the force of chance and connect the plots in a non-casual effect approach. Under these conditions, the characters in Angelopoulos' films appear to be more passive than those in mainstream films. They battle against the changing environment and try to seize and affirm their identity in the chaotic world.

Angelopoulos' characters often insist on their initial belief and choice at the end of the film as an affirmation of self-identity. Thus, they complete the Greek romance's version of "the hero's journey". Besides the persistence on the inner personal level of self-identity, Angelopoulos also ensures the external level of self-identity remains unchanged. In the selected three films, the characters all have the same appearance from the beginning to the end. Although they may encounter dangers and receive harm during their journey, they do not have any external trace that proves it. This unchanging appearance further assures the interchangeability of time and space between the sequence shots, which allows several historical times to flow

together and creates a surrealistic feeling. Moreover, it functions as a symbol that implies the affirmation of self.

Instead of distinctive individuality and the power of will that many mainstream films try to present, Angelopoulos seeks collective emotions in personal struggles. Self-identity becomes his main concern because it is a personal issue shared by global audiences. In addition, he also generalizes his characters and locations, presenting the similarities instead of the differences. He dares enough to leave out information and allows his audience to imagine the rest themselves. By seeking collective emotions and intentionally leaving room for imagination, Angelopoulos embraces the audience with various cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, Theo Angelopoulos uses other objects that are meaningful for a collective group: the Lenin statue in *Ulysses' Gaze*, the biblical tree in *Landscape in the Mist*, and the fence at the border to separate or divide people in *Eternity and a Day*. Because they widely exist in global cultures and history, they embody the collective emotions of various groups of people. When the audience sees these objects, they bring their personal experiences and feelings that relate to them and apply the same emotion to the characters in the film. The emotions triggered by the objects could be different based on personal experiences. However, Angelopoulos refuses to provide his interpretation as the director to secure a single understanding of his works. He intentionally avoids explaining his symbols, generalizes the spaces in the story, and only portrays his characters according to their social roles without additional distinctions. Therefore, there is an ambiguous space for the audience to complete based on their experiences. This space to interpret, imagine, and fill in with one's feelings created by ambiguity catalyzes a consistent mythical tone throughout his films.

Theo Angelopoulos' films are mythical not only because they fulfill the characteristics of Greek romance, but also because they function as myths and carry the collective emotions of his time, and even those of modern times. Joseph Campbell admits that today, all the meanings are in the individual and none in the group; thus the communication between the conscious and unconscious are cut off (334). The meaning of an individual only emerges and becomes tangible when it is seen under a group circumstance. With his films, Angelopoulos rebuilds the missing communication through his mythical style, collective memories, and shared emotions.

Angelopoulos acknowledges the insignificance of individuals by allowing chance, landscapes, and time to play more effective roles as story drives. In addition, he intentionally maintains ambiguity in characters and narrations to convey a collective emotion. Consequently, the characters become more passive and lack distinctiveness like those in mainstream films.

However, The tenacity of individuals is manifested through their persistence in their pursuit. Through their extreme passion, Theo Angelopoulos portrays persevering individuals with great vitality in harsh changing situations. The isolated but uncompromised spirit in his characters resonates with the audience who struggles with their self-identity in modern society regardless of the cultural context.

Theo Angelopoulos' films retell personal struggles that are situated in his regional context in a mythical tone by using generalized passive characters, creating surrealistic moments with manifolds of time, and keeping a considerable ambiguity; thus, the audience will introduce their personal experience into the viewing process. His films are welcoming as he encourages his audience to feel, imagine, and dream as a collective group called humankind.

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