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**Towards an Inclusive Discourse**  
**Representation of Albanian Immigrants in Greek Cinema**

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(BA, MsC)

Submitted in fulfilment for the requirements of  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

This thesis outlines and discusses portrayals of Albanian and Ethnic Greek migrants from Albania in contemporary Greek cinema. The focus is on seven coproduced films made between 1993 and 2009 that set out to challenge endemic xenophobia and nationalism. The latter have served the most in the exclusion of Albanian immigrants in Greece. The exclusion of Albanian migrants in Greece can be linked to a history of opposition between both countries which has led to a collective predisposition towards Albanians as inherently criminal. This is not an isolated event, but a broad phenomenon that saw Southern European cinemas becoming increasingly preoccupied with the presence of migrants in a region that has not been conditioned to hosting but rather to sending émigrés. Such films therefore also challenge the cultural bedrock of Greece and Europe. It is argued in this thesis that the shift from a national cinema to a transnational mode of filmmaking and representation, that asserts difference and a decline in national sovereignty, is an entirely alien experience to the history of Greek cinema. By utilising a holistic and critically informed framework and methodology, the author unpacks the films' creative and cultural context and addresses them as one body in relation to the specific cultural and historical backdrop. Consequently the texts per se are addressed in order to measure the degree to which they achieve a radical representation of difference and an overall shift from the norm of an insular cinema and film discourse. It is argued that the proposed films plant the seeds for an inclusive discourse but not without reinforcing obvious essentialisms that underlie nationalism and Eurocentrism. Therefore, the author argues that nationalism and Eurocentrism inform the films and hinder their aspiration towards a radical discourse.

## Table of Contents

<b>Table of contents</b> .....	1-3
<b>List of figures</b> .....	4-6
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	7
<b>Author's declaration</b> .....	8
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	9
1.1 Entering the era of migration.....	10-12
1.2 Concurrent shifts in the cinema(s) of Fortress Europe.....	13
1.3 Greek cinema.....	14-17
1.4 A discourse of the margins	
1.4.1 <i>Distribution</i> .....	18-20
1.4.2 <i>Limited scholarly research</i> .....	21-25
1.4.3 <i>Dealing with an ingrained bias</i> .....	26-28
1.4.4 <i>Box office failure</i> .....	29-33
1.5 Structure.....	34-35
<b>2. Framework and Methodology</b>	
Introduction.....	36
2.1 National and transnational cinema.....	37-45
2.2 Difference, representation and postcolonial theory.....	46-47
2.3 Methodology.....	48-52
<b>3. Behind the text: Production, exhibition and reception of <i>Hostage</i>, <i>Eduart</i> and <i>correction</i></b>	
Introduction.....	53-54
3.1 Power and resistance: <i>Hostage</i>	
3.1.1 <i>Situated, universal, national and transnational: Constantinos Giannaris</i> .....	55-59
3.1.2 <i>The hostage situation and its aftermath</i> .....	60-62
3.1.3 <i>Questioning the national in <i>Hostage</i>: production and cast</i> .....	63-66
3.1.4 <i>The film that became a hostage: domestic reception of <i>Hostage</i></i> ..	67-70
3.1.5 <i>Reception of <i>Hostage</i> by the "other"</i> .....	71-74
3.1.6 <i>Labeling and claiming the auteur</i> .....	75-77
3.2 A film without nationality: <i>Eduart</i> .....	78-84

3.3 "Guerilla Cinema": filmmaking in the interstices of national cinema and subsidy.....	85-92
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#### **4. The Migrant Imagination: Motivations, expectations and ambitions**

Introduction.....	93-94
4.1 Imagined fatherlands, imagined utopias: <i>From the Snow</i> .....	95-99
4.2 Justifying criminality in <i>Hostage</i> : vindication in perpetual dialogue with a traumatic past and the migrant imagination.....	100-107
4.3 The migrant imagination as a desire for escape from patriarchy and the Albanian nation: <i>Eduart</i> .....	108-115

#### **5. At the border and beyond: Journeys of hope to Fortress Europe and representations of border syndrome in *From the Snow, Hostage and Eternity and a Day***

Introduction.....	116
5.1 From one border to the next and towards a marginal life: <i>From the Snow</i> .....	117-129
5.2 Tragic pathos and border syndrome: <i>Hostage</i> .....	130-137
5.3 A meditation on postmodernity, Left patronage and Eurocentrism: <i>Eternity and a Day</i>	
5.3.1 <i>Dislocation and loss</i> .....	138-140
5.3.2 <i>The greater picture: a world of border subjects</i> .....	141-146
5.3.3 <i>The universal border subject: inertia and the pathos of exile</i> ...	147-155

#### **6. The end of the Journey as a reminder of Europe's periphery, *From the Snow, Eternity and a Day, Hostage*.....**

6.1 Albanians without borders: <i>correction</i> .....	175-178
6.2 Afterword: Crime and redemption: reconfiguring the Greek-Albanian border in <i>Eduart</i> .....	179-182

#### **7. The Albanian in the Room, assessing representations of hospitality**

Introduction.....	183-185
7.1 First encounters, first representations: <i>From the Snow</i> .....	186-196
7.2 From xenophobia to xenophilia: exploring a new representation in <i>See You</i> .....	197-208

7.3 Reverse hierarchy: Albanian hospitality in <i>correction</i> and <i>See You</i> .....	209-224
7.4 You will never become a Greek: reinforcing stereotypes in <i>Plato's Academy</i> .....	225-235
<b>8. Conclusion: Towards Difference</b> .....	236-241
<b>9. Bibliography</b> .....	242-253
<b>10. Electronic Bibliography</b> .....	254-258
<b>10. Filmography</b> .....	259-261

## List of Figures

Figure 3.1.3.1: A monumental setting .....	65
Figure 3.1.3.2: Close-up.....	65
Figure 4.1.1: Corfu by night.....	98
Figure 4.1.2: Corfu by day .....	98
Figure 4.2.1: Elion between a partition and seat .....	105
Figure 4.2.2: Close-up through a window.....	105
Figure 4.2.3: Elion clutches his Kalashnikov .....	107
Figure 4.2.4: Elion is dragged to a warehouse .....	107
Figure 4.3.1: Confrontation.....	109
Figure 4.3.2: Raman Bako's suit .....	109
Figure 4.3.3: Raman Bako's medals.....	110
Figure 4.3.4: Extreme close-up of the lips .....	110
Figure 5.5.1: Standing in a tow truck.....	118
Figure 5.1.2: Treading a rough landscape to the border .....	118
Figure 5.1.3: Achilles seemingly floating .....	120
Figure 5.1.4: Apprehension at the Forbidden Zones.....	120
Figure 5.1.5: Military wake-up call.....	122
Figure 5.1.6: Screening the migrants .....	122
Figure 5.1.7: Queuing for a meal in the camp .....	123
Figure 5.1.8: Eating under makeshift structures .....	123
Figure 5.1.9: Sleeping beneath a row of phone booths .....	126
Figure 5.1.10: Cut to Achilles' dream.....	126
Figure 5.2.1: Police chief tightly framed .....	131
Figure 5.2.2: Elion tightly framed.....	131
Figure 5.2.3: Criminalisation of the border.....	132
Figure 5.2.4: Elion becomes increasingly detached from his surroundings .....	132

Figure 5.2.5: A panoramic vista.....	132
Figure 5.2.6: On the move.....	132
Figure 5.2.7: Gazing at the border signpost.....	134
Figure 5.2.8: Elion hides behind a bush.....	134
Figure 5.2.9: Close-up of Elion in his "house".....	137
Figure 5.2.10: A clear shot of Elion's house.....	137
Figure 5.3.1.1: The colours of loss.....	140
Figure 5.3.2.1: Each child assigned to a car.....	143
Figure 5.3.2.2: Alexander drives past the children.....	143
Figure 5.3.2.3: A geometrically directed sweep operation.....	145
Figure 5.3.2.4: An invisible conductor observes the traffic.....	145
Figure 5.3.3.1: Mobility.....	149
Figure 5.3.3.2: I can't leave you like this.....	149
Figure 5.3.3.3: The ubiquitous traffickers.....	152
Figure 5.3.3.4: The sale of children.....	152
Figure 5.3.3.5: Alexander saves the boy once more.....	154
Figure 5.3.3.6: Black silhouettes hanging at the border.....	154
Figure 5.3.3.7: An ominous cloaked figure approaches.....	154
Figure 6.1: Thomas, lying dead.....	159
Figure 6.2: Achilles and Nikos disconnected.....	159
Figure 6.3: At Kakavia.....	162
Figure 6.4: No sight of Achilles and Nikos on the bus.....	162
Figure 6.5: The melancholic image of a luminous ship.....	167
Figure 6.6: Inserted in the mouth of the beast ship.....	167
Figure 6.7: So close yet so far.....	169
Figure 6.8: No eascape even at an open door.....	169
Figure 6.9: Embodied protest.....	172
Figure 6.2.1: Border patrol reviving Eduart.....	181



Figure 6.2.2: Redemption and bloom.....	181
Figure 7.1.1: A point of view shot of the panicked migrants.....	187
Figure 7.1.2: Emotive gaze .....	187
Figure 7.1.3: Hospitality .....	188
Figure 7.1.4: The host supervises his guests .....	188
Figure 7.1.5: Watching TV .....	190
Figure 7.1.6: Like a TV ad.....	190
Figure 7.1.7: The domestic boxing ring .....	191
Figure 7.3.1: The flag painted on Yorgos' face .....	212
Figure 7.3.2: The Greek flag adorns fast food .....	212
Figure 7.3.3: “Albanian” Yorgos at the front door .....	213
Figure 7.3.4: A new superstructure .....	213
Figure 7.3.5: Ornella performing a defensive gesture.....	214
Figure 7.3.6: Yorgos repairs the washing machine.....	214
Figure 7.3.7: The distance of separation .....	215
Figure 7.3.8: Ornella cleans Yorgos' wounds.....	217
Figure 7.3.9: Facing back to back .....	217
Figure 7.4.1: An awkward pairing .....	229
Figure 7.4.2: Matter out of place.....	229
Figure 7.4.3: The Albanian fans.....	232
Figure 7.4.4: The Greek fans.....	232

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### **Author's Declaration**

This thesis represents the original work of Philip Phillis, unless otherwise stated in the text. The research upon which it is based was carried out in the Theatre, Film and Television Studies Department at the University of Glasgow under the supervision of Professor Dimitris Eleftheriotis and Dr Ian Goode during the period of October 2010 to September 2013.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The inception of this doctoral dissertation lies in a period of contemporary political and social upheaval in Greece when the term "crisis" was conceived to indicate a plethora of predicaments that the Greek state and populace were suddenly faced with, including near bankruptcy and exclusion from the Eurozone, growing rates of clandestine migration and a surge of xenophobia and nationalism. The latter figured in an increasingly resentful public that offered parliamentary entry to the Far Right Golden Dawn who blamed immigrants for the country's predicament. Overnight, the party's swastika-bearing members became a real and present threat to democracy. While mainstream media and the Greek people delved into populism and sheer hatred towards Europe's "others", I was living in Scotland pursuing a master's degree in film studies from where I could do nothing but witness the so-called "cradle of democracy", which has suffered greatly from fascism, retreat to racism and xenophobia. My PhD proposal gave me the opportunity to do more than hope for change as I began to explore the rich discourse of cinematic representation and migration. My critical analysis of a handful of Greek films that deal with the proposed subject promotes an inclusive and radical discourse.

## 1.1 Entering the era of migration

My research took me to the early 1990s, a pivotal era that saw a daunting test of the European competency of Greece, one of the challenges met since the Restoration of Democracy in 1974, when the newly elected government put into operation a latent modernity which led to joining the European Union in 1981. Towards the 1990s, the "new world order" (Calotycho, 2013: 2) meant that Greece transformed from a country of emigration to a host of thousands of disenfranchised immigrants from the Third World, Eastern Europe and the Balkans. For a country with a history of transitions and with national identity being the locus of an entrenched struggle, foreign migration was "both a challenge and a shock to the political and ideological conditioning of the population" (Karalis, 2012: 237) especially since from the mid 1980s there was a dramatic fertility collapse that reinforced a drive for national cohesion (King, 1999: 11). This was also challenging for the limited resources of a state unprepared for large scale demographic shifts<sup>1</sup>.

This was a wider phenomenon that saw a surge in migration to Southern Europe, a region known for its clandestine industry that thrives on illegal employment (ibid.). The region is also known as the "soft underbelly" of Europe (Lazaridis & Psimmenos, 1999: 175), named aptly "Fortress Europe". The term can be linked<sup>2</sup> to the 1985 Schengen agreement that commands fortification and the closing of European borders from foreign "invasions" of Europe's "poorer and less stable neighbours" who generated great fears for public security, health and local economies particularly in Northern states (Collinson, 1999: 301-302). This brings us to another indication of Fortress Europe which is the prevalence of nationalism and xenophobia that serve as defensive measures of an overall

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<sup>1</sup>Southern European countries suffer from poor statistical records, and demographic accounts in the region are often contested. However we can estimate that from the mid to the late 1980s, migration to Southern Europe was part of an exodus from the Third World that saw a 3 million increase in Southern European countries by 1991 (King, 1999: 11). According to Vangelis Calotycho (2013: 2), by 1999, 1 in 10 persons in Greece was a foreign migrant. Stathis Fakiolas (1999, cited in Lazaridis & Psimmenos 1999: 175) in particular points out that 300.000 clandestine Albanians lived in Greece by 1996, contesting the numbers given by the Ministry of Public Order that expose its limitations and questionable intentions to give a facile impression of security to a public terrified of "illegal" immigrants. By 1998, 240,000 Albanians, amongst many other migrants, had registered for legalization in Greece (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004: 2).

<sup>2</sup>Loshitzky (2010: 1) originates the term in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* where it appears as "Festung Europa" implying a German Europe, fortified and pure.

fortress mentality that makes clandestine<sup>3</sup> migration an inevitable necessity for those who pursue with tooth and nail a better life in Europe (Baldwin-Edwards, 2001: 1). The first migrant groups to heavily populate Greece came from Albania.

Albanian migration happened very suddenly and in vast numbers after the fall of a communist regime that kept Albania isolated for over forty years. By 1999, nearly 500,000 Albanians, from an overall population of 3,500,000, migrated to its closest neighbours, catching almost by surprise their reluctant hosts (King, 1999: 11). Albanians, documented and clandestine, constitute the largest migrant group in Greece throughout the 1990s. They are as well the most heavily discriminated against.

Hostility towards Albanians can be associated with both countries' competitive struggle for national assertion from the first quarter of the century, "a recipe for violence" according to Mark Mazower (2000: 104). Albania was constituted then as one of Greece's arch enemies, posing allegedly a threat to the latter's imperialist plans and irredentism (and vice-versa), with shared borders becoming the apple of discord<sup>4</sup>. After World War II, Albania was accused overall for owning the power to set Greek modernity in backwards motion, particularly for being the closest communist state. A collective Greek predisposition towards Albanians saw the latter as inherently criminal and cunning which mainstream media promoted widely from the 1990s onwards (Konstantinidou, 2001; Papailias, 2003: 1063) and which can be further linked to anthropological texts written by Western European travellers who regarded the Balkans as tribal and primitive through an ingrained orientalist perspective (Mazower, 2000; Papailias, 2003; Calotychos, 2013). At this moment, racist stereotyping and exclusion functioned as one, reinforcing national cohesion. Faced with an inefficient citizenship scheme and an intolerant community, Albanian migrants became entirely excluded in order to not disturb a tightly knit nation that keeps its own people safe and its culture and identity untainted from foreign "invaders" (Lazaridis, 1999; Psimmenos, 2001).

Amongst a plethora of migrants, Albanians became the most popular and visible constitutive "other" of Greeks. No other immigrant group in Greece has served more strongly this very function or has been stereotyped so heavily. The latter highlights that identities are not part of the natural order of things, but are in constant flux and "emerge

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<sup>3</sup>Too often the term "illegal" is employed, which connotes the illegality of migrants in receiving countries. A more appropriate term is "undocumented" but here we will use only the term "clandestine" migration/migrants.

<sup>4</sup>For more on Greek and Albanian national assertion in the twentieth century see; Mazower (2000: 104-128), Tsitselikis and Hristopoulos (2003), Mpaltiotis (2003), Proedros (2011), Petropoulos (2011).

within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion [...]" (Hall, 1996b: 4-5). In other words, identity is perpetually redefined in relation to the "other", highlighting and consequently containing (cultural and ethnic) difference, establishing hence the exclusive features, in this case, of Greek identity which establish an overall language of belonging to the detriment of the "other". This process functions according to a binary logic which assumes that between the terms "Greek" and "Albanian" one figures higher, signifying a structure of power that endorses oppressive ideologies particularly since one term has meaning only in relation to the knowledge of its "other" (Foucault, 1980; Derrida, 1981). In this respect, us/them and indigenous/foreign-migrant binaries establish belonging on a national level stressing belonging rather than greater inclusion. This is what makes indigenous identity in receiving countries a dominant site of identification and assimilation which explains how Europe began to redefine itself, in the 1990s, in relation to its constitutive "others", steering migrant populations towards assimilation.

According to Stuart Hall, from the early 1990s begins "the era of globalisation and migration [during which] Europe's 'other' has finally come home to roost" (1992: 47). This is also when European filmmakers became increasingly preoccupied with Europe's current political and social issues including the encounter with the "other" and his/her plight in Fortress Europe, reinforcing but also questioning indigenous identities and European ideology.

## 1.2 Concurrent shifts in the cinema(s) of Fortress Europe

From the early 1990s, European cinema became a source of inquiry on the identity crisis of a Europe faced with a plethora of strangers. Isabel Santaolalla highlights that "the increased visibility of migrant groups and individuals is currently perhaps the most striking feature common to Spanish, Italian and Greek cinemas. This development arose in the early 1990s and has since led to a sizeable body of so-called immigrant films in each country<sup>5</sup>" (2010: 152). The notion of "constitutive others" is appropriate considering the inherent function of cinema to reflect on its audience and the medium's power to capture and (re)constitute meaning. In other words, cinema is an ideal medium through which indigenous European identity and ideological mechanisms, and their originating discourse, namely colonialism and Europe's universality (Shohat & Stam, 1994; Anderson, 2006[1983]: 163:185; Eleftheriotis, 2001: 1-13) can be reconstituted in an inclusive fashion or simply reinforced in relation to the "other". Yosefa Loshitzky emphasizes this very notion:

A complex phenomenon like today's 'Europe' cannot be described or experienced as a whole but only as a site of negotiation over identity. The media and the arts have become a new site of articulation of Europe's new sociocultural space, shaped by the experience of displacement, diaspora, exile, migration, nomadism, homelessness, and border crossing, challenging the traditional notions of 'Europe' and 'Europeanness' (2010: 8).

This power of cinema in particular is linked to the vast culture of European audiovisual media that have served possibly the most in rendering the continent's "others" visible, forcing audiences to look, reflect, think and often retreat deeper. In the era of migration, audiovisual media significantly reconstitute identity. According to Duncan Petrie, "the image is central to the working through of this complex process" with many implications that demand an inclusive and critical scholarly discourse (1992: 3). Greek filmmakers have become preoccupied with this phenomenon, contributing to the transformation of European and Greek cinema, opposing the forces that deem migration, difference and national sovereignty as vexed issues.

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<sup>5</sup>The author neglects the erroneous character of such a classification which can never be inclusive enough and moreover does not supply her readers with other classifications which need to be based on a wide range of issues regarding the films' plots, artistic merit, cultural and creative context and chiefly its representational strategies that focus on the very notion of encountering the "other". Here we will refrain from terms such as "immigrant films" as an indication of a frustration in film studies to establish an inclusive term and to promote a more holistic argument and engaging dialogue.



### 1.3 Greek cinema

In particular, this thesis addresses seven Greek transnational coproductions, directed by Greek filmmakers between 1993 and 2009<sup>6</sup> that deal implicitly with Greece's constitutive "other" and the indigenous community's encounter with him. In the films, Greek is spoken besides Albanian, while the cast comprises of indigenous Greeks, Albanians and Ethnic Greeks from South Albania. The settings are divided between Greek, Albanian and Balkan locations with production costs shared by Greek and European subsidizers and in few cases non European. The films display the shifting sociocultural and political landscape of Greece from the 1990s and into the 2000s and, while visualising the shock of a nation still healing from the wounds of a traumatic past, in search of national identity and a sense of belonging in a wider European community, confronted suddenly with its most dreaded stranger, the filmmakers pull Albanians and Ethnic Greeks out of the margins and make their plight and journeys of migration central themes. This means that the stranger is transformed from an object into a subject of representation. This is overall a radical turn in Greek cinema that commands scholarly attention particularly since the films challenge and in certain cases entirely negate the alleged criminality of Albanians. In this respect, the title "towards inclusiveness" implies that the films do not entirely establish an inclusive discourse, but highlight a certain path towards this.

Moreover, they confuse the tightly knit discourse of national cinema by introducing hybridity which is manifest in the films' creative context, cultural background and content where we observe visual codes and tropes that challenge familiar national iconographies

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<sup>6</sup>These films occur in a period of Greek cinema conceived as "contemporary" which figures in its temporal reference from the late 1980s/early 1990s to the present and ongoing. The obvious problem with this is that what is at once contemporary will soon not be. This however is a term used widely in the Greek and Anglophone literature on Greek cinema and is considered as the major running definition of the cinema produced since the 1990s (Leventakos, 2002; Papadimitriou, 2009; Kokonis, 2012). For a holistic reasoning of contemporary Greek cinema particularly in the 2000s and of the culture surrounding Greek cinema since the financial crisis, see Papadimitriou (2014). The contemporary is often associated with a temporal delineation but moreover alludes to the death of the author and the postmodern condition and its hybrid aesthetics of pastiche and nostalgia which Skopeteas utilizes in his conception of the contemporary as the "post-classical" (2002). It is also associated with the renewed interest of producers and audiences in commercial cinema and popular film genres and the increased availability of new technologies, the internet and, particularly in the 1990s, a partnership of filmmakers with television channels (Kokonis, 2012; Chalkou, 2012). Karalis highlights that immigration and otherness underlie the cinema from the 1990s as well (2012: 239-284).

and ideologies. By "smuggling"<sup>7</sup> difference, the filmmakers tear at the cracks of a national cinema that relies on the notion of a sovereign nation. Moreover, the majority of the films appeal to Albanian audiences, in Greece and Albania, and received distribution in Albania as well. In other words, they are not directed exclusively for internal consumption and have the inherent capacity to travel and cross national borders and thus appeal to foreign audiences and, most importantly, to Albanian immigrants. This is an indication of the way transnational cinema functions which, in terms of its discursive, economic and cultural aspects, relies on the erasure of national sovereignty, transnational and European subsidy and the increasingly stronger presence of difference in films and filmmaking/production (Ezra & Rowden, 2006: 3-4).

This makes for a more inclusive scholarly discourse, akin to an ongoing discussion in film studies that utilizes the tools and language of cultural studies which establish a critical and politically informed framework and methodology. In particular, this discussion is steeped in a sub-field of transnational film discourse that deals with diasporic and postcolonial cinemas which are closely associated with globalization and some of its most immediate results, namely cultural exchange and a loosening of national borders, increased migration and cross-border movement and, in parallel, a surge of nationalism and xenophobia in Europe overall (ibid.). The latter especially expose a struggle to resist such radical shifts but also contribute to the tensions that forge a radical discourse which can only emerge through opposition, power and resistance. Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim outline the basic points of this framework in the editorial of *Transnational Cinemas*:

[This cinema] aims, through its analysis of the cinematic representation of cultural identity, to challenge the western (neocolonial) construct of nation and national culture and, by extension, national cinema as stable and Eurocentric in its ideological norms as well as its narrative and aesthetic formations [...]. Such studies are heavily influenced by theoretical paradigms emerging from cultural studies, postcolonial theory and globalization studies[...]. The films they study are also seen to be characterized by issues of migration, loss and displacement that lead to identities in flux, which, again, challenge the stable and fixed (hegemonic) concept of the national (2010: 9-10).

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<sup>7</sup>This is a valuable term that will appear often in this thesis and which indicates the manner in which difference unsettles the fixity of national cinema but also the invisible and permeating presence of the nation and Europe.

This description however does not account for various deviations from the proposed category, evident in the Greek films, exposing thus a growing frustration in film studies to appropriately unpack the diverse and numerous particularities of films, filmmaking and overall film cultures. We need therefore to emphasize that the films employ the constitutive "other" through a hegemonic representation, visualising the encounter and immediate confrontation of the indigenous community with Albanian immigrants. The films therefore, despite their departure from a national cinema that is familiar in the first place to indigenous audiences, visualise a phenomenon that is by any means a national concern and which evokes the us in the us/them dichotomy especially since it is made by Greek filmmakers. This means that the national is not entirely negated, but a departure point from where the nation and its legitimacy are questioned.

For example, *Ap to Hioni/From the Snow* (Goritsas, 1993) deals with the exclusion of Ethnic Greeks from their homeland and the insecurity of Greek society, faced with thousands of strangers who claim to be "one of us". Sotiris Goritsas adopts the strangers' point of view but ultimately articulates the nation's disconnection from the Greeks of Albania as a result of Greek intolerance. *Mirupafshim/See You* (Korras & Voupouras, 1998) unfolds the friendship of an internal exile, Christos, with a group of Albanians in Athens. The film opens with his first encounter with them and his eagerness to learn about their culture and plight in Greece. This leads to a journey to Albania that exposes the extreme differences but also similarities between Greeks and Albanians that force Christos to reconsider his deep resentment to his country. *Omiros/Hostage* (Giannaris, 2004) follows the trajectory of the migrant's descent to tragedy as a means to display to the indigenous community the latter's intolerance, in other words portraying the "other" but speaking in our name. In *Akadimia Platonos/Plato's Academy* (Tsitos, 2009), the director applies satire in order to highlight the pitiful host who is awkward in the presence of an Albanian migrant claiming to be his lost brother. The film visualises the otherness of Greek working class men, who are estranged by the agenda of multiculturalism. Adopting the point of view of the host is a means towards unsettling indigenous audiences. In this manner, *diorthosi/correction*<sup>8</sup> (Anastopoulos, 2008) depicts the struggle of a former nationalist to atone for killing an Albanian migrant, displaying to indigenous audiences how national identity becomes the rubric of hatred.

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<sup>8</sup> The film in its Greek and English form are written with a lower case in order to highlight the humility of atonement which is a major subject in the film. This is the format I will be applying here as well.

While the diversity inherent in the corpus of films showcases different subjective points of view, the films are an exception in so-called "minority discourse" which demands that the strangers per se portray on film their own plight. Another term is Hamid Naficy's *Accented Cinema* (2001) which highlights a cinema produced in the West by "Third World people" who introduce an "accent" which figures as dissimilar and "accented" contrary to the universal and uniform cinema of the West which heavily populates indigenous cinemas (cultural imperialism) reinforcing cultural uniformity. A film's "accent" in this case is a direct result of the director's displacement (Naficy, 2001: 4) and generates cultural interruption. Although the films discussed here can be said to own an "accent" (a notion all in all too obscure to serve an argument), ultimately one cannot prescribe this framework to the works discussed here.

Loshitzky shares the same issue in her *Screening Strangers, migration and diaspora in contemporary European cinema* (2010). According to her, the films discussed in her book "were made by symbolic representatives of the host/receiving societies, rather than by the 'strangers' in their midst whose work constitutes part of a 'minority discourse', traditionally based on ethnic autobiography and autobiographical fiction" (ibid.: 9). This discourse dates back to 1980s Britain and the Black Film and Video movement which radicalized the political and cultural agenda of the time (Pines, 1998[1988]: 183). Judith Williamson refers to the movement as "oppositional filmmaking" (1996 [1993]: 173) while Sarita Malik utilizes the more pertinent "cinema of duty" (1996) to refer to the urgency of showcasing films of black filmmakers who challenge the "official race relations narrative" (Pines, 1988: 29). Simultaneously, the term highlights the urgency of the movement in itself and the dutiful task of the filmmakers. In a similar fashion, the symbolic representatives of the receiving nation produce a cinema of duty in Greece that challenges a respective narrative and calls for attention and unpacking. This broad understanding of Black Film and Video serves as an inclusive point of reference for films that deal overall with the plight of Europe's "others".

## 1.4 A discourse of the margins

### 1.4.1 Distribution

Challenging the alleged criminality of Albanian immigrants is a radical departure from the norm. The filmmakers consequently set a tall order and risk box office failure. Moreover, films that articulate an unfavourable representation of the nation, particularly when made by indigenous filmmakers, are almost impossible to obtain through mainstream channels of distribution. This makes the task of scholarly vocation even more significant since it can throw valuable insight onto less known and studied areas of culture and discourse and simultaneously encourage wider and engaging discussions on such areas of expression and inquiry.

Indeed, I was fortunate to get hold of *From the Snow* from the director himself. Director Yorgos Korras supplied me with a DVD copy of *See You* and *correction* recorded from television. When I began to compile my corpus in 2010, these films were not available on DVD format in Greece or international markets, which is not only a symptom of the films' low demand, but also because Greek cinema has only very recently come under consideration as being literally "outside Greece" (Needham, 2012).

Distribution on DVD in Greece has been and arguably remains an important issue since many films are no longer in stock and become forgotten after a short time while there is generally limited interest by consumers and retailers especially since rental shops become increasingly scarce. International retailers, such as Amazon, categorize films according to popular tags that cast a culturally and geographically remote cinema on the periphery of the market where the erroneous and even derogatory term "world cinema"<sup>9</sup> often applies (ibid.). In 2010, *Eduart* (Antoniou, 2006), a European coproduction nearly impossible to classify according to tags or genres, was not available outside Greece but is distributed on Amazon since 2012 by the Greek "e-katastima". Before this I was fortunate to find the film at a local DVD rental in my hometown in Crete. Interestingly, the film was categorised as "social" ("koinoniki") and not under "Greek cinema" which is the mainstay marketing label in DVD rental shops for Greek films (and more obviously that contain only spoken Greek). The same retailer distributes *correction* on Amazon but it is indefinitely out of stock. The aforementioned films were also uploaded on YouTube

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<sup>9</sup>The term all too often implies the centrality of Hollywood and European art cinema and the more peripheral role of "other" cinemas of smaller nations or of popular European cinema (see also Dyer & Vincendeau, 1992 and Eleftheriotis, 2001).

between 2010 and 2012 without English subtitles making a viewing of the film a difficult task for non-Greek speakers<sup>10</sup>.

*Mia Aioniotita kai mia Mera/Eternity and a Day* (Angelopoulos, 1998), *Hostage* and *Plato's Academy* were easier to obtain from Amazon. The first is available thanks to Theo Angelopoulos' popularity within European art cinema circuits which endorses distribution of his films by respective companies, such as Artificial Eye. Art cinema is an everlasting marketing label and Angelopoulos is considered as the penultimate example of a filmmaker of artistic prose and ingenious virtuosity (Horton, 1997; Horton 1997b; Makrygiannakis, 2008) who appeals to audiences in and outside Greece. *Hostage* is distributed by "Rarewaves", an American audiovisual retailer. In Greece it is available in scattered DVD rentals and impossible to find on sale. My last visit in 2011 to several rental shops saw the film no longer in stock. *Plato's Academy* is a Greek/German coproduction. The film is distributed on DVD by the German retailer "good!movies" and the title on Amazon is the German rendition "Kleine Wunder in Athen" which translates literally as "small miracle in Athens" referring to the Greek protagonist's unsettling discovery of Albanian descent. The title highlights the satirical features of the film, changing the geographical designation of the original title showing how coproduction can leave audiences lost in translation<sup>11</sup>. In 2014, *Plato's Academy* and *Hostage* were uploaded as well on YouTube without subtitles<sup>12</sup>.

All this means that these films are not accessible to wide audiences also since some lack English subtitles while *Plato's Academy* is the sole case where subtitles apply only for spoken Greek casting an obvious deficit in the films' potential to establish openness. Where English subtitles are available, they are easily misleading. In *See You* and *Eternity and a Day* entire phrases are missing or reduced to their basic meaning while the translation is riddled with errors. Particularly in the former, in which case Korras managed the subtitling, while the Greek language is translated poorly, when Albanian is spoken, the

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<sup>10</sup>*From the Snow* was uploaded on December 2010 and is available in six parts at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-O\\_b4mo5sQ0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-O_b4mo5sQ0) last accessed 4 August 2014. *See You* was uploaded on November 2012 and is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQoJDyMHJZo> last accessed 4 August 2014. *Correction* was uploaded on November 2012 and is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGBmuuaANqc> last accessed 4 August 2014. *Eduart* was uploaded on November 2011 and is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNeBILPZmtk> last accessed 4 August 2014.

<sup>11</sup>According to Naficy's (2001) theoretical reasoning, the process of translation which is required on various levels, ranging from the languages in a film and to the presence of foreign cast and crew, is an indication of an "accent" which suggests an interruption. This lack of translation, evident also in the subtitling of only spoken Greek, is simultaneously indicative of the assimilating power of Europe and its cultural policy that casts the Albanian language as not translatable and the film's Greek nationality as central.

<sup>12</sup>*Plato's Academy* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cu00KogY8tE> last accessed 5 August 2014. *Hostage* available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cQM16P8NoY> last accessed 5 August 2014.

English translation is "broken" as though conveying the "broken" Greek of the Albanian cast. Overall, to this date it is an impossible task to obtain all these films on DVD and to actually see them without being in the first place a Greek speaker which does not exclude methodological obstacles. Any attempt to address the films therefore as a single body, from 1993 to 2009, is methodologically problematic even for Greek speakers.

#### 1.4.2 Limited scholarly research

In this respect, the very few scholarly articles that discuss some of the films are limited to those available in international markets and almost only *Hostage*. International publications include those of Santaolalla (2010) and Olga Kourelou (2010) who briefly address *Hostage* and *Ap tin Akri tis Polis/From the Edge of the City* (Giannaris, 1998), while Betty Kaklamanidou (2012) discusses *Hostage*. This coincidence is not merely a result of the films' international availability on DVD, but also of Giannaris' notoriety as an enfant terrible<sup>13</sup>. The director's disdain towards art and commercial cinema<sup>14</sup> moreover makes him an ideal ambassador for a large audience and attracts attention for its controversy. His diasporic background as well relates to studies of "interstitial" and "accented" filmmakers (Naficy, 2001) who envelope many degrees of difference in their films which make for an inclusive discourse rich in meaning and arguments. Nevertheless, the diasporic background of Giannaris has not been discussed extensively in relation to diasporic, exilic (Mercer, 1994: 53-69; Naficy, 2001) and cosmopolitan filmmakers (Bergfelder 2012, 2012b; Eleftheriotis, 2012) and their positioning in national culture(s). Dimitris Papanikolaou (2009) is the sole exception here as he briefly unpacks the director's mixed nationality and cinematic "upbringing" beside Derek Jarman. The author however addresses the repatriation of Pontian émigrés in *From the Edge of the City* and not *Hostage* and the Albanian "other". Papanikolaou poignantly observes that Giannaris' "accent" is traceable not only in the themes of displacement, awkward and arduous repatriation or Pontians but more so in the film's formal features which the author associates with the films and avant-gardes tendencies of Derek Jarman.

*Hostage* is based on a true story that recounts the hijacking of an intercity bus in 1999 by Flamur Pislî, a clandestine Albanian migrant. The film redeems him by exposing the intolerant hosts and police brutality. No other film discussed in this thesis conjured

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<sup>13</sup> At the 1998 State Awards of Quality ("Kratika Vravias Pliotitas") when Angelopoulos was awarded, Giannaris showed the finger to the committee and left the ceremony in anger. As I discuss in chapter 3, section 1.6, Giannaris and his status as filmmaker are loaded with terms that highlight the challenging content of his films but also his intentions to shock and to pass strong judgement on Greekness while simultaneously being considered as "the only hope for Greek cinema". His aforementioned gesture often precedes his reputation as enfant terrible ("tromero pedi") or even "spoiled brat" ("kolopedo"). These issues are described by Levteris Adamidis (*Sinema*, no. 165, March 2005) who moreover argues that Giannaris "is the only filmmaker with the guts to throw a bucket of cold water on the face of a cinematically numb country" (ibid.: 19) contributing to an "us versus them" confrontation (see also <http://www.cinemanews.gr/v5/movies.php?n=2453>).

<sup>14</sup>In an interview given to myself, Giannaris refers to commercial films with the derogatory term "mainstreymya" ("μεηνστρημιά").



such a storm as *Hostage*, inciting the rage of nationalists, the media and the family of a Greek passenger who was killed during the actual incident. The film was a box office failure and was withdrawn quickly from venues exposing a nation humiliated by PISLI. It is arguably a logical conclusion that the few English articles to address Greek cinema and migration<sup>15</sup> deal exclusively with the confrontational *Hostage*, as opposed to the more popular *Dekapentavgoustos/One Day in August* (2001) which has generated no scholarly research yet.

The problem with this is manifold. Apart from exposing an ingrained tendency in film studies, particularly in Greece, to dismiss popular cinema for allegedly lacking in artistic (and thus scholarly) merit, it implies that *Hostage* was a one-off, that in other words *Hostage* is the only film to so radically confront xenophobic discourse surrounding Albanian migrants and to therefore receive scholarly attention. Moreover, this literature lacks in critical depth, celebrating the film rather than examining it closely to expose its obvious deficit. The latter is an issue as well in the Greek literature on the subject which, apart from being very limited, is often journalistic, too short and one-sided, celebrating the film over commercial cinema for its artistic merit<sup>16</sup>. Few are the film scholars in Greece to address *Hostage* including Afroditi Nikolaidou (2002), Panayota Mini (2006) and Maria Paradisi (2006) all of whom repeat the same celebratory arguments. Mini and Santaolalla are the only scholars to address the notion of embodied protest in the film, which I argue highlights the permanence of stereotypes that reinforce the victimhood of migrants.

In other cases, scholars from classics, theatre and modern Greek studies address only few of the films and again mainly *Hostage*<sup>17</sup>. From these disciplines two major

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<sup>15</sup>Nevertheless, an existing corpus of articles on the reverse topic - representations of émigrés and repatriated émigrés in the so-called "Palios Ellinikos Kinimatografos" (Old Greek Cinema) and in the films of "Neos Ellinikos Kinimatografos" (New Greek Cinema) offers some insight. See Sotiropoulou, 1995, Delveroudi, 2004, Ksanthopoulos, Kehayas, Pagoulatos, Papstathis, Ventoura, Kymionis, 2004, Kartalou, Nikolaidou & Anastopoulos, Delveroudi, Georgakas, Horton, Kymionis 2006.

<sup>16</sup>For more on this and the origins of the dichotomy popular/art, quality/commercial cinema in Greece, see Eleftheriotis, 2006 and Chalkou, 2008.

<sup>17</sup>One such example is Constantinos Kyriakos' (2001) *Alterity and Eroticism* ("diaforetikotita kai erotismos") which serves more as a prescriptive list of films according to broader themes where scattered, brief and misleading references include *From the Snow* (104) and *See You* (103). The writer favours highly Giannaris and moreover relies too much on footnotes making the primary text rather short and poor. Yorgos Mpramos (2004) addresses *From the Snow*, *See You* and *From the Edge of the City* again celebrating the films and moreover expressing disdain towards the majority of popular and commercial films of the 1990s, such as *Safe Sex* (Papathanasiou & Reppas, 1999) for "stealing" the spotlight from the former "better" films (67). His text is also too short, lacks in critical insight and contains conceptual errors such as the often met reference to the migrants in *From the Snow* as Albanians.

international publications have emerged recently; Vrasidas Karalis' *A History of Greek Cinema* (2012) and Vangelis Calotychos' *The Balkan Prospect: Identity, Culture and Politics in Greece after 1989* (2013). Their publications reveal that the subject, although dating to the early 1990s, has only recently begun to be discussed thoroughly and in relation to cinema. This thesis is a more focused and specific assessment of the subject.

Karalis' is the first concise history of Greek cinema written in English, taking into account a social, historical, cultural and creative context offering a broad understanding of Greek cinema and its place as a cultural vehicle from its inception. The author in particular breaks new ground as he frames his approach to Greek cinema from 1995 to 2010 according to the shifting landscape brought on by migration. He aptly names his final chapter "the Polyphony of the Decentred Gaze: the Other as Cultural Hero (1995-2010)" (2012: 239-282). The author points out in his opening sentence that "the 1990s was almost exclusively dedicated to the exploration of difference and diversity" (ibid.: 239). Karalis moreover offers an overview of the creative, cultural and semantic background of films such as *From the Snow* which signify "a new representational style" steeped in a combination of fiction and documentary, exposing on film for the first time the unknown alleys of Athens where migrants dwell<sup>18</sup> (ibid.: 234-235). Karalis here highlights a common feature in the films that reflects the social and political dystopia that the Greek populace experienced. According to Karalis, in the films, Albanian "others" reflect the otherness of indigenous Greeks who are at odds with their compatriots and, most importantly, with a political system of "depersonalizing structures" (ibid.: 242). Moreover, amongst a plethora of "strangers" who confuse the boundaries of the nation and national identity, the Greek protagonists are strangers even to themselves. Maintaining however their favourable and challenging cache of themes, the filmmakers highlight also (albeit on a secondary level) the loneliness, alienation and helplessness of migrants to "survive as strangers in a society without bonds" (ibid.). This is a theme that will be discussed and questioned in the following chapters.

Calotychos is the only scholar to address as one body the films I have selected, separate from other films of the period, and to consider primarily the notion of a Greek-Albanian confrontation and of Greece's role in the Balkans as major frameworks. The films I am addressing serve for Calotychos similar purposes: they highlight and visualise radical changes in the country's political, demographic, social, cultural and ideological make-up

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<sup>18</sup>This is however not the first time that the derelict, contrary to the more alluring sight-seeing, locations of Athens are portrayed in Greek cinema. For more on this and a neo-realist Greek cinema see Poupou, 2012.

and the confrontation with Albanians as a major indication of the country's transformation and deeply rooted struggles since 1989. Calotychos is the only one until now to offer a more critical and well-thought understanding of the films in relation to the particular national and cultural context but also to a politics of representation that requires critical thought<sup>19</sup>. *The Balkan Prospect* however is closely linked to modern Greek studies and political history, not film studies. This shows how cinema is a versatile medium in the humanities and often available for all disciplines as case studies, making the task of film studies to centre attention on films even more pertinent through appropriate theoretical frameworks.

Eventually, despite their breakthrough, both publications suffer from similar problems as their predecessors when it comes to addressing the particular films discussed here - namely a strong and biased focus on the work of Angelopoulos and Giannaris and an uneven and too short reference to the other films with a good number of conceptual errors and an attitude that makes the texts at times heavily opinionated. Moreover, Karalis very briefly refers to *Eduart* (269) while Calotychos surprisingly has entirely excluded the film (even though it deals predominantly with contemporary shifts in the Balkans and is the only Greek coproduction to portray the 1997 insurrection in Albania). Like their predecessors, both authors skim through the majority of the films favouring those of Angelopoulos that deal with Balkan affairs. *Plato's Academy*, *See You* and *Eduart* are discussed very briefly or at all making it seem at times that the authors speed up the discussion towards Angelopoulos.

Since I began my research, one more major contribution has been made to Greek film studies. *Greek Cinema: texts, histories, identities*, edited by Lydia Papadimitriou and Yannis Tzioumakis (2012), is the first international edited volume on Greek cinema in English that deals exclusively with Greek cinema, from the silent era up to the early 2000s. It followed from the successful respective conference at John Moores University of Liverpool in 2008 which served as a major platform for a wide and international discussion on Greek film and Greek film studies. The book offers a wide-arching perspective that is indicative of the editors' aims to offer a "plurality of voices" (10) that articulate textual analysis, new frameworks and methodologies, historiography, box office accounts, popular cinema and an overall culture surrounding Greek cinema. Although transnational cinema and foreign migration are not discussed, insight can be gained by the article of Michalis

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<sup>19</sup> The author's anathema on *See You* particularly is indicative of a focused critical input but also of a biased attitude that foreshadows his neglect of the more elusive features of the film that make it suggestive of a drive to gradually establish a more inclusive cinema.

Kokonis that showcases the preferences of popular audiences as the author outlines box office accounts from the early 1990s into the early 2000s arguing for the existence of a "Greek blockbuster". Maria Stassinopoulou offers some insight into the dutiful and arguably arduous task of articulating a holistic history and periodization of Greek cinema beyond a linear model and considering various methodological questions<sup>20</sup>. Gary Needham highlights my own difficulty as well to obtain Greek films on DVD from international retailers, with English subtitles, for reasons that highlight low demand and a cinema that is aimed towards Greek speaking audiences making it an impossible task for a non-Greek scholar to address Greek cinema beyond the films of Angelopoulos (2012: 205).

Lastly, Papanikolaou (2009) is the sole author to address directly *Eternity and a Day* through a postcolonial framework<sup>21</sup>. The author outlines and expands on the reasons why the film ultimately fails to address the "other" and his otherness stressing how Angelopoulos assimilates alterity and subsequently discards it after having served a specific purpose that in no way showcases the little boy from Epirus, who has no name, homeland or purpose - he is solely and entirely "other". This is an issue that at no point is questioned but on the contrary becomes increasingly reinforced throughout the film's narrative. Papanikolaou sets the fertile ground for an extended assessment of the film which I will expand further into critical territory.

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<sup>20</sup>For more on this see Constantinidis, 2000.

<sup>21</sup>Vasiliki Kolokotroni (2000) as well unpacks the artistry of the film.

### 1.4.3 Dealing with an ingrained bias

The problem goes even deeper when we consider that the films are overall met with resistance by a fraction of critics who shape public opinion (Leventakos, 2002) and express resentment towards transnational coproductions whose nationality is unclear. Their strong arguments date back to the condemning dictum of the vanguard of New Greek Cinema in the 1970s and its major literary outlet, "Syghronos Kinimatografos" (Papadimitriou, 2009: 68). In particular, they express the need for a strictly national cinema that domesticates industrial modernity as well as European modernism and overall launches a national cinema in the tradition of European national cinemas such as the Italian, German and the French Nouvelle Vague<sup>22</sup>. This argument is loaded with obscure connotations that can be summed up in the concept of an artistic and authorial cinematic vision and language that is Greek and which can speak of a national experience through the apparatus and artistic innovation of twentieth century modernity. In other words, there is an ongoing "search for an authentic Greekness that [could] be expressed through a modernist aesthetic [...]" (ibid.: 70). Haritos articulates this very questionable issue and a dislike towards the shifting landscape of 1990s Greek cinema: "The result is that indigenous ("εγχώριος") cinema remained - and to a good degree remains - [in the 1990s] [...], a product of mimesis or imitation, at times successful or not. The term 'Greek' is justified only by language and geographical specificity<sup>23</sup>" (2002: 42).

Indeed, an often met product of transnational coproduction is the very definition of the term that refers to cultural exchanges across national borders (Ezra & Rowden, 2005: Introduction) that is on a material level (funding, cast, settings) but also abstract (formal influence, multiple identities and languages on display and pastiche). This may facilitate hybridity in the film per se and potentially confuse the boundaries, material or non, of a nation which could mean a cinematic index that is in no way entirely "Greek". This is what Haritos considers when referring to mimesis and imitation. This has been an issue in national film discourse which has burdened the value of scholarly publications, such as Hayward's *French National Cinema*. In her book, the author claims openly that:

It is in this murky area of co-productions, especially when they are the predominant production practice, that the identity of a national cinema becomes confused [...]. It is not just the loss of the specificity of a national identity that such practices can

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<sup>22</sup>For a more precise historical account of the aspirations to domesticate modernity and establish a national cinema in Greece in the first quarter of the century, see Hess, 2011.

<sup>23</sup>Translations from Greek to English are mine.

entail [...]. The pursuance of these practices also caused a loss of small - to medium-budget films which are the mainstay and hallmark of the French national cinema (1993: 37).

Hayward displays disdain towards foreign elements in national cinema. This aversion became a defining feature of French culture overall which, after the War, was manifest in the efforts of General de Gaulle to cultivate a national image - "une certaine idée de la France" (Harris & Ezra: 2) validating protective legislation for the protection of French cinema from foreign imports and especially Hollywood (Eleftheriotis, 2001: 37-42).

The "murky" territory of coproduction according to Yannis Skopeteas (2002) is part and parcel of a postmodern practice in cinema and filmmaking that is indicative of the failure of modernity and the decline of its high idealism and modernism, which, although open to questioning, explains to some degree the resentment of critics in Greece towards coproduced popular cinema and their persistent call for a national cinema.

Papanikolaou outlines briefly but poignantly how *From the Edge of the City* departs from a "Greek" aesthetic. For the author, the formal innovations of Angelopoulos became the official index of Greek filmmakers who widely "imitated" (2009: 265) his style "to the point of being considered the central characteristic of a national school of New Greek Cinema" (ibid.). While Papanikolaou refers to the particular movement up to the 1970s, one may, bearing in mind that Greek film criticism, and to a lesser degree academic scholarship, consider Angelopoulos as the only filmmaker worthy of praise and of the title "auteur" ("dimiourgos"), argue that Angelopoulos' art-cinema was the central characteristic of an aspiring Greek national cinema. If however there is such a thing as a "Greek" cinematic language, according to Papanikolaou, Giannaris entirely deviates from this.

The notion of a "Greek" cinematic language and lexicon is so deeply ingrained however that even Giannaris opts for it. In his provocative language, Giannaris expresses this to myself in an interview regarding *Plato's Academy*: "I think Tsitos is the worst indication of a director who lacks in his own style - he copies at times Kaurismaki or Jarmusch. There is nothing Greek in his style". Korras followed suit as well, strongly criticising Panos Koutras and his breakthrough film *Strella/A Woman's Way* (2009) "for not being a Greek film, but a poor imitation of Almodovar". Korras was moreover a writer for *Syghronos Kinimatografos* and shares openly his disdain towards such foreign influence which moreover stems from a director (Pedro Almodovar) who is not associated

with high modernism but popular European cinema (Arroyo, 1992). This attitude partly explains a deficit in Greek film studies and reluctance to promote a more devoted, inclusive and critical assessment of Greek cinema in Greece resulting in nostalgia for the New Greek Cinema. Moreover, apart from a strong reliance on the popular/art binaries, one observes that art cinema is associated with national cinema a notion that is overall obscure and heavily opinionated.

Clearly, the notion of a film's nationality is deeply ingrained and figures in the overall expectations of various interest groups - audiences, critics, scholars, distributors and producers who accordingly influence an overall attitude that very often casts transnational films into the margins of critical and scholarly vocation. A film's nationality is identified moreover not only in its most immediate indications but also through the attributes of cinematic artistry that allow a film to qualify as a product of a national art cinema that can articulate the nation through formal innovation. The national however and its ideological functions are so ingrained that it can become the defining signifier of a film regardless of its artistic merit or authorial signature of an auteur<sup>24</sup>, who has been regarded as the major agent of a national cinema (Hjort & Mackenzie, 2000: 2-4).

This overall makes for a very narrow and exclusive discourse that also opens certain questions; how does a film qualify for a single nationality? Are we in a position to make such a reductive argument? Should "Greek" serve as a label implying that a Greek film is for a Greek audience before it is for a foreign one and if so can its formal features not appeal more to foreign audiences? Does the label automatically imply a familiar iconography and formal language that showcases a domestic modernism familiar firstly to indigenous audiences? Does a film's "nationality" figure firstly according to formal language or to more complex and elusive features? In any case, one cannot entirely disregard the notion of a film's nationality.

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<sup>24</sup>For a concise review of the literature and overall approaches to national cinema in film studies from 1960, see Hjort & Mackenzie, 2000.

#### 1.4.4 Box office failure

Lastly, the majority of the films obtained limited and almost zero revenue at domestic box office, for reasons that implicate complex questions of distribution and reception. For example, the controversy surrounding *Hostage* was a direct result of the film's reception by certain interest groups. In my discussion on *Hostage* I argue that the film's ill-fated reception in Greece, as opposed to Albania and Europe, is indicative of a certain dominant ideology in Greece which, at the time, meant that redeeming a clandestine Albanian migrant and criminal on screen could have been unappealing to distributors and audiences. While this issue is not an argument that can be applied without certain inconsistencies and bias, it is arguably opportune to speculate if the reasons behind box office failure can be attributed to the films' content and the filmmakers intention to negate media discourse which has been reinforcing Albanian criminality for over a decade. Considering this, I will discuss the domestic box office account of each film in relation to its content and the domestic and international competition.

The first major success to bring popular audiences back to the cinema, after more than a decade of limited cinema-going was *Safe Sex* (Reppas & Papathanasiou, 1999) which sold 245,000 tickets<sup>25</sup> in just two weeks (Kokonis, 2012: 39) and a total of 400,000 tickets (Kouanis, 2001: 257) which roughly amounts to \$2,400,000. The film was marketed towards a Greek speaking audience, familiar with the codes and tropes of Greek television series (Papadimitriou, 2011: 498) (which can be associated with the fact that the film was coproduced by a private television channel), and a broader vernacular culture and humour and opened the way towards the restoration of popular genres and Greek commercial cinema. Before *Safe Sex*, *From the Snow* sold a total of 12,000 tickets (\$72,000), *See You* 5,000 (\$35,000) and *Eternity and a Day* 50,000 (\$350,000). The latter's relatively successful exhibition can be explained in relation to the director's crowning at the Cannes Film Festival that awarded Angelopoulos the Palme D'or. On the meagre earnings of the former, Kouanis (2001: 160-162) notes that the preferences of popular audiences and critics vary, meaning that films with domestic awards very often fail to attract a large audience again for reasons that require research into the marketing of national cinema in Greece and speculations on popular preferences and the logic on which distribution functions. It is indeed a question that this thesis seeks to highlight (although not answer) if

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<sup>25</sup>For a lack of sources on box office earnings, I necessarily rely on the unique source for Greek box office accounts written by Kouanis (2001) which however reports tickets sold instead of actual earnings. Box office mojo.com supplies domestic revenue of films from 2000 and onwards but is the only source to offer this information. The average ticket price for the period 1993-2000 was 1,500 drachmas which amounts to \$6 while from 2000 and onward, with the country's induction in the Eurozone, the average price changes to \$8.



a film with awards but low earnings can be considered marginal. Additionally, one does not exclude the other since, as the examples of *Politiki Kouzina/Touch of Spice* (Mpoulmetis, 2003) and *El Greco* (Smaragdis, 2007) have shown<sup>26</sup>, a film can receive multiple national and international awards and still be appealing to popular domestic audiences regardless of the implications of art versus popular cinema.

In 2005, *Hostage* was met with hostility manifest in its poor earnings of \$50,100 (6,400 tickets) while the highest grossing film was *Loufa kai Parallagi: Seirines sto Egeo/Loafing and Camouflage: Sirens in the Aegean* (Perakis, 2005), with earnings of \$11,700,000 (1,400,000 tickets). The film deals with the shenanigans of a motley crew of Greek soldiers on the borders with Turkey. Despite attempts to establish rapprochement, it ultimately reinforces nationalistic sentiments associated with Greece's primordial arch enemy (Papadimitriou, 2011: 498) capitalising further on the success of *Safe Sex* which also meant that both films were subsequently rendered into a TV series.

*Hostage* was openly boycotted by nationalist groups who used every means available to entirely shatter any chance of success. Their influence was such that eventually the media promoted the notion of an unpatriotic filmmaker valorising an Albanian criminal leading to a short-lived period in cinemas particularly in Athens, where nationalists would stand guard distributing pamphlets incriminating Giannaris. This is something that I discuss in detail in chapter 3, section 1.4.

*Eduart* was released in 2007 and was only very briefly screened after its national premiere. The film grossed at \$110.900 (13,862 tickets). At the same time, the national box office was governed by *300* (Snyder, 2006) and *El Greco* (Smaragdis, 2007) in second place with \$11,000,000 (1,375,000 tickets) and \$8,000,000 (1,000,000 tickets) respectively in earnings. The first was attractive arguably for its portrayal of Ancient Spartan warriors and for openly claiming the superiority of a primordial Greek race over Eastern cultures. The film was a major subject at the time on the evening news of private channels, where nationalists (such as the popular Demosthenes Liakopoulos) were given the chance to more openly claim the superiority of the Greek race. Interestingly, the sequel *300: Rise of an Empire* (Murro, 2014) is the top grossing film of 2014 with earnings of over \$4.000.000 (500,000 tickets) only in Greece. Similarly, by utilizing simplistic binary allusions on darkness and light, connoting superiority and inferiority, *El Greco* borders on nationalistic with its director stating in 2011 that his follow up project, *O Theos Agapa to Haviari/God*

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<sup>26</sup> Kokonis (2012) notes that, among other films, *El Greco* and *Touch of Spice*, are proof to the existence of a Greek blockbuster.

*Loves caviar* (Smaragdis, 2012) "can only do good to people - and especially Greeks. It will sooth their soul and make them proud" (Zoumpoulakis, 2011). This statement reveals how national sentiments and populism (bordering with nationalism) can be an agent of a Greek film which is moreover centred on the notion of being a good ambassador for the country and its people. While this is not necessarily a pathological expression of nationhood and of a national cinema, it implies that a film like *Hostage* cannot appeal to popular audiences since it achieves the opposite of *El Greco*. Arguably, one can see here that films with a favourable appeal to the nation are succesful particularly for striking a chord where popular national sentiments rest. While this is not necessarily the reason why these films dominated the national box office, it offers good reason to speculate on the ideological background of audiences and the discourses that potentially underlie film culture in Greece.

*Correction* was a box office failure of \$8.168 (1,021 tickets) in 2008 which saw *Mamma Mia* (Lloyd, 2008), an adaptation of a popular Broadway musical filmed on a Greek isle, top the national box office with \$7,394,659 (925,000 tickets). The film, although not designated primarily for a Greek audience, appealed greatly by evoking escapism and a holiday spirit which is often associated with the isles of the Aegean Sea and the seasonal tourist economy. In third and fourth places respectively were *Loufa kai Apallagi I-4/ Loafing and Camouflage I-4* (Katsikis, 2008) another sequel to the popular franchise and *Molis Horisa/Just Broke Up* (Myrianthopoulos, 2008), a romantic comedy with popular television star and hostess Zeta Makrypoulia, inspired by the formula of *Safe Sex*.

*Plato's Academy* had a better fate than most of its predecessors grossing \$175,698 (22,000 tickets) when the global box office record reaching *Avatar* (Cameron, 2009) was number one in the national box office earning \$10,700,000 (1,337,500 tickets). In third place with over \$5,000,000 (625,000 tickets) ranked *Nisos/The Island* (Dimas, 2009) a comedy with familiar stars, including Costas Voutsas, one of the most prominent figures of the Old Greek Cinema that first established a star system and a Greek index/rendition of popular Hollywood genres (Papadimitriou, 2006). The film relied on the genres and satire of the Old Greek Cinema and its popular comedies that deal with a Greek small town ethos.

We are not entirely in a position to define and explain the intentions and aims of distributors and the expectations of popular audiences, particularly in a country which lacks in depth research in its national film culture (Kouanis, 2001; Papadimitriou, 2009;

Stassinopoulou, 2012; Needham, 2012), that would mean taking under consideration also Hollywood blockbusters<sup>27</sup> (Higson, 1989).

Considering therefore a lack of sound evidence and research into audiences, distribution and marketing of cinema in Greece, I argue that the films discussed in this thesis are part and parcel of a discourse of the margins. As such, they highlight on the one hand a lack of motivation from distributors to showcase films that challenge national sentiments and genre conventions and on the other the preferences of audiences towards popular genres that, in terms of content and ideology, reflect a nationally inclined cinema that endorses favourable depictions of the nation that make the opposite often unappealing. Lack of scholarly research on the subject of Greek cinema and foreign migration is also an indication of the marginal setting of the films.

Moreover, this is suggestive of the fact that diasporic and postcolonial films, like these discussed here, are often located in the margins of national film cultures and industries making it impossible to assess their impact on popular and commercial cinema and popular audiences in a national and transnational framework (Higbee and Lim, 2010: 11). This can mean that the films remain on the margins of scholarly vocation and on the margins of a national film culture. In this respect, mine is an attempt to encourage further engagement with this subject and to locate the point where transnational and postcolonial cinema transcends national cinema as the term's prefix suggests. This is something that I discuss in relation to Greek cinema with an aim to broaden towards other national cinemas.

The films discussed in this thesis suggest highly significant shifts in Greek cinema. They emerge through tensions within Greek society, its political and social issues, within a transforming national and European cinema and on the level of film studies that has been responding to the shifts brought on by globalisation, migration and exile. I begin my analysis by supporting this particular argument and proceed to comprehend and assess the films' contribution all the while maintaining a critical approach that allows me to highlight their discursive value in film studies but also an obvious deficit in the filmmakers' intentions to fully establish a radically inclusive cinema. In this respect I also highlight the deficit of transnational film discourse and question its value as an inclusive framework which has given way to more pertinent frameworks such as critical transnationalism and cosmopolitanism.

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<sup>27</sup>Higson stresses that "it is inadequate to reduce the study of national cinemas only to considerations of the films produced by and within a particular nation state" (1989: 44, cited in Eleftheriotis, 2001: 33).

Ultimately, I will argue that the films discussed here, with the sole exception of *Eduart*, while taking one step forward take one step back facilitating inclusiveness while simultaneously affirming the discourses they challenge. This figures in three major issues apparent in the films that appear at various moments: the notoriety of Albania, the centrality of Europe versus the peripheral position of Albania and most importantly the persistence of the "good" Albanian stereotype that facilitates the "bad" Greek which is also the basis of the filmmakers' critique of the Greek nation - Greeks are "bad" exactly because Albanians are "good". This reliance on binaries is ultimately why difference in the films dissolves and, while it shakes the foundations of the national, it leaves it intact.

This thesis aims at being the first to critically assess the proposed films as one body and to examine them in relation to themselves, their cultural, national and creative background and as case studies for a more inclusive and broad framework that departs from national and transnational cinema. Highlighting the films as marginal and the lack of focused attention on them as indications of a discourse on and of the margins, allows us to apply a radical framework that showcases marginality as a departure point and which allows us to showcase the deeper problems of Fortress Europe in the era of migration.

## 1.5 Structure

In chapter two I outline my framework and a review of non Greek sources, including film and cultural studies mainly from the United Kingdom. My framework comprises of the most relevant features of national and transnational cinema. I rely as well on the methodological tools of cultural studies, particularly the work of Hall and the language of postcolonial theory - essentially a politics of representation. Combined with the highly insightful critical input of Higbee and Lim (2010) who promote a "critical transnationalism" that allows us to consider notions of power, I will rely on a hybrid framework in order to discuss the more elusive features of the films and to maintain an inclusive approach. My methodology dictates that I treat the films as one body and examine them in separate groups according to their creative and cultural background and secondly applying critical textual analysis.

After this, in Chapter three, I address questions on production, exhibition and reception and the challenges for film discourse when dealing with a diasporic filmmaker such as Giannaris. The films discussed are *Hostage*, *Eduart* and *correction* all of which had an ill-fated trajectory in venues, suffered from a lack of interest from national subsidisers and were questioned on the premise of their nationality (*Eduart*) particularly for valorising an Albanian criminal (*Hostage*).

In Chapters four to seven, I dissect the films according to three different groupings. The first focuses on the migrant imagination in which I discuss portrayals of migrants from Albania in *From the Snow*, *Hostage* and *Eduart* at the first stages of their journey of hope to Greece. By focusing on the migrants' aspirations and motivations but also the forces that make migration the sole alternative to life in Albania, the filmmakers challenge the alleged criminality of Albanian migrants and expose more elusive features that justify migration to Greece.

The next grouping is based on the journey and the concept of border subjects. I begin by examining the beginning of the journey and the flight of the migrants to Greece in *From the Snow*, *Hostage* and *Eternity and a Day*. Movement and mobility here are associated with mobility inherent in the cinematic medium that makes for an elusive understanding of migration. In this case however, we discuss mobility as inertia which defines the notion of a border subject, of migrants perpetually inhabiting the margins of societies, or, literally, the Greek-Albanian border. This on the one hand highlights the intolerant host and on the other the deeper political aspirations of Europe to fortify itself

from foreign invasions. This is also the first indication of a one sided understanding of the migrants as victims and solely as border subjects that is restricting and all too often a label that carries the racist binary of "good" and "bad" Albanian. The first, being entirely marginal and wretched is acceptable and easily assimilated, while the second is entirely excluded.

The same films are discussed in relation to what happens at the end of their journey, at which point marginality is additionally reinforced as a means toward highlighting the migrants' pathos while Eurocentrism is brought into the fore. In other words, Albania is shown as peripheral and the locus of deprivation and insurrection. By casting Albania as a no man's land and Greece as an Eldorado, to which the migrants persist to return despite the obvious hazards, Greece and Europe are conceptualised as central in popular imaginations. Ultimately, the films display a limited imagination since, as the journey's end implies, the apparatus of Fortress Europe is fully functioning and serves its purpose. A familiar problem that emerges in every point of the journey is the notoriety of Albania and a questionable urge to entirely abandon Albania even though life in Greece is life threatening. *Eduart* is an exception in this respect and suggests a more inclusive representation.

In the final chapter I address *From the Snow*, *See You*, *correction* and *Plato's Academy* through the concept of hospitality which draws primarily on the seminal lectures of Jacques Derrida (2000) on the subject. In the films, except *From the Snow*, the migrants are fully settled in Greece, living in the margins of society and "ingested" in the body of the nation. Selected scenes expose the state of relations between host and guest, relying heavily on the binary indigenous/foreigner. In the first and last, the tensions between guest and host suggest a Greek-Albanian confrontation in which the guest is unwanted and the host is increasingly awkward and eventually hostile. The metaphor here is evident. The domestic space alludes to the nation and the exclusive belonging governing the home. In the home, we see "conditional hospitality" (ibid.) becoming a dominant trope that underlies the tensions between guest and host on a national level. In both cases, the marginality of Albanians is reinforced and, in *Plato's Academy*, European multiculturalism becomes a narrative trope that endorses a bordered society that contains difference. In the other two films, we see a different and more imaginative approach that is suggestive of xenophilia. It is in these where ultimately good intentions fall short since Eurocentrism is affirmed, with a Greek-Albanian friendship being entirely severed highlighting the impossibility of hospitality.

## Chapter 2

### Framework and Methodology

#### Introduction

In this chapter I examine the major frameworks applied in this thesis and outline a critical methodology that is pertinent to an analysis of the proposed films. I argue here that national and transnational cinema are both of value in understanding the culture that surrounds the films since both categories complement each other. At the same time, I argue that various discrepancies exist in the respective discourses that make it increasingly difficult to account on the one hand for the transnational dimensions inherent in national cinema and on the other for the nationalistic and eurocentric tendencies of transnational cinema, in the text per se or in the creative and cultural context of a film. My framework also relies on the tensions between national and transnational cinema which is why it is important to stress that both categories are problematic but also salient departure points.

While the tensions that exist between a closed fraternity (national cinema) and a more inclusive expression of belonging<sup>28</sup> (transnational cinema) underlie my framework, one needs to consider as well how Greek society is the site of great tensions emerging between sweeping forces that as well highlight inclusiveness and belonging. Namely, globalization and mass migration and the growth of nationalism which figures through the increasing popularity of the Far Right and especially Golden Dawn whose rhetoric has been becoming increasingly prominent and alarming particularly since the party, from 2012 to the present, is consistently coming third. The films discussed here emerge at this time of tension and struggle and, while, as transnational coproductions, they are products of these tensions, they are also their vehicles. It is therefore important to utilize an analytical and critical framework in order to examine national and transnational cinema in relation to the proposed case studies from a bird's eye view in order to then suggest a radical approach to both categories and Greek cinema.

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<sup>28</sup> Let us not forget that both categories are closely linked through the national (an issue that is obvious in their etymology). Indeed, while transnational cinema transcends the national, it still indicates cross cultural relations between nations and not a different expression of belonging. The nation and national are still the most popular expressions of belonging which is also why this thesis does not seek to negate the national but to utilize it as a departure point from where the transnational emerges and where we can imagine the national without its exclusive features especially since the films discussed rely on expressions of nationhood.

## 2.1 National and transnational cinema

Assessing, let alone defining both categories is an erroneous task particularly since they are slippery terms that shift concurrently with the flux of nations, national identity and globalisation. Additionally, both categories have been contested and scholarly research has established more inclusive frameworks. In any case, I refrain from capturing such meanings but rather aim to expose their ideological mechanisms that figure in the particular films I am addressing, their overall context and evidently their content.

I therefore repeat certain questions which, particularly when answered, highlight the inherent refutability of national cinema firstly because of its binding contract that cannot account for differences that lie beside the category's exclusive features that have been "widely and unproblematically accepted" (Hjort & Mackenzie, 2000: 2). Arguably, a tightly knit nation and national cinema is at once strongly fortified but easy to tear at its seams. Inherent differences indeed tear at the seams of the category but at the same time they are easily ignored for the sake of uniformity. This process of "brutality" (Renan, 1990, cited in Eleftheriotis, 2001: 32) requires forgetting, which is "a crucial factor in the creation of a nation" (ibid.) and a national cinema.

Susan Hayward (1993: 1) has sought to "chart possible ways of writing the 'national' of national cinema" seeking to answer questions such as "how does one enunciate the 'national' of a country's cinema? when is a cinema 'national'?" (ibid.). Answering these questions can only open a Pandora's Box of essentialisms. National cinema's inherent refutability has been showcased in the innovative historical studies of Tim Bergfelder into the transnational aspects of European and German cinema in the first half of the twentieth century and of Andrew Higson into early cinema and the transnational (Bergfelder, 2005b; Higson, 2010; Bergfelder and Cargnelli, 2012; Bergfelder, Harris, Street, 2014). These reveal the popular argument that national cinema has always been transnational which all the more confuses the boundaries of both categories.

In order to understand national cinema, as an existing corpus of films and as a site of discourse, one requires first an understanding of what comprises a nation and how it becomes such a determining force in all spheres of communication. The concept of the nation has been debated for over a century and, although "awakened" by growing nationalisms and thus very pertinent in the era of migration, it is nearly impossible to discuss the subject without numerous inconsistencies.



In this respect, there are certain concise and insightful accounts of the nation and its pertinence as a descriptive category of a country's cinematic production. Dimitris Eleftheriotis (2001: 25-47) offers a cohesive elaboration on the nation and of some significant debates on the subject starting with Ernest Renan's seminal speech "What is a nation?" (1990). Like Alan Williams (2002), Higson (2000), Philip Schlessinger (2000), Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (2000), Eleftheriotis highlights that underlying the concept of the nation are various essentialisms that are inherently nationalistic and which figure through an "established and accepted orthodoxy" (2001: 28) that can in particular be linked to the ideological and cultural agenda of the Enlightenment which according to Benedict Anderson ([1983] 2006: 7) led to the formation of the modern nation. Accounts of the nation in critical texts such as those of Anderson (ibid.) and Ernest Gellner (1983) suggest that an evocation of the nation is nationalism. This is particularly true for Gellner who asserts<sup>29</sup> that "nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way around" (1983, cited in Hobsbawm, 1990: 10). The aforementioned authors moreover showcase Anderson's groundbreaking *Imagined Communities* and his famous account of the nation as an inherently limited, sovereign and imagined community ([1983] 2006: 7).

Eleftheriotis' assessment of national cinema highlights the most popular approaches and simultaneously that national cinema is an exclusive category that relies on the language of belonging which functions on exclusion and a constitutive relation to difference. Hayward supports the latter as well but takes it as a given (1993: 8). This can be observed in her anathema on the "murky territory" of coproduction. This is also an issue that figures in state policy which has been considered as the major driving force of national cinema, in filmmaking and academic discourse (Ezra and Harris, 2000: 1-13).

Our understanding of national cinema, as an exclusive category and a significant departure point has been strongly shaped by Anderson. Hjort and Mackenzie underline in their major publication *Cinema and Nation* that "indeed, in many cases it [defining the nature of a national cinema] is a matter of mobilising Benedict Anderson's modernist conception of the nation as an imagined community" (2000: 2). Schlessinger as well argues that Anderson's work has "provided the theoretical starting point for most recent writing on national cinema" (2000: 22). The author in particular focuses on Anderson's argument that

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<sup>29</sup> Gellner's account is rather dogmatic and although not entirely unfounded, I will be approaching the national (particularly in *Eduart*) not exclusively as the product of nationalism but as a more fluid concept. Anderson's account of the nation as imagined is a more reliable theoretical reasoning which will be used in the analysis of the proposed films to shed light on their problematic features in order to transcend them and approach Greek cinema critically.

print language invents nationalism but not any particular language (Schlesinger, 2000: 23) and does not hence address the impact of the moving image in this effect nor the power of the media to shape and reinforce collective consciousness and to become in itself a site of debate over the nation. Schlesinger forces us to consider how nationalism is not merely established but maintained, redefined and reasserted. Schlesinger, Hjort and Mackenzie stress that Anderson's model is pertinent but should nevertheless be questioned when applied in film discourse and that film debates should move beyond any insular model that rests on a definition of the nation.

We can then argue that a film is an agent of the nation and can evoke its limits, fraternity and sovereignty. According to the models proposed by Higson ([1989] 2002, 2000), Stephen Crofts ([1993] 2006; 1998) and Eleftheriotis (2001) The first departure point in this case would be the production, circulation and consumption of films as "constitutive of the national collectivity" (Hjort & Mackenzie, 2000: 24). The second departure point is the text itself which is the major site of enquiry in the traditional<sup>30</sup> model of national cinema which has unambiguously neglected issues of production, exhibition and consumption: "The latter [a given country's cinematographic production] [...] it is held can be studied by analysis of the films themselves, the written discourses that they evoke [...]" (Schlesinger, 2000: 25). This is however a model that considers the nation as indeed limited, sovereign and "there". Moreover, as Higson (2000) has argued in his defining *Limiting Imagination of National Cinema*, where he questions the scholarly value of his 1989 seminal *the Concept of National Cinema*, assessing representations of the national collectivity functions in a prescriptive manner rather than descriptive. In other words, films have been analysed and taken for granted as contextualising the nation which has been regarded as a salient analytical framework either in textual analysis or in historical accounts. Taking this for granted makes an analysis of a film's "greatness" and "success" in evoking the nation quite relevant while also associating art cinema and artistic merit with a certain nationality. Higson argues that one should consider a more broad definition of a given country's national cinematic production even if this means including foreign and especially Hollywood films the consumption of which is indicative of collective preferences that in turn showcase an overall film culture on a national level that considers the nation as limited and "there" but simultaneously allows us to challenge its fixity.

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<sup>30</sup>Hjort and Mackenzie (2000: 2-3) offer a very concise and insightful review of a scholarly corpus of accounts on national cinemas which were considered as model studies and which contributed to a strengthening of the category.

A national cinema and its nationalistic premises are observable in Eleftheriotis' assessment of cultural imperialism alongside that of Williams (2002: 1-25), Ian Jarvie (2000) and Higson (2000). The authors expose protectionism and cultural nationalism as major functions of a state endorsed cinema that resists the "imperialist" agenda of Hollywood which peripheral nations cannot defy as a result of the overarching force of an international capitalist economy that allows Hollywood to "colonise" indigenous film exhibition. Cultural nationalism thus prescribes a nationalistic rhetoric that relies on Anderson's model of the nation. For a cinema to become national, it has to be sovereign and therefore emerge through a sovereign state and fashion itself as limited. On the level of consumption this implies that an indigenous market endorses and favours predominantly its own films which moreover strengthen national consciousness, as far as a film displays the signifying tropes and narratives of nation building and national identity. This also means that a national film is meant in the first place for internal consumption.

Cultural imperialism has been considered a given in national and particularly European film discourse as a means of asserting the superiority of the artistic cinema of Europe versus the consumerist commercial cinema of Hollywood and that smaller national cinemas imitate Hollywood trying to beat the latter at its own game<sup>31</sup> (Crofts, [1993] 2006; Hayward, 1993; Ezra & Harris, 2000). This has been taken as given and a legitimate framework in the writings of Crofts ([1993]2006), Hayward (1993) Ezra and Harris (2000). Crofts, like Hayward, uses a derogatory language to describe coproduction, as issue which in the first place requires taking into account the necessities of filmmakers. For Crofts, coproduction is "image mixing" which is a symptom of Hollywood's threat (1998: 393). This approach, apart from prescribing essentialisms is also an anathema on popular European cinema which is seen separately from art cinema and merely as an imitation of Hollywood (Vincendeau & Dyer, 1992).

The latter is an invention that has served as a trademark of the European cultural agenda to assert universal ownership to art cinema a notion that rests as well on the ideological function of colonialism that figures through the alleged universality of Europe. Moreover, it prefigures the label "world cinema" which reinforces the universality of

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<sup>31</sup>In this respect, Papadimitriou (2006) and Eleftheriotis (1995) have eloquently argued on the more elusive and culturally specific features of the Old Greek Cinema and particularly of the Greek film musical and the popular comedies featuring Costas Voutsas respectively which have been regarded as imitations of Hollywood.

Hollywood and European art cinema<sup>32</sup> while making peripheral the cinemas of more geographically remote nations like Greece. Accepting cultural imperialism as an entirely legitimate framework, rather than a departure point, reinforces the centrality of Hollywood and Europe. This obviously cannot account for the particularities of smaller national cinemas in as much as it reinforces the notion that indigenous audiences collectively favour either Hollywood consumerism or art films. Indigenous cinemas and audiences nevertheless function on more elusive terms that transnational discourse captures through studies of popular cinemas as a barometer of popular culture.

In addition, cultural imperialism reinforces the idea that Europe is a single entity comprised by various cohesive and diverse nations that come together under the title "European". This could not be more evident than in the declaration of the council of Europe's fund for the coproduction, distribution and exhibition of European cinema, EURIMAGES which claims that it "endeavours to support works which reflect the multiple facets of a European society whose common roots are evidence of a single culture<sup>33</sup>". One can see here how the notion of brutality functions as a central mechanism of film policy.

This declaration also serves an assimilating role. In other words, European film policy and exhibition serve the purpose of dissolving difference. This can affect a film such as *Eduart* which inherently contains many layers of difference that defy the centrality of Europe. I argue that this film in particular "smuggles" difference that figures in Balkan affiliations which highlight the periphery of Europe. This begs for a definition of national cinema without Europe or Greece. The film's cathartic ending at the Greek-Albanian border exposes this plea: situated at the interstices of Europe and hence at "ground zero", the film does not establish a new definition of national or European cinema but demands an entirely new definition of that.

Apparently, the most pertinent point of departure for an assessment of a "national" film is the text itself. Thus far I have described how the Greek films addressed here evoke the nation through binaries that figure in the strongly felt confrontation between Greeks and Albanians which are analysed in detail in following chapters. The fact all the more that they have been directed by representatives of the host nation and partly funded by the Greek Film Centre (GFC), points towards a cinema that is not purely national but has

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<sup>32</sup>This is something I have observed in my interview of Yorgos Korras in which the director claims that the "greatness" of Wong Kar-Wai and Abbas Kiarostami stems from the directors' continuation of the authorial cinemas of Goddard and Rossellini respectively.

<sup>33</sup>[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/eurimages/About/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/eurimages/About/default_en.asp).

certainly a number of features that make the films Greek and which signal the national in the films. However, the films evoke also the Albanian nation. The nation is "there" figuring through allegory that calls to mind the unity of the nation and its binding features, referred to here as Greekness and Albanianess. To suggest that the films are national is not misguided in any sense but to assert one nationality is to admit to the legitimacy of binaries. Nevertheless, I refer to the films as Greek and not Albanian. This forces us to consider that the language of belonging is all-encompassing and that we cannot refute it entirely.

My running definition of a national cinema is one which sees the national in operation in the films in terms of binaries and an overall iconography, rather than in terms of form. The films "enable[s] its audiences to imagine, a closed and coherent community with an already fully formed and fixed indigenous tradition" (Higson, 2000: 70) which however is contested by their transnational dimensions. This paradoxical coexistence exposes the struggle at the core of the films. National cinema cannot account fully for films which evoke more than one nation and which risk not having a single nationality. In order to assess Greek cinema as national, we would be forced to "forget" such films for which transnational cinema can account.

Transnational cinema is a category that moves beyond, as the prefix suggests, the national cinema model. It allows us to consider films which do not comply for one nationality and can be therefore valued on their appeal to popular audiences. Moreover, the transnational has facilitated an ongoing reassessment of established film histories, exposing the inherent "forgotten" interruptions in national cinemas, opening the way for a more considerate approach that challenges the centrality of Europe and Hollywood revealing that ultimately any national cinema is transnational either because of the circulation of films and foreign/migrant personnel or because of the medium's capacity to move and evoke movement (Ezra & Rowden 2006: Introduction). Moreover, we are now able to gradually discuss the cinemas of geographically remote countries without Hollywood and Europe and to understand the complexities of "world cinema" as distinct categories of cultural expression that figure on a more complex web of relations, collaborations and interruptions since not all cinemas have been to this point fashioned on the exclusive model of a national cinema. Modern Scholarship has basically focused on a model that refers to the national cinemas of Europe and Hollywood and the auteurs of other countries such as Japan (Kurosawa, Ozu, Mizoguchi) and India (Ray) while transnational discourse allows for cross-cultural interpretations that evoke the

interconnectivity and influence of foreign cultures "forgotten" by the national cinema model<sup>34</sup>. For this reason, Higson (2000) and Bergfelder (2005) consider transnationalism a more subtle model.

From the moment that Greek filmmakers obtain European and transnational funding and become preoccupied with migration, Greek cinema becomes European, producing through a dominant institution and circuit of contemporary European culture and subsidy and, at the same time, portraying what is possibly one of the most flaming issues of Europe. Therefore, Greek cinema is understood as European because of its cultural and creative background and its preoccupation with par excellence European concerns.

At this time additionally, the GFC is no longer the exclusive source of funding and Greek cinema does not narrate the nation as a "finite, limited space, inhabited by a tightly coherent and unified community, closed off to other identities besides national identity" (Higson, 2000: 66). This is the foundation of cultural exchange which happens on various levels. Transnational cinema figures primarily as a financial agreement and a strategic way out for filmmakers faced with insufficient state subsidy. This is the foundation of coproduction which happens also on the exchange of personnel, cast and on post-production.

European coproduction, contrary to transnational coproduction, is understood in this thesis as predominantly a Eurocentric phenomenon, established by major foundations of contemporary European culture such as the European Council and the Eurimages Foundation which have brought forth other respective funding sources such as the LUX award which aim at establishing the oneness of European culture. In this respect, Bergfelder (2005: 315) aptly remarks that research into transnational cinemas and transnational film cultures requires "research into discrete national cinemas" which ultimately means that one cannot but adhere to the limitations of the national. In this case, I argue also that European coproduction serves the ideological agenda of diversity (European multiculturalism) which originates from diverse yet discrete nations where diversity overrides difference asserting the peripheral understanding of Europe's "others" particularly from the postcolonial world.

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<sup>34</sup>Eleftheriotis' (2006) discussion on the exhibition of Indian melodramas in Greek open-air cinemas in the late 1950s-early 1960s and the anathema of critics on such a "poor" affair is a brilliant example of the transnational at work.

The dominant theme of migration to Greece and the binary of us versus them that figures so strongly in the proposed films (with the exception of *Eduart*) is not only an indication of how the nation is in operation but of how this functions in relation to the finitude of Europe as a single entity that is fortified from "invaders" asserting one side of the binary as central. This issue and the category's debt to the function of an international capitalist economy<sup>35</sup> (which is not the sole property of Hollywood) forces Bergfelder (2012) and Higbee and Lim (2010) to argue that transnational cinema is closer to internationalism than transnationalism. They therefore propose respectively cosmopolitan authorship and critical transnationalism as more pertinent categories that acknowledge power. European cinema necessarily comes under postcolonial scrutiny which by definition requires that we question Europe and its national cinemas.

This is not however an anathema on transnational film production or discourse since transnational cinema, as a discursive field, paves the way to more inclusive frameworks and arguments. Most importantly this allows us to deal with difference as a driving interruption of national and European cinema and a central function of transnational cinemas and discourse. This thesis rests on an evocation and assessment of difference which is linked to representations of contemporary migration. It derives from Homi Bhabha's famous declaration to assert cultural difference rather than diversity which is part and parcel of Europe's multicultural agenda which places difference within clearly demarcated borders (1994: 4). It is the task of scholars to highlight difference and assess it as a source of cultural interruption which all too often dissolves.

My running definition therefore of transnational cinema is of one that resists the exclusiveness of national cinema but which has inherent limitations since essentialisms go more than skin deep. It allows us to showcase the various cultural exchanges in the creative context which are indeed exciting and suggestive of a more inclusive cinema. The content of the films is the more decisive source of scrutiny however and in this case transnational discourse allows us to highlight difference. To account though for its dissolving, I rely on critical transnationalism according to Higbee and Lim:

Transnationalism in films and in the study of cinema cannot be taken as a given or for granted. The concept of 'transnational cinema' cannot be merely descriptive because all border crossing activities are necessarily fraught with issues of power; neither can it be purely prescriptive as this often amounts to nothing more than

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<sup>35</sup>See for example Kerr (2010) who exposes the function of international capital in *Babel* (Iñárritu, 2006).

wishful thinking. Rather, we propose a critical, discursive stance towards the question of the transnational in film studies so that we are alert to the challenges and potentialities that greet each transnational trajectory: whether it takes place within a film's narrative or production process, across film industries, or indeed in academia. In the study of films, a critical transnationalism does not ghettoize transnational filmmaking in interstitial and marginal spaces but rather interrogates how these filmmaking activities negotiate with the national on all levels - from cultural policy to financial sources, from the multiculturalism of difference to how it reconfigures the nation's image of itself. In examining all forms of cross border activities, it is also always attentive to questions of postcoloniality, politics and power, and how these, in turn, uncover new forms of neocolonialist practices in the guise of popular genres or auteurist aesthetics (2010: 18).



## 2.2 Difference, representation and postcolonial theory

Difference is a defining term that guides this thesis and frames its radical departure point. It is a major point of reference in the works of many cultural theorists (Rutherford, 1990, 1990b; Bhabha, 1990; Mercer, 1994; Hall, [1987] 1996) and in the philosophical doctrine of poststructuralist philosophers (Derrida, 2000, 1981; Foucault, 1972-1977 [cited in Gordon, 1981]; [1977] 1991). Their work is valued through their studies of "systems of representation" "by which all sorts of objects, people and events are correlated with a set of concepts or *mental representations* which we carry around in our heads" (Hall, 1997b). These intellectuals have been present at some major junctures of modern and contemporary popular struggles and have examined them through a critical lens elaborating on the discursive value they offer. Hall in particular was on the editorial board of the "New Left Review" and participated in the riots of 1968, against the Vietnam war and the rise of the New Right. The other scholars come from a familiar as well as leftist background that has shaped a great deal of the scholarly discourses from that time onward. Their work is important for research into representation, difference, marginality and subaltern groups.

Jonathan Rutherford for example offers a discursive account of the miners' strike in Britain from 1984 to 1985 and how it revealed numerous divisions within the norm of class divisions, various identities and affiliations that emerge primarily as difference (1990b). For Rutherford, the process of combining elements and difference into a third term (beyond a binary) is akin to what Antonio Gramsci spoke of as "the starting point of critical elaboration" (1971, cited in Rutherford, 1990b).

The representational strategies of directors in the films discussed in this thesis are deeply affected by the essentialisms that have been governing western perceptions of difference. In other words, the films, despite their significant departure from a "fragmentary and image-based history" (Williams & Chrisman, 1993: 8) that has defined the colonised and the peripheries of the west, ultimately reinforce the peripheral perception of, in this case, Albania and Albanians. This highlights the mutual functioning of power and knowledge by which the latter endorses power and power "enables the production of a range of knowledges about other cultures" (Ibid.). Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman highlight the links of Orientalism with modes of representation and the Enlightenment (reminding us of Anderson's linking of the latter to nationalism and the modern nation):

Such is the power of Orientalist or colonialist knowledge that even those discourses or modes of representation which are not formally or ideologically aligned with it

may be pulled in an Orientalist direction, or may simply be appropriated by Orientalism and utilised as if they were another facet of its world view. Orientalism's enormous appetite for forms of knowledge - scientific, historical, geographical, linguistic, literary, artistic, anthropological - derives in part from its location within the period of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment's universalising will to knowledge (for better or worse) feeds Orientalism's will to power. The latter then stands as an example of the production of knowledge as [...] negative: Stereotyping, Othering, dominatory. Colonial discourse analysis and post-colonial theory are thus critiques of the process of production of knowledge about the Other (1993: 8).

To this, Bhabha adds that "the aim of cultural difference is to re-articulate the sum of knowledge from the perspective of the signifying position of the minority that resists totalization [...]" (1994: 162). Difference thus is understood as "political, positional and essentially fluid" (Eleftheriotis, 2001: 50).

### 2.3 Methodology

This thesis develops through an object based interrogation of the films. This means that the major methodological tools are textual and discourse analysis which require "reading" the films and interrogating their subtext. I therefore highlight the points which suggest an interruption within dominant discourses, the racist binary of the "good" and "bad" Albanian, but also where the films fall short in achieving this. In order to articulate difference and to capture it at the point where it is demarcated, where it unsettles or ultimately dissolves, a critical methodology is also required. A critical methodology is indeed required for artifacts that form a discourse of the margins. This means that we need to be alerted to the fact that nations, nationhood and national identity are imagined. This allows us to acknowledge the way nationalism becomes manifest in the films, as an inflamed manifestation of nationhood. Nationalism on the contrary is not imagined but tangible and following on Gellner and Anderson, it prefigures any claim to imagined ideas. Moreover, this allows us to acknowledge the function of power and knowledge which, relying on nationhood and nationalism, is the bedrock of the "good" and "bad" Albanian as much as the concept of the "bad" Greek. My short references to *Eduart* and to the figure of Panayotis in *correction* showcase Albanians without labels, borders and binaries. This reveals that the aforementioned binary does not account for any layered and elusive individual since it is restricting and loaded with essentialisms.

This thesis is divided according to two distinct approaches. I firstly address the cultural and creative context of *Hostage*, *Eduart* and *correction*. I address the various interruptions that figure on the levels of production, cast and crew and the background of the filmmakers. The films are interrogated in relation to a wider context that is implicitly linked to their reception and circulation and to European and national policy. Examining these issues in relation to the films allows us to assess their role and value as cultural vehicles, sites of debate on the nation and their discursive value in film studies. Stringent policy and the expectations of certain interest groups reflect immigration and citizenship policies that the Greek state and Europe have been promoting and a wider perception of difference as a popular disdain towards Albanian immigrants in Greece. In simple terms, the films mirror the greater struggles in society and political spheres implicit in the exclusion of Albanian immigrants and the growth of nationalism in Greece during the era of migration. By examining what happens behind the text we can see how films are mediums of the nation and how they question its legitimacy, inciting change and resistance.

The section on representation is divided into four distinct categories which allow us to follow the trajectory of immigration from flight to assimilation. The first category is entitled "the migrant imagination". Here, I analyse specific scenes in *From the Snow*, *Hostage* and *Eduart* that showcase the Eldorado model designated for the west overall. It is important that we maintain national specificity since the way this model refers to Greece, and how it fuels the imagination and hopes of Albanian migrants, differs from other cases of migration. I argue that at this stage of the journey, the filmmakers negate Albanian criminality since they reveal that migration is fuelled by superior powers that force the migrants to depart to Greece.

I proceed then to examine the actual journey of hope from the moment of flight to its sombre ending in *From the Snow*, *Hostage* and *Eternity and a Day*. this is where we can see good intentions falling short and that stereotypes are deeply ingrained so much as to suggest that the filmmakers cannot do more than showcase Albanians as merely "good" in order to negate criminality. In other words negating criminality by reinforcing victimhood. In this respect, Naficy provides the backdrop for an understanding of "border subjects" (2001: 201), of migrants who live literally between borders or in the margins of the host nation, deterritorialized and "othered". The transformation into border subject is a direct result of the migrants' interaction with a hostile host. In the words of Naficy, the border transforms them into border subjects (Naficy 2001, 220). Adding to this, Gazmend Kapllani argues that the border denotes the point between "eternal flight and eternal return" and "always going somewhere" (Kapllani 2010, 127). Kapllani is a former border subject whose journey and bordered life is eloquently retold in his *Short Border Handbook* where he coins from the offset the term "border syndrome" which highlights the same impression as Naficy's "border effect" (2001: 221). While Naficy offers a more appropriate term to theorise the implications of border crossing and a bordered life, Kapllani highlights the magnitude and permanence of the actual effect that border crossing may have on a migrant through an emotive evocation of his own journey.

Naficy relies heavily on embodied protest which figures in films where the migrant, according to Naficy, willingly becomes marginalised as a way of embodying protest towards the intolerant host nation. In these chapters I challenge this view point which is another essentialism that figures strongly in the films discussed. Accepting embodied protest as a form of interruption is arguably misguided since it prefigures the victimhood of migrants. At the same time, both Naficy and Kapllani rely on a medical index in order to describe the effect of border crossing. This leads to a strict classification either with the

term "syndrome" or "effect" which ultimately deterritorializes the migrants and cannot account for a varied spectrum of representation since it is loaded with essentialisms that are deterritorializing and restricting.

In order to understand how border syndrome/effect are "caught" one needs to assess what happens at the border and how the migrants are positioned. In this respect, claustrophobia and detainment in transitory and periphractic spaces are on display in many instants of the films. *Mise en scène* is decisive in affectively portraying border syndrome. The feeling of claustrophobia is a dominant theme that pervades narrative, *mise en scène* and camera movement and is conveyed in a manner that Naficy exemplifies:

Claustrophobia and violent environments presented through labyrinthine deployments of shadowy spaces, usually in places where people lack freedom such as jails, mental institutions and army barracks; abrupt camera movements and editing patterns; temporal circularity; tragically bounded narrative structures (2001: 190) [...] Paranoid structures take the form of closed *mise-en-scène* and filming style and a receding structure of feelings. Small, dingy, and overcrowded immigrant apartments, prison cells, hotel rooms, buses, tunnels, and confining symbolic spaces such as the suitcase are favored. The claustrophobia of these settings is intensified by a dark lighting scheme that limits sight, by barriers in the shot that impede vision, and by tight shot composition, immobile framing, and a stationary camera. The characters' physical disability or immobility deepens recessive feeling structures (ibid.:191).

In order to understand how (cinematic) migrants adopt a submissive embodied protest, Naficy addresses psychological interpretations of the behavior of women suffering from hysteria and eating disorders: "Women [...] may willingly whittle down the space that they occupy in order to fit the normalizing gaze of society [...] - a way of "behaving themselves" (ibid.: 189) through overcompensation. In the same way, exilic subjects seek to occupy less space and not stir tension amongst indigenous populations. This may develop into a pathological condition, a disorder, as the subject becomes obsessed with this practically for the sake of it believing that hence he/she will be accepted. This phenomenon, according to Naficy, is displayed in the films of exilic filmmakers who utilise this notion as a form of protest against the repressive ideology that binds the subject. This is something however that I challenge and question in the given chapters as biased and androcentric, even though embodied protest is a significant theme in the films, particularly in *Hostage*.

In this case, I rely more on Loshitzky's analysis of ideology and the logic of Fortress Europe in her *Screening Strangers* where she claims that "through practices of assimilation, absorption, and integration, which are in accordance with the models of citizenship adopted by each European nation state [...] it is hoped that the good migrants will be digested by the national and European body" (2010, 2). This highlights the deeper implications of embodied protest and that it is the result of a deeply rooted approach to migrants as "good" or "bad".

Interestingly, Naficy and Loshitzky diverge from any reference to transnational or national cinema as well as from minority discourse. Naficy's *Accented Cinema* however serves as a blanket term that cannot account for numerous transnational but also national dimensions. Loshitzky moreover is not preoccupied with form or with proposing a category, but with "reading" films which deal with "journeys of hope", "cities of hope" and the assimilation of migrants in Fortress Europe in terms of theme and representation. Like Loshitzky, I follow the trajectory of migration to Fortress Europe and attempt to highlight the ideological implications of representation, regardless of any proposed category that relies on specific features. In this respect, methodologically, although I do examine the films through categories that highlight the trajectory of migration, I ultimately rely on representation per se.

Dealing with journeys means necessarily that one deals with mobility, movement and stasis, the first referring to the ability to move. Migration is mobility and therefore plays a significant role in assessing representations of Albanian migrants as border subjects, governed by mobility or stasis, departing, on the move or caught in the interstices of nations and in essence at borders that assert stasis as a way of life and living. Mobility is an inherent feature of cinema and the medium and is thus an ideal point from where we can begin to theorise representations of mobility as self reflexive. In this respect, Eleftheriotis' *Cinematic Journeys* (2010) is a valuable tool since it offers a broad theoretical and historical account of movement, from the figure of the flâneur to representations of migration and border crossing, to "cross-border films", a term that Naficy and Eleftheriotis use to refer to films that travel and are exhibited across national borders.

My last chapter deals with the topic of hospitality where I address *See You* and *Plato's Academy* in detail. These, alongside *From the Snow* and *correction* include diverse and challenging representations of hospitality. The chapter is entitled "the Albanian in the room" highlighting the existence of Albanians in the host nation, living besides indigenous populations and asserting an uncomfortable reality that, as the "elephant in the room",

often goes unnoticed. In this section I rely heavily on Jacques Derrida's seminal speech *On Hospitality* (2000). the author here stays true to his teachings which are famous for the philosopher's radical approach to Marxism and to any inclusive ideology, as he debunked class relations and revealed inherent antagonisms in most accepted works of critical thought. This was achieved, according to Rutherford, "by recognising their [cultural identities] nature [which] opens up the space for individual historical agency" (1990b: 21).

## Chapter 3

### Behind the text

#### Production, exhibition and reception of *Hostage*, *Eduart* and *correction*

##### Introduction

In this chapter I address a popular argument that takes into consideration the cultural and creative context of a film, its reception and the discursive value of film policy, which in many cases is a driving force of a film and of its impact, on a local and global scale. Taking these issues under serious consideration broadens our scope and generates new value for film classification, as based on several and diverse questions rather than on the artistic and national appeal of a film (Crofts, 1998; Higson, 2000: 68-69; Eleftheriotis, 2001: 32-33; Williams, 2002: 3-5; Bergfelder, 2005: 329; Elsaesser, 2012: 38). In other words, we need to consider the transnational dimensions of cinematic production, distribution, reception as much as the more national dimensions of these phenomena in order to broaden both categories (Higson 2000, Hjort & Mackenzie 2000).

In any case, we consider the implications of national film policy, how it steers exhibition and reception, its impact in terms of classification and moreover the vast and perpetually shifting web that involves "sites of conflict and various interest groups" (Williams, 2002: 3-5) that resolve the trajectory and impact of a film in wider cultural spheres. This means that films, such as these addressed in this chapter, are loci of a wider debate on the nation and are products of a struggle to assert a cinematic culture that transcends and, consequently, contradicts the limits of the nation-state.

One needs to consider also the particularities of both transnational and national cinema, their practical and discursive features, respectively the challenges of cultural exchange and difference and the persistence of nationhood and nationalism in Europe and European cinemas. Moreover, we need to consider how filmmakers evoke the nation, regardless of their favourable or critical stance. The filmmakers discussed here evoke the nation, through allegory, utilizing familiar tropes. In *Hostage* the confined space of the bus is a symbol of contemporary Greece in which various figures that embody political, sexual, gender and racial affiliations express the experience of Greeks who are as alienated by nationalism and patriarchy as the immigrant. This is in any respect a narrative that puts the national in operation particularly since difference plays such a decisive role. In *Eduart*, a narrative that utilizes the Albanian household and its hierarchy, the country's tumultuous history and a trajectory of reconciliation between Greece and Albania evoke the Albanian



nation and the possibility for change and inclusion in Albania, Greece and the Balkans. The nation therefore figures strongly here and so do narratives that evoke a nation, not one under construction (nation building narrative) but deconstruction.

In this respect, I examine the overall background issues that are intrinsically linked to *Hostage* and *Eduart* considering all the while the tensions between the unity and oneness of national and European cinema and the cultural exchanges and diversity of transnational cinema showcasing the capacity of the films to depart from the more insular features of a national cinema. Moreover, we consider that the films examined here promote a critique of national identity, suggesting that filmmakers are agents of cultural transformation waging more than artistic expression.

I begin by assessing the various challenging features of *Hostage*, namely the controversy surrounding the film's reception in Greece, Albania and Europe, the position of Constantinos Giannaris as an agent of an inclusive cinema and overall national culture. The film and its cultural and political baggage highlight the value of national and transnational cinema in assessing films and inciting change and is thus an ideal departure point. I will argue that the film falls into several categories (Greek, European and Balkan cinema) and is indicative of an increasingly difficult challenge to classify cultural artifacts. *Hostage* directly addresses the Greek-Albanian confrontation and the marginalization of Albanians in Greece and launches a full-on assault against Greekness. Giannaris achieves this by articulating the horrors that the migrant experiences in Greece. *Elion* and the film comprise a mirror that reflects to audiences the dreadful implications of intolerance on the defenseless migrant. The great gamble therefore on the part of Giannaris was domestic reception of his film and the risk for his own reputation.

Lastly, we examine similar issues, regarding national film policy and how it fails to foster inclusiveness in a time when coproduction and cultural exchange are dominant modes of filmmaking and production. Our case study here is *Eduart* which challenges the alleged criminality of the dreaded Albanian "criminal", rather than a Greek - Albanian confrontation. In the last section I focus on the overall shortfalls of national film policy and funding, the positive features of coproduction, transnational subsidy and the role of film as a cultural commodity in Greek society. My case study here is *correction*.

### 3.1 Power and resistance: *Hostage*

#### 3.1.1 Situated, universal, national and transnational: Constantinos Giannaris

Giannaris is a diasporic filmmaker, born in Australia to a Greek family in 1959. At a young age he moved to Greece and studied finance and philosophy in 1976 at the universities of Keele and Birmingham respectively. In 1982 he displayed his initial preoccupation with filmmaking<sup>36</sup>. His career as a filmmaker began in the United Kingdom with a number of short films. Giannaris' first, *Jean Genet is Dead* (1989), is indicative of his visceral fascination with homosexuality and masculinity that pervade his entire oeuvre. His is a forty minute film about love in the time when AIDS was an alarming issue in the United Kingdom which saw also a criminalization of homosexuality (Terzis, 2011). In the film's voice over one can hear recited poems of Jean Genet that reinforce its statement for tolerance.

Giannaris' first full length feature is the television film *3 Steps to Heaven* (1995) that was subsidized by the British Film Institute (BFI) and Channel 4<sup>37</sup>. The film is comprised of a British cast and established the director's reputation in Greece. Giannaris was a passionate devotee of Derek Jarman whom he regards as his mentor (Terzis, 2011). His identity as a director was indeed shaped at the time by the space that British television and British cinema facilitated where Jarman was by any means a controversial and influential figure. Moreover, as a homosexual man, he was given the opportunity to portray his sexual and gender affiliations within the enclaves of a vibrant artistic and cultural movement that promoted such issues and a relative iconography. This was a decisive time in the director's career which enriched his cinematic caché and which he would ultimately "smuggle" into Greece and Greek cinema.

Giannaris began his career as a diasporic filmmaker, of Greek origin, working within the context of British national cinema and television and has progressed to a wider definition of a filmmaker with an international appeal, displaying a multitude of languages and affiliations, through a personal representation of migration and difference, in the era of migration. His films, European and transnational coproductions, are certainly not entirely national but moreover situated in the interstices of the national and the transnational since he ultimately evokes national identity and belonging as departure points to something more inclusive. In the words of Naficy, Giannaris is "situated but [also] universal" (2001: 10).

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<sup>36</sup><http://www.epohi.gr/kersanidis> (URL not available).

<sup>37</sup><http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0126766/> Last accessed at 27 June 2014.

His status as a purely Greek filmmaker is questioned by his mixed nationality and cosmopolitan features conveyed through his films per se and diverse cinematic and cultural affiliations. Giannaris is one of many diasporic filmmakers that emerged after the second half of the twentieth century in an increasingly globalized world (Kerr, 2010), inhabiting different national cinemas. An increasingly globalized world and cultural circuit facilitates greater movement, in other words transnational migration and cultural exchange. According to Paul Kerr (ibid.), a result of globalization is the increased emergence and popularity of film festivals that facilitate and encourage cultural exchange. Indicative of this is Giannaris' popularity in Europe and the United States. In 2011, his short films, entitled *Shards* ("Thravsmata"), lasting in total over three hours (Zoumpoulakis, 2012), were exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York and presented by the museum's curator, Laurence Kardish<sup>38</sup>. Before this, his short film *North of Vortex* (1991), with a Greek and British cast, was screened at the Tate Modern Gallery in London for the "Time Zones" exhibition in 2004. This is also where the first public screening of *Hostage* took place, on November twelfth 2004<sup>39</sup>.

Giannaris is thus situated and at the same time extends borders and the particularities of any given national establishment, as he has an increased movement and awareness of difference, alterity and of his own foreignness which makes him moreover appealing to non-Greek audiences, cultural institutions and festival circuits. His cultural and national affiliations establish an impure gaze and register particularly since these are "smuggled" and "mixed" with more particular national and local features.

According to Hall (1994: 192) "diaspora speaks in our own name, of ourselves and from our own experience" which however is not the case here since, in Britain, Giannaris is implicated in all things British and speaks in "our name" only once he discovers his niche in Greece. As a novice filmmaker, Giannaris is a member of a certain avant garde elite of British cinema which at the time launched various challenges towards the political establishment and national cinema through a radical politics of representation and formal experimentation. In this respect Giannaris "speaks" not in favour of a Greek identity and experience but of a more universal and simultaneously personal experience that shifts from the restrictions of nationhood, establishing a register that cannot be entirely classified, particularly since it shifts from one position of enunciation to another as the director moves from one homeland to another and portrays shifting and new connections. As a director

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<sup>38</sup><http://www.parathyro.com/?p=6090> Last accessed 27 June 2014.

<sup>39</sup><http://in.gr/2/11/2004> (URL not available).

with more than one homeland, which may simultaneously suggest no homeland at all, one cannot examine the filmmaker and his work as entirely national. While the transnational model seems more fitting, this would be a prescription of a title which is still tightly knit and binding. For this reason one needs to consider the various degrees of difference and alterity in the director's background and films which suggest that his identity "lives with and through, not despite, difference, by hybridity" (Hall, 1990: 222). Arguably, what is at once universal and also situated, slips easily through the cracks and cannot be cohesively classified. This is yet another source of frustration in film studies which nevertheless facilitates greater inclusion.

In 1995 Giannaris returned to Greece where he continued filmmaking and established his reputation. His films, despite obvious departures from a national cinema, concern all things Greek: the repatriated diaspora of the Black Sea region to its alleged homeland, the encounter of the nation with migrant populations, the lives of diasporas and migrants in Athens and the disintegration of the Greek family. His films challenge the foundations of the Greek nation but implicitly concern these very issues which are national concerns although, arguably, concerns of migrants as well. Arguably, the transformation of Greece to a host of immigrants is one of the most controversial concerns of the Greek state and populace and it evokes the nation and its unity. A film which challenges the former, while also placing itself in the contemporary sphere of social and political upheaval brought by migration in Greece, is a national film, despite any departures from the more exclusive frameworks of national cinema which is to say that a film can be national without these exclusive features that dictate citizenship and belonging. After all, transnational does not exclude national.

Nevertheless, as Giannaris has revealed<sup>40</sup>, his experience of life in Greece has only heightened his alterity since, very much like his mentor, he is an internal exile who certainly is Greek but does not feel that he belongs in and to a country and culture that criminalizes migration and homosexuality. It comes as no surprise then that Giannaris has been leading initiatives for Gay Pride in Athens and for an awareness of queer cinema (Kiriakos, 2001: 120). At the same time, he is implicated in the increasingly alarming violations against immigrants and refugees in Athens, showing openly his support to them and literally fighting Golden Dawn supporters in the streets risking his own life (Saklampanis, 2010). He does not hesitate to express that he sees himself as a stranger in a strange land who therefore identifies with immigrants and their plight (Terzis, 2011;

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<sup>40</sup> Personal interview with Constantinos Giannaris (2011).

Adamidis & Likourgou, 2005). He refers to the violence and the various initiatives of the state in 2011, such as the erection of a concrete wall on the northern border, as a "new apartheid" and a "modernization of Greek racism" (Saklampanis, 2010).

Conclusively, it comes as no surprise that Giannaris sees a reflection of his own oppression in the multitude of oppressed migrants (Adamidis & Likourgou, 2005). One may argue that the director's films are "an aesthetic response to the experience of displacement[...]" (Naficy, 2001: 10) which is certainly not far from the truth but contrary to what Naficy claims in relation to diasporic filmmakers, Giannaris does not occupy an interstitial location in national circles of film production, subsidy and appreciation. He does after all figure highly in the "quality" rankings of film critics and festivals while the controversy surrounding *Hostage* and Giannaris' gesturing to the committee of the State Awards of Quality have made him notorious.

Giannaris discusses the various alarming social phenomena of Greece, articulating diverse identities from a distance, as a foreigner, and, at the same time, immersed in Greek culture and society. His own identity has been molded by the experience of emigration and homosexuality, as individual sites of identification and struggle, and, while he articulates Greek national identity, he reserves a certain distance as a nomad, a man with more than one homeland and diverse affiliations that bleed into his films. According to the classification that Naficy (2001: 4) has proposed, we can argue that Giannaris' films, where "strangers" are the protagonists, are indicative of an accented cinema, a cinema that has in other words a certain "accent", different from the mainstream of Greek cinema and which emerges through patterns of difference. This difference stems from the radically diverse identities on display in the films that speak of an experience that is alien to "our name" and the director's foreign affiliations.

The cinemas of exilic and diasporic filmmakers emerge from a diverse cultural input and are characterized by hybridity since accented filmmakers "speak" from a position that is in and beyond the language, culture and identity of the homeland and extend their output to the general public, as much as to the fractured collective of the diaspora. Moreover, as Hall has discussed, diasporic identities perpetually produce and reproduce themselves anew marking thus a continuously shifting cinema that sees diasporic filmmakers push the borders of national cinema outward facilitating a greater degree of inclusiveness by "smuggling" difference - the foreign accent that is manifest in form, thematics and the overall cultural and creative context of a film (1990: 222).

Naficy essentially highlights the notion of difference as embedded within representation, mirroring the diasporic identity of the director. In other words, the director's alterity is an authorial signature. Therefore, an accented film like *Hostage* stands out because it reflects the foreign identity of its director and its various affiliations that reveal how he is also a stranger in Greece.

What is very challenging and worth mentioning here is that *Hostage* extends to a fractured collective indeed, but not a diasporic Greek community, on the contrary, the Albanian community, in and beyond Albania, a country that has seen generations of men in exile. In other words, if we were to speak of a diasporic cinema in terms of Hall's meditations, then Giannaris' is an entirely new diasporic cinema. Moreover, it is a "cinema of duty" (Malik, 1996), which highlights the plight of a foreign community in the director's indigenous community, doing quite the opposite of what Malik and Naficy suggest, becoming in a way an ambassador for Albanians in Greece, although he is not Albanian or indeed an immigrant per se. Nevertheless, the film not only appeals but moreover is almost forcefully directed to the Greek nation, one that allegorically comes to life inside the bus and outside asserting thus that the imagined community is tangible. Accented cinema in this respect does not account for the diversity inherent in the background and films of Giannaris as much as for the least accented features.

It is important that we consider this discussion on the filmmaker's background. On the one hand it is a popular argument in film studies that we need to consider numerous other issues that are intrinsically linked to films and which reinforce a holistic debate on cinema not merely as a an artistic product but as an overall cultural artifact and outlet. On the other, the background of a film and filmmaker are inevitably embedded in the films per se and therefore need to be considered for an inclusive textual analysis. The elusive features of Giannaris highlight the pleasures of transnationalism and suggest that, in a globalised world, existing systems of classification fall short and that we need to rely further on hybridity and the interplay between fixed identities and homelands, difference and diaspora which require greater unpacking rather than classification. Giannaris' interview to myself<sup>41</sup>, where he reveals that he wished to make with *Hostage* "a film about us, his own experience as a pariah, a film about the body of the immigrant but also a bit of a thriller and drama in the style of Sidney Lumet" exposes this hybridity that permeates both form and theme and reveals a cinema that cannot be classified entirely as Greek and which is an example of the hybridity of transnational films.

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<sup>41</sup> Personal interview with Constantinos Giannaris (2011).

### 3.1.2 The hostage situation and its aftermath

*Hostage* is based on actual events that took place on 28 May 1999 in Northern Greece (Spirou, 2011: 10). A 25 year old Albanian immigrant, Flamur Pislí, hijacked an intercity bus going from Kato Scholari, a semi-industrial village in Thessaloniki, to the south. The event began to draw increasing attention as Pislí demanded that television channels document the entire event. He demanded as ransom 50,000,000 drachmas and that the police reveal the existence of three Kalashnikov guns that were planted in his work space, a construction site on his employer's estate. Pislí insisted that he was framed by his employer, the local police chief who sought illegal arms dealings with him and who sent Pislí to detention, where he was beaten and sexually abused (Papailias, 2003: 1060). The journey ended in Albania where Albanian police snipers shot down Pislí and George Koulouris, a Greek passenger. During the hostage situation, television channels and police forces formed a convoy following the bus, documenting the event and negotiating with Pislí. The trajectory of the event was broadcast primarily by Antenna TV and the reporter and newscaster Nikos Evangelatos, a popular television persona at the height of his career and popularity.

This was one of two significant hostage situations in the late 1990s that was documented in its entirety with live broadcasts by television channels and reporters who sought to exploit the situation in order to increase their ratings by endorsing a populist rhetoric that criminalizes immigration. The news program of Evangelatos reproduced nine times in three minutes the scene of Koulouris' corpse creating a sinister atmosphere overriding fear and hatred, drawing on sensationalism and the popular image of an Albanian as criminal getting "what he deserved" (Konstantinidou, 2001: 99; Spirou, 2011: 25).

The aftermath of the tragic incident saw twenty one articles published in various newspapers including *Ta Nea* (29/5/1999), *Kathimerini* (29/5/1999, cited in Spirou, 2011: 35-36) and *Eleftherotypia* (29/5/1999 and 2/6/1999, cited in Mini, 2006: 74). In these articles, Pislí is mentioned as "the Albanian" ("o Alvanos") as well as on television channels, particularly the news, where reporters are keen on referring to immigrant criminals, or suspected immigrants, by mentioning their nationality. They thus establish Albanophobia, additionally by using dramatic music and irrelevant archival footage of crime scenes, demonizing the Albanian (Kapplani, 2010: 91-92).

The hostage situation and the lack of resourcefulness of the Greek police forces reflected on a hostage incident that happened in Athens in 1998. In this other case, a Greek family was taken hostage in a tenement flat by a Romanian immigrant, Sorin Matei. The sting operation of the Greek police, that happened more than twenty four hours later resulted in the death of a young Greek woman and a disgraced national police force that had made very risky calculations regarding the hand grenade that Matei was holding and threatening to detonate. After the hijacking of the bus and the death of Koulouris, the Greek press wrote about the hijacking as a "parody of the Matei incident" (*Kathimerini, Eleftherotypia* 29/5/1999, cited in Spirou, 2011: 36). The very next day, police forces in Athens, following orders by the Prime Minister Costas Simitis, initiated a sweep operation of Albanian immigrants, documented and clandestine, setting off a diplomatic conflict with Albania, a representative of whom declared that Greece was exploiting the hostage situation as an excuse to deport immigrants. Penelope Papailias interprets this initiative as "an attempt [of Greece] to deflect attention from its responsibilities" (2003: 1061). This conflict was resolved quickly without further collateral damage revealing nevertheless the intensity of Greek-Albanian relations and their nationalistic background as the hijacking confirmed the growing public sentiment that both countries must sharply define their borders (ibid.: 1060). Moreover, one may draw in this case from Isaiah Berlin's insight on the definition of nationalism. Berlin argues that "nationalism is an inflamed manifestation of nationhood, which is triggered by a form of collective humiliation" (1990: 245). The feeling of humiliation emerging from the thought that the Greek state is unable to protect its people and that the national police force is incapable of serving its role of protecting Greeks, undeniably brings with it the seeds of nationalism and xenophobia. This is true particularly when the sentiments of humiliation are perceived as collective, a task that the media implement to the fullest extent. It thus seems as no coincidence that in the following years, a ministry for "the protection of citizens" ("Ipourgio Prostasias tou Politi") was established.

For two years, the Albanian government did not acknowledge that Koulouris was shot by Albanian snipers, despite footage from Reuters. Following the sweep operation ordered by the Simitis government, the Albanian foreign minister, Paskal Milo, threatened to flood Northern Epirus with Albanian refugees from Kosovo, who were descending to Albania during NATO bombing operations in Kosovo and the former Yugoslavia.

The hijacking and the death of Koulouris were still flaming issues in 2005 when *Hostage* was released in cinemas (Spirou, 2011: 40) while Albanians were still regarded as



a threat to national sovereignty and ethnic homogeneity. Albanophobia was still a critical issue affecting the lives of Albanian immigrants and defining the overall attitude of Greeks towards Albanians.

This was a ubiquitous phenomenon as the state of affairs was underlined by populist sentiments regarding Greeks and Albanians. In 1998, the state proceeded to new measures regarding an ongoing modernisation of the country (Spirou, 2011: 15). This included among other things agreeing to a European currency. The archbishop Christodoulos, a significant figure who influenced political decisions and who fought against secularism was elected, while the country was preparing to host the 2004 Olympic Games. However, the increasingly growing numbers of undocumented immigrants and various headlines of newspapers stirred mass panic that seemed inappropriate at the time of modernisation. Headlines included "300% increase in the sale of alarms" (*Kathimerini*, 14/3/1998), "terror has spread in the city" (*Kathimerini*, 15/3/1998) while rightist newspapers *Eleftheros Typos* and *Eleftheros* blamed Albanians and clandestine immigrants overall for increased crime rates (cited in Konstantinidou, 1999: 125). *Ethnos* very obviously demonizes "Albanians": "The people are distraught as yet another bus has been hijacked by an Albanian gangster. The Greek people demand that these phenomena cease since they endanger innocent civilians" (*To Ethnos*, 1/6/1999) while according to *Avriani* "Greece is at the mercy of Albanian criminals" (1/6/1999). Moreover, the then Minister of Public Order George Romaios declared openly (*Kathimerini*, 25/3/1998 cited in Spirou, 2011: 44) that "the Albanians are to blame for everything". After the death of Koulouris, Romaios submitted his resignation which was however not accepted by Simitis (ibid.). With such an image looming in the press and media, one can argue that a film suggesting that Greek bigotry is responsible for the hijacking would be welcomed with hostility, as it indeed was.

### 3.1.3 Questioning the national in *Hostage*: production and cast

As all the films I am examining, *Hostage* is a coproduction between various Greek, European and non European contributors, private and public. It was coproduced primarily by private sources including Giannaris' G. Giannaris Films, Highway Productions and the Turkish Sarmasik Sanatlar. The film received also the support of the GFC, the private Greek television channel Alpha, Graal Digital Creations in Athens and Strada Productions with the additional support of the Eurimages initiative for European cinema and the See Cinema Network. The film is predominantly a Greek – Turkish coproduction a fact that designates it partly as non European, also obvious in the cast, the filming settings and the use of the Albanian language.

This case of coproduction is indicative of a transnational exchange that has been happening between Greece and Turkey for some years. In particular, Turkish soap operas have been becoming increasingly popular in Greek channels since the mid 2000s, with showings programmed daily during prime time, and ratings soaring very high for private channels. Popular television magazines (*Tilerama*, *Tiletheatis*) address these soap operas and also bear the Turkish stars on front pages, with tabloid headlines along with plot revelations. Interesting here is a prior cultural exchange between the two nations in the 1970s. During the military junta, Turkish melodramas with Turkish stars were figuring highly in Greek open-air venues, with fifty films imported overall in Greece (Eleftheriotis, 2001: 194), implying a shared cultural affiliation between Greek and Turkish melodramas which had arguably similar stories, plots and modes of representation of identity and familial structures, with which Greek audiences identified. Both nations share the fact that they have been at a transitional stage, sites of struggle between tradition and modernity, inclusiveness and exclusiveness with Turkey pursuing at present inclusion in the European Union, with the support of Greece.

Lastly, one of the most successful and strikingly popular Greek films of the past decade, *Touch of Spice*, was coproduced by Turkish contributors and saw in its cast Turkish actors as well as the use of the language and local settings. This draws further attention as Greece, before, during and after the Junta, was often on the verge of a military and diplomatic clash with Turkey in 1922, during the campaign to reclaim the territory of Asia Minor, the population exchanges in 1923 and the 1960s, the occupation of Cyprus and the violation of the military coastline in the Aegean, that lead to a temporary Turkish occupation of the isles of Imia in the 1990s. Despite these issues, both countries have been implicated in the making of films and also share many cultural affiliations thanks to their

histories, diasporas and geographical locations. What this cultural exchange suggests, as we shall see further on, is that transnationalism allows for several interest groups<sup>42</sup>, national and international, European and non European, to claim a film particularly when another nation is implicated to a high degree in the film's funding and production.

Questioning moreover the national is the film's cast. The film's protagonist, Stathis Papadopoulos, is a Greek from the diaspora of the Black Sea region. He is a favourite of Giannaris, who revealed in *From the Edge of the City* a fascination with Papadopoulos's body and sexuality, of a man who seeks for a national and sexual identity in the margins of Athens and as an Albanian immigrant in *Hostage*, where he portrays Flamur Pislî. While the Greek actors Theodora Tzimou and Giannis Stankoglou are present in a good number of Greek films and in Giannaris' filmography in Greece, the director is not keen on the presence of stars, particularly popular television actors or singers, a trend that became the norm since the success of *Safe Sex* as Maria Chalkou observes (2012: 246). On the contrary, Giannaris' star in *Hostage* is the Albanian actress Rajmonda Bulku, who is a favourite and acclaimed film and theatrical actress in Albania, and moreover a member of the Albanian Democratic Party since 2009.

Bulku portrays the distraught mother of the Albanian migrant. Throughout the course of the story, she obtains a symbolic status as the timeless figure of a nurturing mother, that transcends nationality and which may appeal to diverse audiences since this is a universal theme that finds an application in many cultures and cinemas. However, the problem in this case is that Greek audiences in particular were asked to identify with and show sympathy to a figure that represents Albanian motherhood, nationhood (in the metaphor of a separated mother and son that allegorizes a fractured nation) and moreover the mother of a man who was regarded as a ruthless criminal and whose actions allegedly sanctioned the death of a Greek man. This is a tall order, since the figure of the mother, considered as sacred and linked particularly in Greece to the Orthodoxy, is also a guarantor of the national and has been established as a symbol of tradition, familial values and the structure of the home. This is a characteristic function of Greek identity that relies heavily on orthodox Christianity. Arguably, Giannaris' favorable approach to the immigrant and the presentation of a tragic figure, particularly in Bulku's monologue that resembles one from ancient Greek tragedies, may not appeal to an audience that is asked to bring back painful memories and to identify with an Albanian mother whose son allegedly got what he deserved.

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<sup>42</sup> Audiences, foreign and indigenous, funding bodies, either private or state affiliated.

The figure of the mother, a form of *pietas* in the film, is very significant in the Greek Christian Orthodox doctrine and underlines a significant aspect of national culture. In the Orthodox Dogma, she is manifested in the icon of "Panagia", the mother of Christ. The term in Greek means "wholly holy" and underlines the sacred aspect of motherhood. In *Hostage*, Elion's mother is referred to by the Greek police chief as a "tragic figure", as she stands on the backdrop of a misty mountain cliff, while her son has been killed as a martyr of Greek bigotry, following his twenty four hour Golgotha from Greece to Albania. Her appeal to Elion evokes the sanctity of the mother-son bond and the home.

In the final climactic scene, she slowly walks towards the bus. Behind her a monumental setting of a deep valley evokes the gravitas of the moment and of the mother's presence (fig. 3.1.3.1). Her name is concealed, reinforcing her allegorical role of holy mother and Albanian nation. Bulku's performance echoes with the throes of tragedy and a certain theatricality as her performance seems entirely choreographed and staged. She approaches the bus and leans her head on it in an extreme close-up, gesticulates and shifts from one expression of pain to another, shouting and exclaiming her plea for surrender and return to the familial hearth. Extreme close-ups on her expressions highlight the scene's grandiosity (fig. 3.1.3.2) while the entire monologue is filmed in a sequence shot which is in itself monumental in its movement and virtuosity evoking the sweeping effect of a monologue. When Elion gets shot, Bulku shrieks in terror and is pulled to the edge of the cliff. Undeniably, certain religious aspects can be observed in both mother and son. Thus, Giannaris adorns Bulku with the rubric of a holy mother, who sees her son being crucified, led to his demise by Greek bigotry, which can be paralleled to Roman law, if we accept the biblical parable literally.



Figure 3.1.3.1: A monumental setting



Figure 3.1.3.2: Close-up

Through the universal and emotive figure of the mother, Giannaris extends his plea for tolerance. This was a tall order on his part. At the time of the film's release, the media transformed the father of Koulouris into a television spectacle and the ultimate victim of Albanian brutality. In the same manner as Bulku encompasses the Albanian nation,

Koulouris's father encompassed the Greek nation. This figure emerged through the so called "parathyra" (windows) of Greek news - a grid on the screen in which each invited speaker expresses in an individual square an opinion on the current debate launched by the news caster which most often favours populism and tabloid themes. This gave the opportunity to articulate a more collective voice on the incident and the humiliation of Greece. By attacking Giannaris for his "unpatriotic" portrayal and for promoting on prime time the mourning father, television channels evoked a collective sense of national humiliation. The figure of the father became a kitsch representation of the nation which was paraded on various private channels at the time, on the expense of *Hostage* and its domestic reception, labeling Giannaris as unpatriotic.

### 3.1.4 The film that became a hostage: domestic reception of *Hostage*

Giannaris received great acclaim abroad for *Hostage*. His three major films have participated in the Berlin Film Festival, while they have been received with praise in the United Kingdom, Venice and the United States. *Hostage* was celebrated at the EU XXL Forum for European Film as "an ideal example of the social and political shifts in the southern European countries"<sup>43</sup>. The EU XXL Forum was founded in 2003 as "an initiative for the advancement of European integration and for cultural exchange and which recognizes the special role of audiovisual media and the cultural, social and economic value of audiovisual productions"<sup>44</sup>. This implies that the film was regarded by certain significant and determining vehicles of European cinephilia and film policy as European and not merely as Greek, revealing the capacity of *Hostage* to broaden the scope of Greek cinema and to travel.

Nevertheless, despite critical acclaim, Giannaris' films have had an inconsistent trajectory in Greek box offices. Up to the release of *Hostage*, his most popular film was *One day in August* which was very successful in open-air venues selling 120,000 tickets (£960,000) in total<sup>45</sup>. Giannaris speaks<sup>46</sup> of this film as "my first attempt at a mainstream film", meaning, according to the vague term "mainstream", a popular box office hit which highlights treasured Greek sentiments linked to tradition and a certain and favourable perception of Greekness that advocates the oneness and cohesion of national identity and the imagined community. Giannaris evokes the nation and its interconnectedness through a network narrative that highlights the invisible and elusive paths that connect Greeks, through one common denominator - the three-day religious anniversary of the repose of the Holy Mother, who in the film is conveyed as the Mother of Greeks. *One day in August* is Giannaris' least accented film and, contrary to his previous productions, does not deal with racism and xenophobia. It is a successful attempt at evoking the nation and producing a film of more clear national dimensions. Indeed, *Hostage* sold merely 13,000 tickets and was taken off cinemas shortly after it was distributed to a total of twenty venues across Greece and often reduced to the late night screening of 10 PM (Terzis, 2011).

*One Day in August*, in its Greek title, refers directly to a religious celebration which happens in August. The film was released in the summer, designated for the popular open-air venues. Open-air venues are a significant part of Greek culture. They attract large

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<sup>43</sup><http://www.griechische-botschaft.at> Last accessed 27 June 2014.

<sup>44</sup><http://www.eu-xxl.at/default.asp?lid=2> Last accessed 27 June 2014.

<sup>45</sup><http://freecinema.blogspot.co.uk> (URL not available).

<sup>46</sup> Personal interview with Constantinos Giannaris (2011).

audiences who seek to go out on a hot summer's night, to socialize and see very often old Greek and foreign films that strike a nostalgic core with older generations and which are often re-released in the summer. They are popular venues for social gatherings. The open-air venue is in the heart of the city, open to the urban landscape which also serves as a direct link to the interior of the cinema that is within the city, with busy roads on the exterior and tenement flat-balconies at a bird's eye view distance from the screen. The social space of the cinema serves as an extension of the neighborhood thanks to its open structure and to its location which may often be in the centre of a busy street or a small neighborhood, occupying little space<sup>47</sup>. In this context, *One Day in August* was a "summer film", marketed in a context that is linked to a very popular seasonal custom that underlines a national culture, rooted in treasured traditions that are one of many links to national identity. The popularity of *One Day in August* was predicated on the potential of the film to bring Greek audiences closer by rekindling national sentiments. This was achieved in a social sphere that facilitates social and ethnic cohesiveness and overall a sense of togetherness.

Contrary to the aforementioned, Giannaris' next film was received with hostility highlighting the expectations of audiences and key figures that make a film accessible - primarily distributors and venues. *Hostage* was meant to premier on Wednesday, March first 2005 at Thessaloniki, at the famous Olympion cinema in the central Aristotelous square of the city. Minutes before the screening, the father of Koulouris stormed into the cinema loudly accusing Giannaris and the audience on the premise of the favorable approach to the real Albanian offender. Minutes after this incident, a bomb threat was made, leading to the evacuation of the cinema. A bomb threat was made the next day as well with the premiere taking place on Friday third of March in the presence of armed police forces outside the Olympion<sup>48</sup>. In the following days, the father of Koulouris would appear in debates in the evening news of channel Alpha, hosted by the popular reporter and news caster Nikos Hatzinikolaou known for being controversial and conservative. While Alpha is listed amongst the subsidizers of the film, nevertheless, the channel and its prime television newscaster unleashed a hate campaign by exploiting the figure of Koulouris's father contributing moreover to the controversial reputation that would follow *Hostage* and Giannaris. The immediate results were high ratings for the channel.

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<sup>47</sup>For more on this, see Eleftheriotis, 2001: 184-196.

<sup>48</sup>in.gr 2/3/2005 (URL not available).

Similar events took place in Athens. Members of the "Youth of the Greek Front" ("neolaia ellinikou metopou") gathered outside various venues showing *Hostage*, shouting slogans such as "kill a Greek and become a hero" ("skotose enan ellina gia na gineis iroas"). They would moreover distribute leaflets at the venues to prospective audiences. The leaflets showed the image of Koulouris' corpse with a caption: "How many dead Greeks do you need in order to wake up?" ("posous nekrous ellines theleis gia na ksipniseis?")<sup>49</sup>.

The nationalists emphasized that *Hostage* was supported by the GFC and that it had to be boycotted since it "may encourage tomorrow's bus hijackers who will cause the death of more innocent victims"<sup>50</sup>. One can observe then how a film can become a site of struggle over national identity in which various agents of nationhood are confronted exactly because of the various other agents who endorse transnationalism. This struggle is performed within the cinematic text per se but can extend to the society through which it emerges revealing the consequences of nationalism, xenophobia and racism and also the potential of a film to incite change that is nevertheless met with great resistance. Great change is the product of tension between two opposing forces (nationalism and inclusiveness).

Greek film critics nevertheless maintained a celebrative tone and encouraged, besides a sensationalist and one sided approach, also greater inclusion. "The 'enfant terrible' ('tromero paidi')<sup>51</sup> of Greek cinema is an angry filmmaker of the nineties and expresses in a provocative manner his personal concerns regarding a distraught society in crisis. His films disturb and provoke, but they are sincere depictions of a society that is plagued by racism and bigotry. This creative filmmaker offers us a stimulating account of a shocking event and thus also the opportunity to reexamine it as well as all those stories of racist madness" (Zoumpoulakis, 2011). "There is also an opportunity to consider, through Giannaris' film, the relationship between Greeks and our Albanian compatriots thanks also to the appearance of the two Albanian actors, Rajmonda Bulku and Laertis vasileiou" (*Eleftherotypia*, 3/3/2005). "*Hostage* is a film of international appeal that breathes air into an anemic Greek Cinema" (Katsounaki, 2005). "Giannaris addresses the pariah, the one who comes to a foreign country looking for a better future and becomes a boxing bag" (ibid.).

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<sup>49</sup><http://www.e-grammes.gr/article.php?id=1755> last accessed 23 June 2014.

<sup>50</sup>ibid.

<sup>51</sup><http://www.cinemanews.gr/v5/movies.php?n=2453> last accessed 27 June 2014.



While these comments reveal a positive attitude to the film, one may argue that they are suggestive of a certain discourse that determines the role of a filmmaker as spokesperson for the voiceless and particularly of Giannaris as the only hope for an anemic cinema and intolerant country. Such reviews reinforce the role of dichotomies, figuring in discussions on "quality" cinema and "controversy", which have been governing domestic Greek film literature.

The reception of *Hostage* in Greece set a precedent for future ventures. This favorable approach to an Albanian man was repeated in *Eduart* which was as well received with great resistance. Both films received controversial criticisms and general hostility by various groups of interest revealing that intolerance is a crucial matter that has to be taken into consideration by filmmakers who maintain the approach of Giannaris. Indeed, in 2011, as the director Kimon Tsakiris revealed to myself in an interview, following his success with the documentary *Sugartown: Oi Gamproi/Sugartown: the Bridegrooms* (2007), submitted a proposal to the GFC. His script was inspired by the Sorin Matei hostage situation. Tsakiris's proposal was immediately rejected by an executive of the GFC who said "did you not see what happened to Giannaris?" Arguably, the incendiary approach of Giannaris entails many risks for producers and overall funding bodies that see zero revenue.

### 3.1.5 Reception of *Hostage* by the "other"

While *Hostage* was welcomed in Greece with overall hostility, the Albanian community in Athens as well as prospective audiences in Albania were excited about a film that addresses directly the plight of Albanians in Greece. *Hostage* became a major success in Albanian venues and was hailed by the Albanian community of Athens (Spirou, 2011: 42). It is available in the Albanian black market and is a prominent feature on Albanian television shown once a week on national television under the title *the true story of Flamur Pisli* "which is Ironic" says Giannaris in an interview to Marina Spirou (ibid.) "since it [the film] is not the true story" but inspired by the actual events which Giannaris utilized. According to Laertis Vasileiou, a cast member of *Hostage*, the Albanian community of Athens was truly excited about the film's release in 2005. "The posters advertising the film are hanging on every wall in central meeting points of the Albanian community. Moreover, the story of Flamur Pisli is notorious and as for Rajmonda Bulku, she is an idol of Albanians, wherever they may live"<sup>52</sup>. Arguably, Giannaris' film is one that, regardless of the director's intentions, appealed greatly to Albanians revealing the potential of a film to travel and become a vehicle of culture and national sentiments in Greece and Europe but also in pariah states such as Albania.

We see here a hybrid conceptualization of Naficy's diasporic cinema. While Giannaris, as a quasi diasporic filmmaker, would be expected to make films in exile, evoking the homeland and the dispersed imagined community, with *Hostage* he evokes the pain of the Albanian diaspora in and from Greece and more indirectly in other countries where Albanians may have been exiled. Regardless of his intentions, the filmmaker captured the sentiments of two peoples, of Greeks through the depiction of the various Greek gender and social margins and divisions (queers, drug addicts, oppressed women) that in any case affirm the limits and cohesiveness of a nation that is for this reason intolerant (as the film allegorises) and through the portrayal of a migrant's journey, the sentiments of Albanians living in exile, where "their bones are devoured" as Elion's mother mentions in her letter to him. This suggests, in terms of reception, a regional and transnational phenomenon, between two transitional and opposing nations, beyond the radar of the official national cinema as though aspiring to converge both sides and establish a more diverse national cinema.

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<sup>52</sup><https://athens.indymedia.org> (URL not available).

*Hostage*, as a cultural commodity that becomes politicized by certain groups of interest (media, nationalist organizations and critics) became even more a national concern, beyond its character as an artwork created by a creative genius. Due to the use of the language, of Albanian settings but above all to the presence of an Albanian star and the story of an Albanian migrant, *Hostage* is a film that appeals to Albanians even more despite its obvious objective - to question the way Greek identity is imagined. The favourable approach to the Albanian nation and the opposite to the Greek nation makes the film all the more appealing to Albanians while the opposite applies to the majority of Greek interest groups. The film obviously then appeals to Albanians for showcasing Greeks as perpetrators of violence, highlighting also that there is a lot of shared hatred between both countries. Moreover, by portraying the alleged rape of Pislis by police, the director, unbeknownst to him, evokes the embodied pain of exile and separation experienced by the Albanian nation. Elion is arguably a vehicle and outlet of this fragmented and "raped" nation.

Despite the universal appeal of the motherly figure, the mother that Bulku brings to life appeals greatly and mainly to her compatriots. In the beginning of the film, we hear her voice-over through a letter that she sent to Elion: "My darling boy, in your own land people will exploit you to the bone. In a strange land they will devour the bones as well". The distance between mother and son that the letter highlights is suggestive of the separation of all Albanian mothers from their sons and hence of the fractured nation. Arguably, the national sentiments that Giannaris articulates are close to Albanian culture and particularly to an immediate and contemporary issue of Albania. Moreover they highlight familial values and the resentment of a fractured people, sentiments which the Greek people have shared. Giannaris however denies any favourable approach to Greekness.

The particular interpretation of exile and the suffering of an exiled Albanian man that emerges through the mother's letter have been equated with the suffering of an entire nation that is retold in folk songs and poems and is an integral part of a collective Albanian psyche (Papailias, 2003: 1063). Songs and traditions on the experience of migration and exile are indicative of this fascination but, even more, a folk epic, a "rapsodi", written in memory of Pislis, reveals why *Hostage* was celebrated in Albania: a pirated cassette contained a recording of a "rapsodi" telling "the story of Flamur Pislis", "hero of migration" who suffered the "emasculating experience of migration and everyday exploitation at the hands of Greek bosses and police" (ibid.). What in Greek media discourse stood as a

paradigm of Balkan savagery and backwardness, for Albanians was a damning statement against Greek savagery and the great achievement of one Albanian man to stump the Greeks - quite the opposite of the former.

The particular representation of Albanian exile could be familiar to Greek audiences since, before becoming a host nation, Greece was a country of émigrés that saw a large portion of its population flee. Greeks were subject to discrimination in exile, known for example in the United States in the 1920s as "dirty Greeks" (Kapllani, 2010: 112). Yet, the public discourse that criminalized Albanians in Greece nearly a century afterward, excluded any notion of a shared background. This could have arguably fostered a degree of solidarity. It reveals how national identity is reformed through perpetual shifts that are performed through power and resistance, in this case forgetting a traumatic collective experience.

For a country that has been persistently keen on European modernisation, acknowledging shared cultural and historical affinities with Albania would designate Greece as inferior and allegedly set its modernity in backwards motion. Surely, any affinity with Albania and Albanians could only be a gross misconception of a European country. One recalls again Renan's emphasis on the notion of forgetting in order to form national identity, the unfavorable image of Greeks as marginal or "dirty", like Albanians. In this case, Greeks had to become Europeans, instead of remaining Balkan, otherwise they would be regarded as an underdeveloped country. Karalis clarifies that in the new millennium the political slogan which expressed optimism and self-confidence was "Greece is not anymore a Balkan country in Europe, but a European country in the Balkans" (2012: 246). This suggests that European is superior to Balkan. According to Kapllani, the immigrant reminds his hosts of their own predicament:

One of your crimes is that you remind the natives of what life used to be like for them. They had just started to put all that behind them, bury it in the depths of Lethe, all the pain and humiliation of being a migrant, the worn out faces, the peasant gait, the heavy stench of sweat and garlic, the fear of hunger and penury, of being the unbearable 'dirty foreigner' [...] (2010: 110).

Returning to our discussion on Giannaris, the latter is not keen on being regarded as a filmmaker who speaks to the nation or as someone who represents a certain political agenda. "I express myself" he says in an interview to Katia Arfaria (1999). "I do not express Greek cinema, or the GFC and I do not express the average Greek person or the

Greeks of the Diaspora". Regardless of this statement however, his film is open to criticism and will be undeniably scrutinized by various interest groups that exercise power on the film claiming that the director "speaks" to them. The film is thus regarded as part of a certain culture indicative of certain tendencies that are apparent in society and of a struggle on the sites of national culture and identity. Moreover, this statement, although it refers even more to his disdain regarding the marketing and labeling of his name and films, reveals that the director is not so much keen on reception by audiences as much as on personal expression.

Indeed, Giannaris, as a diasporic filmmaker, has experienced a sense of displacement, of having more than one homeland and does indeed address and underline in *Hostage* the consequences of being a stranger in a strange land. Considering this, one can argue that Giannaris embraces Flamur Pishi and examines his case through *Elion*, from a different angle that is favourable, suggesting that discrimination may lead to an eruption. In this way he is also expressing his personal sense of alienation and concerns for the country. But at the same time, even unwillingly, he is addressing directly the Greek and Albanian nations and it is expected that Albanian audiences, and indeed Albanian immigrants, would claim this film as their own. The director articulates a rather myopic and resentful sentiment that is open to questioning since, ultimately, a film is not merely the product of an artistic and individual mind but, more so, a cultural product that emerges through a public debate and which contributes to it.

### 3.1.6 Labeling and claiming the auteur

While on the one hand Giannaris is described as "daring", "courageous" (Adamidis & Likourgou, 2005), and as a "serious" filmmaker (Dimitropoulos, 2005), he is on the other hand described as "sacrilegious" and "unpatriotic" (ibid.). Giannaris' controversial status is contested by various interest groups that transform him and his exemplary status into a national symbol within a struggle of opposites. While one may note that he is popular, albeit very often for the wrong reasons that rely more on controversy, he is very often acknowledged as a director of the margins. This refers to his films per se on the one hand and on the other to the fact that he is marginalized by the mainstream for his challenging films (Adamidis & Likourgou, 2005). Many voices demanded that *Hostage* be boycotted while many accused Giannaris even of a sacrilegious presentation of Orthodox Christianity in *One Day in August* (ibid.).

Very often, Giannaris is noted as "the only hope of Greek cinema" (*To Vima*, 6/3/2005) and "the most important Greek filmmaker" (Adamidis & Likourgou, 2005) whose success abroad, particularly the screenings at the Tate Modern and The Museum of Modern Art in New York are regarded as "a great success not only for Giannaris personally, but for Greek civilization ["politismos"] and culture ["koulтура"], in a time when our country could use positive feedback from abroad" (Zoumpoulakis, 2011C). He is often regarded as "a director of the margins" ("perithorio") (Zoumpoulakis, 2011) and as a filmmaker who is "opening a new way for filmmaking in Greece" (Arfaria, 1999). He is described also as the "unconventional and avant-garde director of immigration" (Tzevelekou, 2011).

Giannaris' films have drawn attention for various reasons that suggest a controversial image of a filmmaker who wishes to make strong political statements. Nevertheless, Giannaris has declared in an interview that "I do not do politics, I make films"<sup>53</sup> suggesting that his image and films are manipulated. Film critics overall consider Giannaris as the only source of hope for Greek cinema. Indeed, alongside Angelopoulos, the international acclaim and appeal of Giannaris is a reason for investing in the figure of an "unconventional and political director" who will promote a "quality" Greek cinema abroad. Giannaris has been very clear on this: "I wish to do my job, to make movies. Do I have to carry the future of Greek cinema like Atlanta? Let us all build then some smaller Atlantes to carry Greek cinema together"<sup>54</sup>. "Indeed, why would a filmmaker be willing to

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<sup>53</sup><http://news.in.gr/culture/article/?aid=1231137147> last accessed 27 June 2014.

<sup>54</sup><http://news.in.gr/culture/article/?aid=1231136814> Last accessed 27 June 2014.

obtain the role of the savior of the always problematic scene of Greek cinema? Some may suggest that Giannaris is the one-eyed man leading the blind" (Adamidis & Likourgou, 2005).

Giannaris' appeal in this case is to some extent because of his international success which critics take pride in, seeing that Greek cinema is esteemed as European and thus as a "quality" film since European cinema and "quality" have been inseparably linked to "art" and cultural superiority (Eleftheriotis, 2001: 9-11). Moreover, Giannaris is one of the few Greek filmmakers with an international trajectory, particularly since Greek cinema, as though consciously aspiring to a traditional national cinema, has been very slowly reaching out to international audiences, an achievement that was repeatedly implemented by Angelopoulos who nevertheless appealed to the elite of European art-house film festivals. This was achieved with *Touch of Spice* (Eleftheriotis, 2012) and to a good degree by Giannaris who accelerated the transformation of Greek cinema from a national to a transnational cinema.

In April 2005, Giannaris was invited to participate in a colloquium on immigration and human rights, an event that took place in the context of the seventh Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival. In his talk, Giannaris emphasized that "immigration is something personal and visceral"<sup>55</sup> and an issue that affected his entire family. It is not merely a fascination that he has as a "filmmaker of immigration" but an experience that shaped him as an individual as he describes:

Although actual immigrants star in my films, this does not mean that my films are in particular about immigrants and human rights. I make films that are about Greek society overall, because I believe that I can maybe change the way people think about certain issues, because cinema is the most popular artistic medium that appeals to the people<sup>56</sup>.

Giannaris exposes thus his intention to appeal to a nation and refutes the notion that he does not make films for "the people".

This sort of labeling would automatically mean that Giannaris is the superior portrayer of immigration in Greece. It may be implied as well that being a diasporic filmmaker, an individual who has migrated more than once in his life, he understands better than other filmmakers that I am addressing here any issue linked to migration and

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<sup>55</sup><http://www.cinemanews.gr>.

<sup>56</sup>ibid.

exile. In the group of filmmakers I am debating, he is arguably popular and is often commemorated for being a popular candidate at the Berlin Film Festival although Tsitos, Anastopoulos, Korras, Voupouras, Antoniou and Goritsas have received awards at smaller festivals abroad and in Greece. In addition, Antoniou and Tsitos are members of the Greek diaspora in Germany and Korras is a man who travels often to Albania, is fluent in Albanian and considers Albania as his second home<sup>57</sup>. Sentiments of alienation are not necessarily an exclusive right of Giannaris.

Giannaris is thus a filmmaker who, particularly with *Hostage*, obtains a significant and firm position within Greek society and culture. *Hostage* is a film that is not only an artistic achievement but a strong statement that underlines the director's intentions to address a crisis and express his visceral understanding of exile and migration. Unknowingly, the filmmaker becomes an ambassador for Albanians and other internal exiles in Greece although he is not keen on this role. The controversy surrounding his name and films, particularly *Hostage*, make him stand out moreover as a political figure, a filmmaker of duty who aims at radically reassessing fundamental issues of the Greek nation.

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<sup>57</sup> Personal interview with Yorgos Korras (2011).



### 3.2 A film without nationality: *Eduart*

*Eduart* is a Greek and European coproduction, directed by Angeliki Antoniou co-financed by the GFC and the Medienboard in Berlin. Antoniou is a diasporic filmmaker living in Germany and directing films in the Balkans, Greece and Germany including also television for ZDF. Her film is inspired by true events. Eduart Bako, a young and ambitious Albanian man, crosses the mountains to Greece dreaming of rock stardom. Things turn awry when Eduart kills an Athenian man who hustled him in a shady bar. Eduart is thus forced to return to Albania where he is a pariah amongst his family. His father, a military officer, finds out that Eduart stole his mother's savings and turns him over to the police. In prison, the German doctor in charge of the infirmary befriends Eduart and takes him under his wing as an assistant where he gradually learns to value human life and thus atones for his murder. The film ends with the doctor dying in Eduart's hands, following the insurrection which led to the opening of jails across Albania in 1997. Eduart returns to Greece and gives himself in to the Greek police forces.

While the film may be regarded as a European coproduction, the various other contributors, cast and settings suggest an affiliation with the Balkans, Balkan cinema and the so-called "Cinema of the Other Europe" (Jordanova, 2003) which, according to John Orr (2000: 50-55), showcases allegory and the iconography of Christianity and tradition as major narrative tropes and themes. Indeed, at the heart of *Eduart* rests a national allegory on themes of loss and redemption, apparent in Eduart's tumultuous trajectory and cathartic journey's end. In this respect, the film deals with all things Balkan: its turbulent history in the late twentieth century, the permanence of nationhood and stringent values in respective regions and, on a second more symbolic level, the troubled relations between Greece and Albania. This Balkan connection is highlighted by the fact that Greece is a Balkan country with a partly Balkan culture, linked to the overall history and culture of the region. This automatically implies, according to the notion that a coproduction by definition is not exclusive property of one nation or individual, that *Eduart* can be claimed by several nations and particularly from the Balkans, asserting an uncomfortable truth: the Balkans and the Europe of the "Iron Curtain" are "smuggled" into Europe and its culture asserting consequently a third space of enunciation, figuring through hybridity, unsettling European culture and its oneness.

The film's protagonist, Esref Durmishi, is an upcoming actor from Kosovo, an area known for its civil conflicts and minority problems with Albania and Serbia that occurred from decades of war and population exchanges. He is additionally fluent in Albanian,

English, Italian and German (Venardou, 2006). In the film he speaks both Albanian and German, but we hardly ever hear him speak Greek an issue which makes it further challenging to annex the title "national" in terms of only one nationality especially since the film deals with obvious national concerns of Albania and Greece and is filmed primarily in the capital of Macedonia (FYROM), Skopje.

Antoniou chose Durmishi for the role of Eduart after more than a year of casting, following an audition that took place in Pristina. Durmishi consequently has been building a career in Greece where he has chosen to live (Venardou, 2006). *Eduart* was filmed partly in Greece and primarily in Macedonia, a country that has been for many years confronted with Greek allegations regarding the actual title of Macedonia (known as Northern Greece) and Alexander the Great, arguably inflaming issues that have stirred endemic nationalisms that govern the political agendas of both countries. At the same time, in 2009, when the debate over Macedonia was peaking, the television channel "Skai" broadcasted a live television event entitled "Great Greeks" ("Megali Ellines")<sup>58</sup>. After a massive poll voting by popular audiences, Alexander the Great was voted "greatest Greek". This came to show the tense relations between Greece and Macedonia.

I thus argue here that Greek cinema and particularly a film like *Eduart* is representative of a Balkan cinema and a cinema of "the Other Europe" which can travel beyond national enclaves, forcing us to consider Greek cinema as Balkan amongst other affiliations (Greek, European) and to challenge dominant perceptions regarding the oneness of European culture and identity and to encourage greater inclusion.

The aforementioned points underline the hybrid nature of a film that is and simultaneously is not Greek, which, nevertheless, due to the Greek nationality of the filmmaker, could arguably be noted and celebrated as a Greek film and a vehicle of an inclusive Greek cinema which showcases the aspirations of transnationalism to broaden the national without however negating it. Moreover, the film's numerous accented features, which extend from the text per se to the cast and crew's affiliations, become embedded in the film and moreover serve as the backdrop of the film's coming to being. Nevertheless the film was marginalized because of these aspirations towards inclusiveness, an issue that influenced its trajectory in Greek venues and film festivals.

*Eduart* received national funding: 300.000 Euros from the GFC, 100,000 Euros from ERT, the public Greek Television Channel and 120,000 from the private television

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<sup>58</sup><http://greekcharm.blogspot.co.uk/2009/02/top-100-great-greeks-of-all-time-skai.html>.

channel NOVA. The second largest sum was 250,000 Euros from the German Film Centre. In total, the weight of the production rested on Greek subsidizers who had a 78% contribution to the film while the German producers had a share of 22%<sup>59</sup>. Subsidy, in the case of Antoniou's film, is primarily Greek a fact which on the one hand means that, according to European legislations (3004/2002), the film bears the nationality of the country that has the largest percentage of participation. Nevertheless, this did not suffice to grant the film a "certificate of Greek nationality" since it did not correspond to the governing rules issued by the GFC regarding a film's nationality exposing us to a paradox since a film that requires one nationality challenges the notion of shared film. This brings us back to the major aim of this thesis which is to highlight the path towards greater inclusion and to challenge the kind of orthodoxy underlying national film discourse.

Specifically, on the website of the GFC<sup>60</sup>, one can read the requirements of a Greek film. The legislation surrounding the Greek nationality of a film, printed moreover in 2010 as law number 3905, demands that in its original edition a film should have 51% of its spoken language in Greek, 51% of the film's length filmed on Greek territory and an equivalent amount of the film's budget spent in Greece. Lastly, post-production must be completed in Greek studios. If the film does not cover all these requirements then it cannot be granted a Greek nationality. If the filmmaker and crew are of Greek origin, they can submit an application to the GFC which will in turn refer to the Minister of Culture and Tourism, a fact that does not guarantee that their film will indeed be granted a Greek nationality. Apart from the fact alone that one cannot entirely measure the nationality of a film, not to mention with such accuracy as to calculate 51%, it means rendering descriptions and measurements (with all its obscure paradoxes) of Greekness in terms of citizenship and belonging for individuals, to a film evoking again the laws of blood and soil as though this is the only measure and token of belonging. *Eduart* challenges governing rules on nationality and eschews them forcing us to reconsider not only the criteria of nationality but also the very idea of a Greek film. I argue thus that a film can be national and speak "in our name" but not only so. And while *Eduart* can speak in the name of Greeks it can also speak for Albanians and be claimed respectively from both sides.

Representatives of the Ministry of Culture claimed that they did not receive a nationality application for *Eduart* and thus the Greek producer was denied the film's nomination at the Greek State Awards of Quality (Kratika Vraveia Piotitas). If one takes

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<sup>59</sup><http://www.kathimerini.gr/266498/article/politismos/arxeio-politismoy/o-entoyart-8yma-ths-grafeiokratias>.

<sup>60</sup>[http://www.gfc.gr/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1212&Itemid=184](http://www.gfc.gr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1212&Itemid=184).

these rules literally, then indeed the film did not deserve a Greek nationality. *Eduart* was filmed partially in Greece and mainly in Albania and Skopje. The spoken languages include Albanian, German, English and Greek, a fact which on its own is not enough to make the film "Greek". Antoniou protested to this decision:

Why is the Ministry of Culture punishing us? First they encourage us to open up to coproduction and then the GFC takes away the film's Greek nationality. It punishes the filmmaker and she and her crew cannot thus display their work, a film that will travel to international festivals without a nationality<sup>61</sup>.

*Eduart* was initially caught within the enclaves of a stiff and illogical web of bureaucracy and protocol which is indicative of the restrictions of the national in terms of policy and of the importance of greater inclusion. In this respect, for immigrants as much as for a film like *Eduart*, a nationality is important for practical reasons that dictate belonging since ultimately an individual or a cultural artifact require belonging. The language of belonging is by default exclusive - one belongs somewhere because he/she does not belong somewhere else. This notion however is a double edged knife and what it shows in this case is that a film which does not openly refer in its content to one exclusive nation, aspiring to cross borders, with its background of mixed nationalities, will confuse belonging. We see nevertheless here a strong reliance on one particular nationality which by definition is exclusive. The film arguably is Greek to the same degree that one can contest this verdict. It is funded by Greek sources and its filmmaker is of Greek origin. Both of these are determining factors which however did not initially suffice to grant the film a Greek nationality. This highlights the need, as this thesis aims to support, for greater inclusion and a more flexible set of criteria for nationality since *Eduart* is a film that demands indeed a flexible definition of a national cinema. Through greater inclusion, the national and a film's nationality can become an agent of mobility instead of a source of inertia. The film requires a nationality and moreover one dominant nationality since the language of belonging functions on this premise which again is not to say that greater inclusion is not possible through this very language. To say however that a film does not require a nationality in any way means to cast the film into a void.

Following Antoniou's protest regarding the situation, the Minister of Culture himself granted the Greek nationality and the film entered the competition. "I am glad that we managed to overcome the bureaucratic issues of *Eduart* and that the film was allowed

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<sup>61</sup><http://www.kathimerini.gr/266498/article/politismos/arxeio-politismoy/o-entoyart-8yma-ths-grafeiokratias>.

to participate in the 'State Awards of Quality' in 2006. It is obvious that we must support Greek cinema as well as coproduction with European countries"<sup>62</sup>. This was the statement of the Minister of Culture following Antoniou's protest. *Eduart* scored a victorious nine awards at the competition, as well as rave reviews by critics, many of whom describe the film as one of a "European standard" (Venardou, 2006) and as a "brave and daring film"<sup>63</sup>. *Eduart* was furthermore celebrated in Italian<sup>64</sup> and Russian websites<sup>65</sup> and was described by Ronald Bergan as a film "that could happily stand in any company" (Bergan, 2006).

Nevertheless, despite critical acclaim and the commercial value that it offers to a film, *Eduart* failed to appeal to domestic audiences and had a short lived period in Greek venues. Its short presence in cinemas was spearheaded by rightists who accused Antoniou for making an "un-Hellenic" ("anthellinikí") film. In turn, Antoniou accused generally "rightists" for the ill fated course of the film. Many hateful messages regarding the supposed un-Hellenic nature of the film were uploaded on Antoniou's website and particularly on the page where *Eduart* was listed. An even worse form of negative propaganda was exhibited through two popular magazines, "Athinorama" and "Elevtheros Kosmos" which are designated as guides for entertainment in Athens and which contain critical texts on many films. As Antoniou mentions on her website<sup>66</sup>, "Athinorama" published these comments on its website which had to be shut down afterwards. Three letters were published in "Elevtheros Kosmos" and "A-1" "informing" the public about the intentions of a film that is favorable to an Albanian murderer who was convicted "only to sixteen years in prison"<sup>67</sup>. In her website, Antoniou blames "rightists" who sabotaged her film and particularly supporters of Golden Dawn ("hrusavgites")<sup>68</sup>. According to Antoniou,

The film was welcomed with great resistance by an audience which denies any relation whatsoever to Albanians. The film was attacked by ultra rightists and Golden Dawn supporters. It surely also does not satisfy many Albanians who would have wished to see their country being depicted as modern and Europeanized but nevertheless the film was not made to satisfy the expectations of both sides and made no compromises<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup>Kathimerini, 01/11/2006.

<sup>63</sup><http://www.athinorama.gr/cinema/movieratings.aspx?id=1008160&cp=9> Last accessed 27 June 2014.

<sup>64</sup><http://www.clproductions.gr/feature-films/eduart/reviews> Last accessed 27 June 2014.

<sup>65</sup>ibid.

<sup>66</sup>The thread is no longer available.

<sup>67</sup>[www.oldelkosmos.gr](http://www.oldelkosmos.gr)

<sup>68</sup>[http://www.elkosmos.gr/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&catid=98:2008-10-17-07-34-07&id=258:----lr-&Itemid=285](http://www.elkosmos.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&catid=98:2008-10-17-07-34-07&id=258:----lr-&Itemid=285) Last accessed 27 June 2014.

<sup>69</sup>[http://www.elkosmos.gr/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&catid=98:2008-10-17-07-34-07&id=258:----lr-&Itemid=285](http://www.elkosmos.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&catid=98:2008-10-17-07-34-07&id=258:----lr-&Itemid=285) Last accessed 27 June 2014.

Although an assessment of ethnically diverse audiences in Greek venues and particularly of Albanians and Greeks remains to be performed, one can argue that the theme of the film and the negative reception from a fraction of audiences in the aforementioned magazines is enough to influence a box office failure, the reasons for this are deeper and cannot be simply attributed to "rightists". To blame the "rightists" is indeed legitimate to a certain degree but such a generalization excludes what seems to be the greater picture which includes questions on audience reception in Greece, popular cinema, distribution and the impact of awards since a film with so many awards cannot be considered necessarily as marginal. This can be used to argue that Antoniou too quickly and strongly claims that the film had little appeal because of its portrayal of an Albanian criminal. Nevertheless, this is open to discussion since the film stirred controversy and was a box office failure for reasons that can be associated with the ideological and political landscapes of the time. In any case it is evident that greater inclusion incites overall change which is met with some resistance.

*Eduart* highlights a more inclusive and challenging cinema, emerging through the interstices of national and transnational Greek, Balkan and European cinema and film policy and launches a radically different definition of a Greek film. As such, it requires a context, in practice, exhibition and discourse that is open to a more broad classification despite the director's aim to obtain a Greek nationality. Considering the permanence of nationhood in the country, it comes as no surprise that *Eduart* had a very short trajectory in Greek venues.

The ill-fated reception of *Eduart* suggests that we should handle the film and its position within a certain culture as part of a national cinema, despite obvious deviations from traditional conceptualizations and definitions. In terms of production, cast and particularly representation, Antoniou's film traverses many boundaries. It is indicative of an overall impossibility of defining at this point a national film based on similarity, continuity and cohesion. But the film is contested by those key figures that influence and shape a particular national cinema, be that an exclusive or more inclusive cinema especially in terms of distribution and reception. This would require that we adopt the definition of a national cinema by Williams who asserts that a national cinema is one that is contested by national interest groups including also scholars (2002: 5). We do however need to consider many more implications in such a definition which this one does not account for.

This definition does not force us to see Greek National cinema as necessarily "third cinema" (Crofts, 2006: 47) that confronts Hollywood or as an "art cinema" in the strict conceptualization of European cinema but as a cinema that obtains its character regardless of Hollywood's hegemony and of specific artistic merit. A classification at this stage would refer moreover to transnational and various conceptualizations of transnational cinema as signifiers of a European film based on its various constitutive elements that move beyond popular/art and national cinema and which open the way to addressing a genre based on questions on production, reception and primarily on representation. A film like *Eduart* is interstitial, produced in the in-between spaces of established national European cinemas (Naficy, 2001: 10) and therefore underlines and reflects the hybridity of its filmmaker who occupies a diasporic status producing film and television in Greece and Germany. It highlights the importance and limitations of classification overall since on the one hand one cannot deny the certain value of national cinema which serves to highlight a sense of belonging, highlighting the role of *Eduart* as a vehicle of a contemporary Greek culture. On the other hand classification may easily dissolve the more elusive features of the film. The film evidently required one specific nationality, but without the limitations that belonging sets through its exclusive allocation of what comprises a national culture. In any case, Greek and European film policy, set very exclusive and binding rules.

### 3.3 "Guerilla cinema": filmmaking in the interstices of national cinema and subsidy

Up to now, we have discussed how various interest groups influence the overall trajectory of a film. We have examined the roles of political groups and the state, both of which generate great friction. In this section, I will address issues of national subsidy and how Greek filmmakers, diasporic or indigenous, are often forced to resort to unusual measures in order to produce and exhibit their films. In this case, I base my analysis on the dated notion that national culture and cinema should be indeed a national concern and therefore promoted and funded by the state - a popular argument when striving for a national cinema. These notions are being questioned overall, in filmmaking and discourse. In Greece, transnational filmmaking is increasingly popular amongst filmmakers who, faced often with rejection or limited funding by the state as well as distribution, must resolve to European/transnational sources of subsidy and routes of exhibition and promotion.

When funding by the state is unobtainable and filmmakers are eager to complete a project before deadlines of submission to festivals, they might have to resolve to drastic measures. The result is what Tsitos calls "guerilla cinema" (Venardou, 2011) a cinema that, in terms of production, circumvents established routes of national state subsidy, as a form of strategy and a reaction to the absence of the state in filmmaking. I focus on this notion of guerilla cinema that occurs as a reaction to the state and which moreover figures as political, highlighting an immediate concern and allowing us to capture the politically urgent problems surrounding Greek film policy. The filmmakers, with great frustration that develops after rejection of their projects by the state, with the excuse of limited funds, presumably the driving force of Greek cinema, must invest even their personal savings in order to complete a film. This manner of production is dissimilar to the mode of European and transnational, private or public coproduction, since the director is in full charge of the film and its funding and, without an official source of funding, must resolve to personal financial resources or to rely very often on the good will of the crew and cast. This is indeed a cinema that happens in the interstices of national cinema and which additionally brings the films to the arena of politics and political struggle. According to Chalkou (2012: 252), "'guerilla film' practices were developed and a new spirit of collaboration was established. Filmmakers started to work for friends for free and to exchange services" (2012: 252). This cinema is not traditionally regarded as Guerilla, conceived by Solanas and Getino (1969, cited in Crofts, 2006: 47) in the late 1960s who declared in their manifesto the need for a cinema that actively combats capitalism and imperialism. This



cinema that various contemporary Greek filmmakers represent resists the dominant mode of film production that is either way linked exclusively to the Ministry of Culture and its available budget.

National funding, by the GFC, the major representative of the Ministry of Culture, which monitors and funds the GFC, has been a crucial and debatable issue since 2009 when the financial crisis brought film productions to a temporary halt. The GFC was rebranded as such in 1986 and became associated with the Ministry of Culture, when international film star, persona and activist Melina Mercouri was the Minister. Funding of the GFC came from funds of the Ministry. In 1997, when the politician Evangelos Venizelos was the Minister, it was decided that there would be a 1,5 tax return from state and private television channels to the GFC (Chalkou, 2012: 251), in order to "compensate for the decline of audiences in venues, because of the screening of films on television" (Dafermou, 2007). Great change in national/private funding began with *Safe Sex* (Chalkou, 2012: 247). Following a rejection of the film's script by the GFC, the filmmakers sought funding from private television channels (Zoumpoulakis, 2006). This collaboration opened the way to a closer relationship between cinema and television in the late 1990s in terms of funding but also in terms of form, since the film launched a new form of popular cinema that recycles narratives and iconographies and overall popular culture that television has sustained establishing a connection with the popular television sex farce and filling up venues in the early 00s that saw a return of popular audiences to cinemas (Chalkou, 2012: 247).

Despite initiatives of the Ministry and the GFC to support cinema and create a national film industry, this has been without great impact. Legislation shifts with every newly elected government, while a firm application of legislation is permanently lacking particularly the all important tax return from television channels that froze in the period from 2009 to 2012 (Panagopoulos, 2011). By 2009, being underfunded by the Ministry of Culture and owing 755,000 euros to independent producers, who by 2011 were still not paid, as according to the popular slogan of the financial crisis "there is no money" (Panagopoulos, 2011), the GFC was on the verge of bankruptcy. In 2011, as the director of the GFC Giorgos Papalios admitted:

The Centre has invoiced debts to ongoing productions of four million euros, while we are still waiting to receive five million from the Ministry. If these matters are not resolved, we will have to bring productions to an indefinite pause. We have already approved twenty productions, which do not have yet a contract, while we

have another forty pending which will have to wait. If the tax return policy is applied, possibly then we can move on (Panagopoulos, 2011).

Filmmaking then, on a national scale, is brought indefinitely to a standstill. Insurmountable problems regarding financial support and stringent bureaucracy that hinder production and domestic distribution, have led various Greek filmmakers to turn to coproduction with private Greek and public European/transnational institutions, such as the Eurimages program, the Media I and II initiatives and film centers in Germany and Turkey in particular. Not few are the cases of acclaimed filmmakers, like Tsitos, who were forced to invest their personal savings in the production of their projects, with cast and crew relying on a potential success in box office and festivals to cover costs and wages. *Plato's Academy* received national funding and was awarded at the Locarno Film Festival and was also a finalist of the LUX competition in 2010. For his next project however, *Adikos Kosmos/Unfair World*, (2012), Tsitos encountered numerous hurdles. According to Tsitos,

the country collapsed. But I will not wait for it to heal in order to carry on with my life. For me it was of vital importance to make this film. Therefore, I invested my personal savings, and everybody participated without receiving their wages. Of course I am feeling very guilty for this. If the film is successful enough, they will receive their earnings in double (Venardou, 2011).

Moreover, Yorgos Lanthimos, whose *Kynodontas/Dogtooth* (2009) had a successful trajectory through Europe, concluding at the annual Academy Awards in the United States in the foreign film category, experienced a similar fate. After *Dogtooth* and critical acclaim, which allegedly heralded a "new spring season" (Panagopoulos 2011b; Danikas, 2011; Kranakis, 2012) for Greek cinema, his next project, *Alpeis/Alps* (2011), was rejected by the GFC and Lanthimos had to rely on the good will of his producer Athena Tsangari, director of the equally acclaimed and aspiring *Attenberg* (2010), and his crew to produce and film with unpaid wages and a very limited budget (Venardou, 2011). According to producer Panos Papahatzis, "films have been made with the help of friends. However, one cannot depend exclusively on the good will of his friends or coworkers. Because of this, we do not have a national cinema. For a national cinema to exist, there needs to be policy" (Panagopoulos, 2011).

Tsitos and Lanthimos resolved to what is referred to here as guerilla cinema which bears certain interest. As a counterpoint to national and transnational cinema, this is a low budget cinema driven solely by the filmmaker who is thus responsible for the outcome of

the film and its distribution. The supreme goal is to accomplish a common aspiration of the filmmaker, crew, cast and producer, when there actually is one, to create a film that serves as an artistic accomplishment that will travel to festivals and receive distribution, beyond the official routes of national cinema yet representing contemporary Greek cinema, not however the institutions that deem filmmakers as ambassadors of the nation. Indeed, both *Unfair World* and *Alps* were awarded at the festivals of Locarno, Venice and Sydney respectively. Their directors managed to cover their expenditure and obtain critical acclaim in Greece. *Alps* additionally received the best script award at the Venice Film Festival (2011)<sup>70</sup>. This is a cinema that emerges between the national and transnational, out of a certain duty and practical strategy but also as a form of reaction to the logic of funding that often endorses prospective films that either promote a favorable portrayal of Greekness, in the films of Smaragdis for instance, or filmmakers of the older elite of New Greek Cinema, like Angelopoulos and Voulgaris. In any case, although lack of funds is the main excuse for rejection, when one considers the high budget of a Smaragdis or Voulgaris film, it is arguably evident that rejection favors only films that have low commercial appeal or/and which promote an unfavorable portrayal of the nation. One would be forced to wait indefinitely for a project to be forwarded and would be bound by the particularities of national subsidy. This could mean that the director is firstly serving the producer and that he/she is also a public servant, working for the state.

This interstitial guerilla cinema and its emergence as a reaction to the state, directly suggests that the latter is an interest group that influences the positive course of a film, its production, domestic and international distribution and appeal. In this case, the director, crew and cast are solely responsible for their accomplishment and its appeal to the public. The fact that the filmmakers express resentment towards the funding agents of the state and still pursue with tooth and nail to complete their films, suggests an obvious political struggle.

Financial support by the GFC is distributed equally to producers who have undertaken the production of a film, despite variations in the estimated budget of an individual film. For example, a film by Angelopoulos most often costs over one million euros belonging in a category of "high cost films" (Dafermou, 2007). However, Angelopoulos in particular would receive support from various European sources and not exclusively by the GFC. As an agent of a traditionally conceived European art cinema,

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<sup>70</sup><http://flix.gr/en/alps-wins-big-at-the-sydney-film-festival.html>; <http://flix.gr/en/alps-wins-big-at-the-sydney-film-festival.html> (URL not available).

Angelopoulos would receive large sums not only from the GFC, but also from major European funding bodies. As a result, it is no surprise that his films can be understood through the derogatory term "Euro pudding" particularly since he would cast often popular figures of the European vanguard of the Nouvelle Vague and New German Cinema, a title used also for the films of Smaragdis (Papadimitriou, 2011: 504). The GFC receives in one year fifty scripts in average for inspection, with only roughly ten approved for funding. Its annual budget is moreover not stable, depending on the 1.5% tax return, which is not always returned (Dafermou, 2007). Many filmmakers have thus been forced to seek alternative routes, delaying further completion of their projects.

In 2007, the Minister of Culture, Yorgos Voulgarakis, announced a seven million Euro budget with nearly 50% deriving from the tax return. In 2007, fourteen films were each granted with 250,000 Euros. This is however a very small sum particularly when directors such as Angelopoulos, Smaragdis, Voulgaris and Mpoulmetis require a budget of over a million (Ibid.). It is for this reason that Voulgaris and Mpoulmetis particularly resolved to funding by foreign private corporations to complete their blockbusters. Voulgaris' *Nifes/Brides* (2004) was produced by Martin Scorsese's Kappa Productions and *Touch of Spice* by Village Roadshow, the company that funded box office records such as *The Matrix* (Andy & Larry Wachowski, 1999) (Dafermou, 2007). Smaragdis received 500,000 Euros from the Centre but *El Greco* was coproduced by various other European sources as well (Kokonis, 2012).

With state subsidy proving to be unobtainable and inadequate, many young filmmakers, who have been regarded as the new generation of Greek filmmakers (Kranakis, 2012; Chalkou, 2012), formed the group "filmmakers in the mist" ("kinimatografistes stin omihli") in 2009. They strongly reacted against the indifference of the state towards cinema and boycotted the State Awards of Quality and neither submitted their films to compete at the 50th Thessaloniki Film Festival. Among the filmmakers who signed the petition were Angelopoulos, Voulgaris and Nikos Panagiotopoulos. They all demanded that "there is no more indifference to cinema, and that the production of a film is not regarded as a heroic act, by and for the few" (Kranakis, 2012). One of their members is Thanos Anastopoulos.

Anastopoulos' *correction* was one more guerilla film that led a very successful course in European and transatlantic film festivals, receiving critical praise. It won the best screenplay and best actor awards at the 2007 Thessaloniki Film Festival. It was screened at

the Cleveland International Film Festival<sup>71</sup> and the New Balkan Film Conference at Columbia University March 7 2009<sup>72</sup>.

*Correction* was described as a film that "does not flatter audiences and does not affirm our petites bourgeois expectations, but introduces its viewer to a struggle with himself"<sup>73</sup>. "With the utmost subtlety, it strikes a blow at the collective Greek gut, addressing the practically taboo theme of xenophobia"<sup>74</sup>. *Correction* was lastly described as the "best film of 2007-2008" by Greek film scholar Christos Dermetzopoulos<sup>75</sup>.

The film is based on actual events. It borrows its main theme from the murder of an Albanian fan by a Greek-American man, after the notorious 2004 football match between Greece and Albania, where Greece, the former Euro cup champion and host to the same year's Olympic Games, lost to Albania on Greek soil. Victory at the Euro cup spread a wave of joy and optimism across the country, while Greece was preparing to host the Olympic Games and chair the European Parliament. These are all accomplishments that created a false sense of prosperity based on the notion that Greece will then have the opportunity to leave its mark in the political and cultural arenas of Europe as a force to be reckoned with. However, at the time, the state neglected the management of the towering migrant populations and spurred xenophobia further to the point that defeat at a football match was regarded as a national defeat by one of the country's sworn enemies<sup>76</sup>.

*Correction* is one of the first Greek films built solely on the subjective gaze of a Greek nationalist, the alleged murderer who, after his release from prison, seeks forgiveness from the victim's wife. We follow him as he stalks her and her daughter, in the most derelict and underdeveloped areas of Athens, a ghetto of drug addicts, immigrants and hooligans. Anastopoulos reveals here the intentions behind his project: "I was angry, sad, and frustrated about the 2004 event in Greece, and I was feeling that there was an increasing nationalism, racism, and xenophobia in Greece that led me to write the *correction* script quickly, by the end of 2006"<sup>77</sup>. The film was shot from March to April 2007 with a twelve person crew, including the cast. Anastopoulos was forced to obtain a

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<sup>71</sup><http://www.filmthreat.com/reviews/11682/#ixzz1n43AGo87> last accessed 27 June 2014.

<sup>72</sup>[www.greeknewsofamerica.com/?p=10101](http://www.greeknewsofamerica.com/?p=10101) (URL not available).

<sup>73</sup><http://www.meatpaceart.org/meatspacesite/kaput02/02/dermetzopoulos.htm> (URL not available).

<sup>74</sup><http://dajieblack.wordpress.com/2008/08/20/a-must-see-movie-diorthosi-correction/> last accessed 27 June 2014.

<sup>75</sup><http://www.myfilm.gr/article2437.html> last accessed 27 June 2014.

<sup>76</sup>For more on this see Golfinopoulos, Yannis (2007), *Ellinas pote... Alvanoi kai Ellinikos Tipos ti Nihta tis 4 Septemvriou 2004/Never a Greek... 'Albanians and Greek Press the Night of September 4 2004*, Ioannina: Isnari.

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.greeknewsofamerica.com/?p=10101> (URL not available).

bank loan, to produce and shoot the film, while waiting for his script to be approved by the GFC. His proposal eventually was rejected and, being already in the phase of editing, completion of *correction* continued as an entirely independent production.

After its premiere in 2008 at the Berlin International Festival, the GFC decided to support the film seeing its successful course in this and other prestigious film festivals. One can only wonder here, what exactly are the criteria of the GFC when approving or rejecting a proposal? In this case, in 2006-2007 the bulk of funding was given to two films of a more traditionally national character - *El Greco* and *Uranya* (Kapakas, 2006). The first, a film that bears obvious nationalistic tendencies to the same degree that it promotes a Eurocentric cinema, received 500,00 Euros and was number one at the Greek State Awards for Quality with *Uranya*, a nostalgic coming-of-age tale in the Greek pastoral landscapes of the late 1960s, in second place. Is a Greek film's merit based on its being successful at European festivals?

I argue here, based on a comment of the 2011 president of the GFC, Grigoris Karantinakis, that if a film is potentially an ambassador of Greece and Greek culture abroad, establishing a "good name" for the country, it may receive national subsidy and also greater domestic distribution. As the financial crisis deepens and the international image of Greece is that of the unwanted child of the Eurozone, cinema serves a specific political purpose. In the words of Karantinakis, "Greek cinema is an important, maybe even the most important part of contemporary Greek culture and with its successes it is becoming an ideal ambassador for our country, in a time when its image is constantly under attack" (*Kathimerini*, 21/12/2011). Arguably, cinema is a potential vehicle of nationalism and populism. Interestingly, in this case, the films per se are not the most crucial matter, but their overall success abroad, be it *El Greco* or a film by Giannaris that does not affirm national identity. In other words, regardless of their content, critical or favourable output on national identity and the nation, films can serve the ideological and political agenda of a state and nation which requires "making a good name abroad". Thus, major European Festivals serve as a stage for a good name that policy agents seek through their support to films.

While various interest groups are keen on promoting a cinema that displays a "correct" image of ourselves, the same groups are keen on promoting Giannaris and Anastopoulos, although their films do the opposite of those of Smaragdis. While Smaragdis aims at "elevating the souls of Greeks in a time of crisis" (Zoumpoulakis, 2011b), Giannaris and Anastopoulos do quite the opposite. Still, both sides of this debate

become vehicles of the nation and its political and cultural affiliations during a time when traditional beliefs and functions surrounding the nation and national culture are tested.

I have sought in this chapter to reveal how the national and its various counterparts bare their mark on a film and how this affects it in terms of production, circulation and reception. My belief is that, despite obvious deviations from the norm, that underline exciting and challenging discussions on the limitations of national cinema, the national still exercises great power on cinema overall as a form of culture particularly in times of reform, from the early 1990s to times of crisis twenty years later. The Greek case is exemplary of this and moreover highlights the limiting imagination of populism and binaries relating to Hollywood and cultural imperialism. The national emerges clearly and at times with subtlety through film policy and the actions of interest groups. The marginalization of *Hostage*, *Eduart* and *correction* took place beyond the radar of the national cinema doctrine since these films confuse the national. Nevertheless the films discussed here bring the national to the fore. The films are still influenced by power that stems from the policy of national cinema and European transnational cinema. At the same time, as transnationalism and globalization blur the boundaries of the national, greater resistance is launched by the later as resistance to change and inclusiveness particularly become embedded in the more immediate social surroundings and mediascapes as much as in cultural policy. This is apparent in Greek cinema in the way that these cultural artifacts, as evidence of a blurring of boundaries, become marginal and a sign of urgency that cannot be dismissed.

## Chapter 4

### The migrant imagination

#### Motivations, expectations and ambitions

##### Introduction

In *From the Snow*, *Hostage* and *Eduart*, migration from Albania is encouraged by the imagination that fuels the idyllic image of Greece as a promised land. The notion of "the world beyond the borders" that Kapllani (2010) aptly utilizes throughout his memoir of migration to Greece, in order to display the over idealised image of Greece in isolated Albania, is the concept that underlies the portrayal of migrants from Albania in the films at the stage of their flight to Greece. It is the basis of a collective imagination, of wanderlust and xenophilia towards the West, which ultimately come crashing down in each film's climactic finale highlighting the deficit of European democracy, neo liberalism and capitalism as major functions of globalization.

Kapllani recalls the moment when Greece became first established as a promised land in the minds of Albanian pupils during the Hoxha regime:

I remember our school trip to Sarandë, where at night you can see the lights from the world-beyond-the-borders. They might have been the lights from a village, maybe a town, who knows? We stood there gawping at them, imagining, speculating, in secret: 'what are people like on the other side?' we each had our own ideas on the subject, usually the product of rumors, or pictures we'd seen on television, transformed into mythical stories, which we'd use to feed our fantasies as much as we could (ibid.: 29-30).

Mythical stories are linked overall to notions of cultural otherness regarding an exoticised image of a foreign land which is often perceived as obscure and hence understood often through mythical stories. Apart from being a fundamental aspect of orientalism, mythical stories highlight the imagined features of the host nation and as such it is an integral function of the migrant imagination. In Kapllani's description, this otherness is life affirming and promises a haven of great pleasures, including, in the male migrant imagination, an absolute lack of sexual restraint and abundance of commodities. In the words of a companion of Kapllani "girls there are liberated; they're free out there, how can I put it? You're constantly ambushed by sex!" (ibid.: 30). This displays an over idealized image of Greece, based on the expectation that life there must be the exact opposite of what it is in Albania.



The concept of the world beyond is an appropriate term since it connotes journeys of discovery and of hope with exciting prospects for the traveler. In particular, this notion could be linked to cartography and the exotic orient, the unfamiliar territory that is open to exploration and exploitation which Edward Said has revealingly discussed in *Orientalism* (1979). The aforementioned terms connote a number of suggestions. A "world", a term vague enough to inspire accordingly an over idealized or dreadful imagination of an obscure location, being "beyond", is surely far away and thus incites curiosity, hope and pleasures that are linked to discovery.

The exotic however connotes something that is not merely far away and the locus of wanderlust and escapism, but implies that which is entirely distant from us undermining any relation to foreign cultures and reinforcing the feeling of togetherness that borders advocate (Eleftheriotis, 2012: 22-23). In this case, since Greece is "beyond" Albania in particular it could be linked to a superior country meaning in other words developed and democratic, not a straitjacket as Kapllani has aptly commented on isolated Albania (see chapter II). Since Greece was the closest European state to Albania, it is automatically linked to the West and hence to idealised notions on capitalism and globalisation. The danger of this conceptualisation is that it advocates Eurocentrism and false prospects for migrants.

This particular cartography is suggestive of the way geographical proximity fires up the hopes of the migrant but also how the host country fears its neighbor. The concept of the world beyond may represent a promised land for the migrants but from Greece it represents a primitive region plagued by communism. In *Hostage*, the police chief managing the hostage situation wonders, "where do they get the guns from?" His deputy answers back "you can get anything up there". "Up there", where primitivism reigns, so far from "here", one can get Kalashnikovs, an apparatus of the former Soviet Union and communism, traditional concepts that are summed up in the sarcastic language of Hall: "barbarians clamoring at the gates of civilisation" (1996: 46).

By visualising the migrant imagination, the filmmakers evoke the movement of migration and its various particularities - the hopes and aspirations of the migrants. The migrant imagination puts movement into operation and sets the narrative, which takes the form of a trajectory which exposes the plight of immigrants in and en route to Fortress Europe. In any case, we focus, through this framework, on the image of the migrant from Albania and how the filmmakers challenge xenophobia and essentialisms.

#### 4.1 Imagined fatherlands, imagined utopias: *From the Snow*

In *From the Snow*, the world beyond is articulated at one particular moment as the locus of abundant paid work. After crossing the border to the Greek territory of Epirus, the protagonist, Achilles, meets with his grandmother's sister who remained on the Greek side of Epirus and was divided by her family following the last drawing of borders. When she asks him what his plans are, Achilles answers to work, save money, bring his family to Greece and to overall "get everyone out of that place up there". The last comment is a mistaken translation of the Greek phrase which literally translates as "to empty that place up there" ("na adeiasei o topos ekei pano"). This phrase has many implications similar to "the world beyond". Albania is at this moment not the safe haven that Greece is imagined as, but a wretched place that must be emptied. And indeed, in the early nineties, financial and social problems were insurmountable, forcing Albanians and Greeks to flee in search of better living conditions. "Emptying" Albania of its population is an extreme way of implying that it is not worth living in Albania any longer but is however so in Greece. The deeper implication of this is that Albania is peripheral and Greece central which figures so in the migrant imagination and which the film does not question.

The migrant imagination is informed additionally by the thought that for them it should not be a great challenge to make it in Greece since it is, allegedly, home. Achilles' words echo historical and social facts; the collapsing of the economy and the chaotic state of affairs after communism and the invitation of the Greek state. These issues are a given in the film that justifies the intention to flee to Greece. This bears further meaning since it is implied that Albania should indeed be emptied by ethnic Greeks since their original homeland is Greece. The migrant imagination here is implied as a collective expression of the Greek community. This highlights, besides the centrality of Greece and Europe, the notion of "long distance nationalism"<sup>78</sup> since the overarching foundations of the imagined community are shared by the diaspora but as "imagined" they perpetually reinforce the migrant imagination.

Before this sequence, in the opening scene, Achilles and Thomas are standing in a tow-truck with other migrants from Albania. In the voice over, Achilles tells of how they fled from Albania through gunfire, looting state houses and making their way to Aghious Saranta, the borders of Northern Epirus with Greece. Achilles and Thomas then decide to cross the borders to Greece. This initiative however is marked by a sense of futility:

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<sup>78</sup>For more on this, see Wise A. "Nation, Transnation, Diaspora: Locating East Timorese Long-Distance Nationalism" in *Sojourn*, Vol.19, No.2 (2004), 151-180.

"where are we going? To the homeland says I. To disaster says Thomas and laughs". The voice over conveys a certain pathos that overrides the inherent wanderlust of movement. The journey of hope away from the devastation of Albania is marked as one that will bring only more devastation, despite any hints of hope and optimism. After all, this is a homecoming journey and not merely a "home-seeking journey or homelessness journey[s]" (Naficy, 2001: 229) which indicates also a joyous moment.

Achilles' voice over asserts subjectivity and binds the centre of perception and narrative to the mobile gaze of the migrant/traveler. We thus follow the trajectory of his journey of hope through his psyche. Despite the futility in the words of Thomas, the migrant imagination is fueled by hope and the imagined notion of a promised land, since it is not only where work presumably is but also the primordial fatherland, the so-called "patrida" ("Πατρίδα"). Articulating the notion of "patrida" is the first indication of the migrant imagination in the film. Patrida is linked to journeys, exile, diaspora and great longing among other notions such as the primordial past that often is employed in xenophobic rhetoric. Moreover, if we examine the etymology of the term, contrary to homeland, patrida derives from the root pater ("πάτερ") meaning father. Patrida therefore is linked to the fatherland. This could be examined in regard to a discourse on primordialism, the arbitrary roots of the nation and lastly patriarchy which is what the term connotes. Our fathers or, in other words, ancestors, were born and died in this territory before us and therefore it is, in the present, our fatherland (and in this respect ours exclusively). The latter displays the deeply rooted concepts that bind a nation of men.

The concept of the fatherland was established already in antiquity when the population was named according to the name of the father and their city-state of origin. This means that a Greek is indeed one and can refer to the country as patrida if his/her father is from there. For Orthodox Greek speakers from Albania this will be conflicting since patrida implies an exclusive membership which they cannot entirely claim according to the law of soil and blood that governs citizenship. Although one may be born on soil that once was Greek.

For the migrants this is assumed as a return to the fatherland but in reality it is a journey to a country where they will experience marginalization. Their fatherland is not Albania but neither Greece. Therefore, I argue that patrida is an imagined concept but as such per se it is an essential component of the migrant imagination and particularly of returnees to Greece who sought to reconnect with Greece maintaining a collective belief in the notion of reconnecting with and healing the trauma of separation a rhetoric that was

widely promoted by the state. The migrant imagination in this case figures indeed upon imagined notions.

The discourse of the fatherland and the return to it are displayed in the Homeric epic, the *Odyssey* of Ulysses to his native land. It is part of a culture that continues in the early twentieth century with Greek emigration and the nationalist agenda for the return of expatriates. It additionally is suggestive of adventurous and arduous journeys which are such since a homecoming journey requires most often great effort. In the *Odyssey*, the journey is rewarding and, after enduring great pain and encountering immense peril, Ulysses is welcomed as a hero, a notion from which Goritsas refrains, linking the traveler's imagination to misguided and hazardous impressions that ultimately lead to a finale in which a journey of homelessness begins undermining journeys of conquest that are often linked to the American dream and the overarching presence of its application in Hollywood. It moreover highlights exile as a permeating and painful feature of migration.

Patrida moreover is a term that carries a particular sense of belonging that can be linked only to those born and raised on Greek soil. The return thus of Greek émigrés from the United States for example would be a natural expectation since they were primarily born and raised in Greece. The invitation to Greeks in Albania was part and parcel of a nationalist agenda that required a strengthening of national consciousness which in particular means re gaining the regions bordering Greece where Christian Orthodox populations resided. This was the cultural, political and military project of the Greek state and it represented the "political expression of the ethnically, religiously and culturally-linguistically defined Greek nation. It also played a significant part in unifying a traditional and internally divided society and transforming it into a nation-state" (Triantafyllidou, 1999: 190). This is the aim of the migrants in the film, to renew their ties to Greece.

Crossing the borders from Albania to Epirus means that Achilles and Thomas have to cross the "Forbidden Zones" (Kapllani, 2010: 31), a terrain forty kilometers from the Greek border, in effect the borders of the borders. In the film, this is performed in the night, as the migrants, Greeks and Albanians, cut through tall wire fences. This is shown as a life risking initiative since the borders are guarded by Albanian soldiers who fire in any direction. Unless one had a permit from the police, which at the time was unobtainable, then one is surely escaping and will be shot on the spot (ibid.). The Albanian guard however is out of sight. All we see are close ups of spotlights tracking the fugitives. This asserts the ubiquitous presence of guards and the notion of a heavily guarded border. The flight of the migrants through the Forbidden Zones is indeed a life risking endeavor.

Achilles sees in the distance the figure of the island of Corfu and exclaims with a tone of hope "Corfu, Thomas". This establishing static shot (fig. 4.1.1), which lasts only for a glimpse, displays the illuminated outline of a piece of land that is indeed beyond, much like in the descriptions of Kapllani. In the dark, the lights across the sea seem promising - the illuminated sight of the West. The migrants cross over through the night and are found by Greek soldiers the next morning. Following their short stay in Epirus on the border with Albania, they flee to Athens. Before this, the two men sit during the day on a hill and Thomas gazes towards the sea. He says "Corfu Achilles" with a tone of futility that is a characteristic of Thomas' personality. The shot of Corfu is, as in the first sighting of the Island, an establishing shot (fig. 4.1.2).



Figure 4.1.1: Corfu by night



Figure 4.1.2: Corfu by day

In the light of the afternoon, one can see mountains obscured by clouds. It seems as though Corfu is closer but still so far from their reach. Both shots of Corfu are static and part of a static gaze and may suggest that the island paradise is inaccessible to the two men as there is no impression of movement towards it. Movement within the frame is linked to the static and disembodied cinematic apparatus. This immediately suggests that Corfu is always far away, excluded from the mobile migrant gaze but always close enough to be inviting and, what is more, illuminated and luring. Thomas acknowledges the gaze of Achilles and projects the same imagination but also the impossibility of reaching the island. This suggests that, even momentarily, they share the hope of returning to the fatherland. Corfu is part of the fatherland that seems to be at their grasp, the doorstep to the world beyond the borders.

However, we never actually see Corfu; it is merely the outline of land in the distance, an imagined paradise which is never reached since the migrant trio proceeds towards the concrete jungle of Athens. The postcard image of the popular tourist destination is thus negated, since we identify with the gaze of the migrant "which deprives the spectator of the scopophilic 'touristic' pleasure" (Loshitzky, 2010: 27). Corfu remains a world beyond, literally and metaphorically. The futility in the voice of Thomas and his

exclamation reinforce the notion that there is a heaven in the world beyond but it is not for the disenfranchised migrant from Albania, something that Thomas is aware of. The migrant imagination is not necessarily negated therefore but it becomes burdened by the conditions of hospitality, in this case by the strong belief that it is not prosperity waiting but disaster.

In the film, the decision to migrate is made not simply out of necessity, but also a desire to return to the fatherland, where the migrants allegedly belong. After all, they were invited. It is a matter of identity and belonging. This is a defining element of Goritsas' representation of Achilles and Thomas. What makes the migrants of Goritsas stand out is that they are returning home and not migrating to a foreign country in order thus to establish national identity anew. Therefore their journey is not only one of hope. This is also a homecoming journey which often leads to perpetual movement as the migrant realizes that home is not what was expected. The migrant imagination and the various aspects of the journey create a more elusive understanding of the particular character of this journey.

*From the Snow* marks the first moment where Greek cinema adopts the gaze of a Northern Epirote during the time of their migration to Greece. It stands out from the other films addressd since the migrants are not Albanian, but Orthodox Greeks from Albania. Goritsas brings to the fore his fictional representation of Northern Epirotes while remaining faithful to historical and social facts and data regarding both countries. Goritsas sides with the migrants and depicts their imagination not as naïve, but logical and human. The futility expressed in the beginning is furthermore an indication of the journey's outcome as the spectator is told that for the migrants neither of their homes is a safe haven. The migrants are shown from the start as hopeless through the minimal and straightforward use of the protagonist's voice over and the shots of the distant homeland. The journey is simultaneously one of hope but also homelessness. Goritsas therefore embraces the "other" and reveals his inner motivations and hopes (and in certain sequences, literally, his dreams as I will discuss) and implies from the first quarter of the film that Northern Epirotes are the wretched of the earth, like other migrants and refugees without a home. Their identity and home are in flux. As we shall see now, the Albanians in *Hostage* and *Eduart* imagine equally an Eldorado in Greece, but their motivation and expectations differ in more detail from those of the Greek migrants.

#### **4.2 Justifying criminality in *Hostage*: vindication in perpetual dialogue with a traumatic past and the migrant imagination**

Elion Senia crosses twice to Greece. The first time was in 1997 following the great insurrection. He is forced to migrate by the undefeatable force of patriarchy and its values that have been dominating in Albania and underlying its traditions and the impossible transition to a market economy. Elion's father died three years before the action in the film. The only pillar left in the house therefore is the older of the two sons, Elion. The chief of the Albanian police who escorts Elion's mother to the borders makes this very clear: "No home without a woman, especially when there's no man around". The home of Elion is therefore scarred for life as is the honor of his family. Before his martyrdom, Elion crosses for the first time to Greece. In the words of the Greek deputy, we learn that this first attempt failed: "the guys at deportation had him for two months. Then they threw him out. He's a piece of filth".

Nevertheless, the Albanian migrant will repeatedly cross the borders to Greece no matter how difficult and perilous this proves to be. In Elion's case this is not merely a necessity of survival for him and his family, but to prove to his in-laws and Albanian society that he fulfills his obligations as a strong male Albanian, where men have to accede to the traditional role of the pillar of the house. His mission is essentially set by his father-in-law. This issue is addressed in a key scene of the film. In Albania, Elion and his mother are sitting at the table with the two in-laws. The *mise-en-scène*, and in particular the clothing of the two families suggest a binary of good versus bad. Elion and his fiancé Mirella are both dressed in white and smiling, with the light shining on their faces while the in-laws are dressed in grey and black seeming morose. The youth and future generation of Albania is the innocent and hopeful while the older are conservative and sinister, a rather myopic understanding of the notion of the younger generation that is impeded by the conservative rules of the older generation.

In Albania, Elion was engaged to Mirella for three years. However, the possibility of marriage is denied by her father who, when Elion addresses him as "father", tells him clearly "I am not your father and never will be". With the last remaining pillar of Elion's home dead and having sold the only piece of land that Elion owned, Mirella's parents are not willing to give their underage daughter to someone who cannot provide. Moreover, his failed attempt to find work in Greece the first time is a "disgrace" that everyone talks about according to Mirella's mother. The discussion, as it turns out, is not centered around the marriage of Elion and Mirella, as much as on asserting male hierarchies and masculine

identity in Albanian society and affirming patriarchy. This is highlighted in Elion's mother's protest to the in-laws: "you're wrong. Very wrong. Why do you believe all this stupid talk? My son is a man! You hear? A man!" Interestingly, in the discussion, none of the participants make any mention of manhood till this moment. The discussion actually is not centered on this issue but on the arrangement between the two families. Clearly, patriarchy and manhood are decisive indicators of identity in the film and equally decisive in the struggle between tradition and modernization and are considered as given.

Bearing in mind how frequently Elion refers to his wounded manhood during the film and that Albania adheres to patriarchy, where, as is manifest in this discussion, the father and husband has the first and last word, we can argue that Elion's motivation stems from his wounded manhood and the imagination that crossing back to Greece will guarantee him vindication and a rightful place as a man in Albania. Before proving himself as an Albanian and provider, he has to prove that he is a man. The persistence of patriarchy in Albania and in Elion's consciousness as a major value is also obvious in his discussion with Iliana, one of the Greek hostages, in the bus. Iliana, weary of familial restrictions and the obligations of motherhood and marriage in Greece, has left her family to be with her lover Grigoris, both of them hostages of patriarchy and conservatism. He tells her that "in Albania, if a woman even looks at another man, she's dead. Here they are all whores". Elion may be a victim of patriarchy, but he does believe in its value and significance. This reveals how there is no escape for Elion from the clutches of an identity that has been forced upon him and which strangely enough is his only source of motivation. Elion's status as a man is not only questioned but additionally negated by a man who assumes that he has authority over him, a higher social ranking. This triggers Elion's flight to Greece and his unquenchable thirst for vindication.

The only way for Elion to redeem himself is by making a life in Greece. He is not accepted as a member of the dominant male community that serves as the pillar of the Albanian nation. According to Kapllani "only if he makes a success of a life abroad, only then can he make peace with his own country. If he doesn't make it, he will be left hanging, at odds with the world and with the universe" (2010: 10). This rather sentimental comment exposes the burden of patriarchy since Albanian men are expected to fulfill a tall order without any alternative. The migrant imagination is informed partly by wanderlust but also by the demands of patriarchy. The filmmaker thus, by revealing the migrant imagination, exposes the internal divisions of a transitional society that underlie the foundations of its political and social struggle.



The migrant imagination in *Hostage* is linked to the prospect of Elion finding work in Greece and also earning a fortune to prove to his in-laws that he is not the man they assume. When he negotiates on the telephone with a newscaster, he demands ten million Euros from the Greek government as ransom. "Ten million for Greece is nothing" says Elion, revealing his misguided imagination that the world beyond is a land of financial prosperity as much as that the answer to his plight in Albania is money. Elion's imagination is also his source of motivation and courage. Kapllani describes this in his text: "He has to make it, not simply because people back home expect something from him; that's the least of it. He has to make it because he cannot go back a failure. The thought of failure makes him tremble like a child afraid of the dark" (2010: 15).

Elion therefore crosses for a second time determined to make it in Greece, since there is no prospect in Albania. He will cross over as many times as it takes, "he'll cross the borders illegally ten, twelve, nineteen, thirty-six times" (ibid.: 32). Indeed, since he migrates for a second time, it is implied that the homeland is devoid of promise as the migrants of Goritsas suggested. This becomes additionally obvious in the mother's letter where she writes that a relative of the family will help them to migrate to Italy once Elion returns home. One can argue that in post-communist Albania there would be a chance for survival and a good life but for a stigmatized man and a mother with a dead husband, it is nearly impossible.

By representing the imagination of Elion and his deeper motivations, Giannaris displays the desperation of Flamur Pislí. This is performed in flashbacks that happen through the course of the hijacking and the journey to Albania. The flashback is Giannaris' major expressive tool through which he displays the imagination of Elion. We see the various moments that reveal how Elion was abused and cast out in Greece, leading thus to the hijacking. The flashback is Giannaris' means towards justifying Elion's criminal act and clandestine migration. By extension, Giannaris excuses Pislí.

The hijacking was exploited by the media in 1999 to unleash albanophobia. This is important to the film since Giannaris essentially aims at challenging this discourse. *Hostage* is a unique moment in the history of Greek cinema since Giannaris, but also the other filmmakers I am addressing, chose to not depict the traditional Greek hospitality ("filoxenia") which literally translates as being friendly towards a stranger. The discourse of filoxenia is deeply rooted in Greek tradition and its values and is linked to the notion of welcoming the Greek nationals from the diaspora (and particularly the United States) a

popular theme as well of the Old Greek Cinema<sup>79</sup>. It is implied that as a nation and people, Greeks are very hospitable. On the contrary, Giannaris sides with an Albanian man, an individual not worthy of *filoxenia*, displays his deepest motivations and desperation and justifies his criminal initiatives in Greece as a natural outcome of a twisted perception of *filoxenia*. By displaying through flashbacks the migrant imagination but also the events that led to the hijacking, Giannaris sides with an Albanian migrant instead of a Greek returnee, like Goritsas does, and challenges the core of Greek values and traditions of hospitality. Let us see how the flashback functions in the film.

*Hostage* does not track a linear narrative. It begins by following Elion to the bus already seven minutes into the film. The narrative from there on unfolds according to the course of the journey. However, the editing of the film is the key to understanding the narrative, as Giannaris cuts irregularly and without any obvious connection to past episodes linked to the events that led to Elion's second crossing to Greece, his time there and the humiliation he suffered. Let us focus on the scene of Elion's rejection from the in-laws.

The flashbacks interrupt the linear journey to Albania in various instances regressing to unspecified moments of Elion's second residence in Greece and the transitional time in Albania before his second flight. In scattered instances, Giannaris evokes through montage the fragmented psyche of Elion, revealing the actions and initiatives that led to the hijacking, such as the illegal arms dealing with the local police chief, Elion's sexual encounter with the former's wife and his humiliation in Greece and Albania. The latter is shown before a critical moment in the narrative. The bus is only two

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<sup>79</sup>See the following films for a corpus on the subject: *Papoutsi apo to topo sou/A Shoe from your own Land* (Sakellarios, 1946), *Dollaria kai Oneira/Dollars and Dreams* (Daifas, 1956), *I Theia apo to Sikago/The Aunt from Chicago* (Sakellarios, 1957), *O Fanouris kai to Soi tou/Fanouris and his Clan* (Ioannopoulos, 1957), *O Theios apo to Kanada/The Uncle from Canada* (Fylaktos, 1959). See also the following literature: Delveroudi, Eliza-Anna (2004), *Oi Neoi stis Komodies tou Ellinikou Kinimatografou (1948-1974)/Youth in the Comedies of Greek Cinema (1948-1974)*, Athens: Kentro Neoellinikon Erevnon; Ksanthopoulos, Levteris, "I Elliniki Doaspora ston Kinimatografo"/"The Greek Diaspora in Cinema", in Tomai-Konstantopoulou, Fotini (2004) (ed.), *I Metanastevsi ston Kinimatografo/Migration in Cinema*, Athens: Papazisis; Sotiropoulou, Chrysanthi (1995), *I diaspora ston elliniko kinimatografo: epidraseis kai epiroes sti thematologiki ekseliksi ton tainion tis periodou 1945-1986/The diaspora in Greek cinema: its influence on the thematic development of films, 1945-1986*, Athens: Themelio.

hours from the Albanian border. The Greek police chief tries in vain to persuade Elion to surrender. His desperation and fear begin then to emerge and a sense of pervasive futility is apparent as it becomes obvious that Elion's plans of vindication and a safe return to Albania are merely manifestations of the deluded migrant imagination. On course to the Albanian border, Elion addresses his hostages: "in a few hours, all this will be over. You have my word. I'll take you to my house. My mother will make you a fine meal. Then you will be free to return home". The bus driver asks Elion if he has people waiting for him in Albania and he answers back "Sure I do. They're waiting". Elion is depicted as a tragic figure, driven to destruction by superior and malicious forces unbeknownst to him, by his unquenchable thirst for revenge and wounded masculinity. It is apparent that he is alone in his quest and that certainly there is nobody to welcome him in Albania as it will be revealed through the flashback.

As the hijacking nears its tragic finale, tension escalates. The dead end direction of the journey seems inevitable, while the montage in the film becomes increasingly fragmented and, indeed, tense, with fast and sudden cutting from steady cam to handheld shots and vice versa. Grigoris encourages Elion to get off the bus before reaching the border: "for Christ's sake, what will you do in Albania" To which Elion answers "no one will dare touch me up there. I'll never set foot in Greece again". At this point, the atmosphere becomes loaded with an obvious sense of futility, implying that Elion's martyrdom will end in an appropriately tragic manner. Elion moves to the door where he is shown in a close up, framed between a seat and a partition (fig. 4.2.1), standing in front of the exit, possibly his only escape route, a tight and narrow space, where he seems trapped. The next shot shows Elion in an extreme close up from the exterior of the bus window banging his head violently on the glass window (fig. 4.2.2). The shot is shaky, filmed with a hand held camera that creates a sense of immediacy, highlighting Elion's despair, establishing a sense of urgency, as his plans obviously increasingly go downhill. He throws out the hand grenade that he has been clutching onto for hours- his only form of collateral. In this moment of desperation, the narrative regresses to the discussion with Elion's in-laws. By interrupting the narrative to depict this scene, Giannaris reveals that indeed Elion has no future in Albania and no one who will welcome him particularly since his second return will mark yet another failure in his struggle.

The flashback in this moment as well implies that this is a memory of Elion, a distant and traumatic memory which highlights in this moment the dead end of his journey and fate. One can argue that the two scenes are not linked, in terms of diegesis, and a

narrative of cause and effect. Indeed, as the camera pans fast over shining lights that become blurry, evoking a sense of memory dissolving into the past, we are taken to a sunny day on the balcony of an Albanian home. The contrast in the *mise en scène* is striking. I argue that Giannaris does not seek to create a sense of continuity through the flashback and *mise en scène*. But he accomplishes to highlight his hero's desperation, setting up thus a favorable image, while as well justifying the hijacking by evoking Elion's traumatic memories and imagination.



Figure 4.2.1: Elion between a partition and seat



Figure 4.2.2: Close-up through a window

Elion is thus in a perpetual dialogue with his past and the memories that are linked to it. Kapllani's personal insight on the experience of Albanian migration to Greece is very valuable in this discussion. According to him, migrants can be divided into two groups, those who "make it and those who do not". For those who do, it is an opportunity to forget about the past and be redeemed of its burden. For those who fail though, like Elion, "memory comes back with a vengeance, more cynical this time, breaks down all barriers and fills your spirit with screams which replace words, or with words that make you stutter with ghosts and shadows that haunt your nightmares by night and feed your neurosis by day" (2010: 143-144). The memories, thrown to the viewer and inserted in the film very suddenly without a clear pretext, are the cross that this Christ-like figure must bear. Interestingly, when Elion articulates his wounded masculinity ([they did to me] "things that you do not do a man" evoking his sexual abuse in detention), he literally stutters. Such is the trauma of his experience in Greece.

This is the most traumatic memory of Elion to which we flashback during a crucial sequence where suspense reaches a high point. In Albania, the bus is forced to stop at a barricade set by the Albanian police forces. An officer calls out to Elion through a loudspeaker "you're not going anywhere pal, the game is over". Elion crouches behind a seat clutching his Kalashnikov and looks down in fear (fig. 4.2.3).

Suspense is immediately interrupted, leaving the spectator to imagine the outcome of the events. In the next shot, two Greek police officers drag Elion (fig. 4.2.4), wounded and with torn clothes, to a warehouse where they question him and discover that he had an affair with the chief's wife. According to the officers, "fucking a guy's wife is bad enough. But fucking his wife and being a foreigner and all is like cutting the guy's dick off in his own home". The officer's monologue initially highlights the obviously subordinate role of women in a patriarchal society where women are passive receptors of an aggressive expression of masculinity that directly implies penetration as that expression. Moreover, it exposes the magnitude of humiliation that a Greek man suffers when another man but even more a foreigner "violates" the former's wife in his own home, considering all the implications for the nation of Greek men that "home" embodies and that "violation" connotes an "invasion" and a claim on the property of men. In this respect, the most appropriate punishment is for the betrayed man to penetrate him as well, not merely as a form of punishment but as an expression of victory, domination and humiliation of the opponent which the term "fuck" suggests (Golfinopoulos, 2007: 44-45). Naturally then, the men penetrate Elion with a glass bottle emasculating and humiliating him as he did to the chief. Giannaris saves the most traumatic experience for the ending, revealing the extent of Elion's suffering and the foundations of the migrant imagination.

At the same time, Giannaris establishes a sense of tragic irony as the spectator is aware that Elion will not be welcomed at all as a hero but that he will be still an outcast. Elion however is still unaware of this. We identify therefore with the gaze of a man deluded by his imagination and who encompasses the pathos of a tragic figure. Giannaris reveals, before the tragic finale, that, regardless of what Elion imagines and seeks for, he is "other" in his homeland and the host nation. He will be left hanging, at odds with the world and the universe. Elion is portrayed as a migrant with no home and identity, either as Albanian or as man. He is in limbo, between borders. In Greece, "Albanian" means filth while in Albania, Elion's identity as a man has been irrevocably lost. He is a failure. One can argue that Elion migrated in order to re-establish an identity, which could be regarded as a conceptualisation of migration overall and the motivations of migrants. Cinematic journeys of migration are often linked to an internal journey, one of self discovery which can also mean that the discovery may very well be that of the loss of identity and the dissolving of difference which is the case here. In this respect, we observe how movement obtains an elusive feature and functions in various ways, putting into operation more than a narrative but conveying the migrant imagination which functions in a non linear fashion

and emerges in relation to traumatic memories that encourage humiliation and in turn a strong urge for vindication that only migration can fulfill.

This favorable representation of an Albanian migrant as a tragic figure is an important achievement in Greek cinema and a source of cultural interruption exposing the power of nationalism which has deprived Elion of any potential but also of his treasured identity and affiliations. The fact that the film is based on a true story is additionally an achievement that goes beyond the universe of the film per se and extends to society and politics and establishes an inclusive and radical discussion on film, nationalism and the Greek-Albanian confrontation. Giannaris thus establishes a direct confrontation with the particular media discourses that functioned on the premise of the actual hijacking. This is the indeed tall order that the director launched, to tell audiences that the Albanian migrant is not a criminal but that *we* are the criminals.



Figure 4.2.3: Elion Clutches his Kalashnikov



Figure 4.2.4: Elion is dragged to a warehouse

### 4.3 The migrant imagination as a desire for escape from patriarchy and the Albanian nation: *Eduart*

The flashback functions in similar ways in *Eduart*. From the opening credits of the film, we are taken one year back to the time when Eduart lived in the derelict and shady areas of Athens, seeking a living through clandestine hustling. The flashback is used for narrative and semantic purposes. For the sake of argumentation, I will be referring to various parts of the film but not linearly since the narrative is fragmented and the migrant imagination is represented through scattered fragments.

The film opens with the final return of Eduart to Greece, through the snowy mountains of Epirus, to confess to murder. One year before, he lived in Athens as a fugitive, homeless and rejected by his friends. He hid in an abandoned train in the outskirts of Athens, without legal documents, subsequently got caught by the police and was deported. The return of Eduart to Albania marks, as in the case of Elion, the return of a failure and additionally unworthy son to the Albanian home where we see for the first time the figure of the Albanian father and master. This is a key moment where the migrant's motivation emerges.

The events in *Eduart* take place from 1996 to 1997 one year before the second insurrection and migration wave. Eduart left his home without any warning, presumably in 1994, and returned two years later. At home, he is once again rejected by the head of the family, his father, Raman Bako, a retired officer of the Hoxha regime. Without any hint of surprise or pleasure at the sight of his son, he sarcastically asks him "you finally remembered you've also got a family?" He directly then accuses him for stealing from the cash register of the train station where Eduart's mother worked and who was dismissed due to this. "Who taught you to steal and lie? Me, or your mother you scum" are the strong words of the father. He attacks Eduart who grabs his arm and answers back "you can't beat me the way you used to". The conversation ends with the father declaring his principles: "I don't want thieves in my house. Get lost". This scene is witnessed by Eduart's mother who watches silently and without intervening although she loves him, despite his delinquency. Eduart answers back "you are not an officer anymore giving orders". The hand-held camera here conveys immediacy and the household becomes a space of confrontation (fig. 4.3.1) that evokes one between the old order and the younger bewildered generation.

The military ranking of Raman Bako is important here since it implies that he is also an officer in the home, imposing military law. This establishes a firm link to the nation

as well since the father represents law and order that stems from his position and authority in the government and national military force which grants power and superiority over those he deems inferior. This is so particularly if we consider that he served under a totalitarian regime that advocates hierarchy. This first scene where patriarchal law is apparent serves as a representation of law, order and familial principles on a national level. Simultaneously, the familial hearth and domestic space is vexed by the authority that generates confinement and a confrontational setting that is tightly knit and filmed with an erratic handheld camera that enhances the confrontation as we move from the figure of the father to Eduart, the movement evoking the sense of confrontation between two people.

One can argue from this point on in the film that Eduart was pushed to migrate to Greece not only because of the instability that governed Albania in the 1990s but by the unrivaled power of patriarchy and its values. This is once again a representation of the Albanian home and family as a straitjacket. The inability of Eduart's mother to intervene while the father enforces his principles is evidence to the hierarchy in this Albanian family, much alike its representation in *Hostage*. This hierarchy is revealed from the first shot of the interior of the home that we see when Eduart arrives: at the entrance, hanging by the wall is the military officer's jacket, with three medals pinned to it, a testament to the old regime which has not died out entirely as its symbol on display clarifies (fig. 4.3.2).



Figure 4.3.1: Confrontation



Figure 4.3.2: Raman Bako's suit

Hierarchy in the family and nation is even more apparent in the dream of Eduart in the infirmary of the prison where he lies in a coma. Eduart's dream provides further evidence to the argument that patriarchy pushed him to leave his home and country. Patriarchy serves as an extension of the nation's power which forces the Albanian youth to leave the home, in other words, the nation. In the dream, Raman Bako appears at the bed where Eduart is lying. He is dressed in full military attire, bearing honorary medals on his chest, a symbol of national pride and loyalty to the military and its values (fig. 4.3.3). He is shown from a low camera angle, creating a terrifying image of an intimidating man looking larger than normal. When he speaks, we see only his lips in an extreme close-up



creating an ominous image as he seems omnipresent and inconceivable in the frame of the shot (fig. 4.3.4).

Eduart introduces his father to the rest of the patients of the ward: "Gentlemen may I present, the honorable commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> division of the People's army, the fallen eagle of the Balkans Raman Bako in person". The other patients start to chant "long live the Party, long live Raman Bako!" The father then slaps Eduart in anger. Raman Bako is shown here once again to be an authoritative figure, ranking higher than his son who is unwanted in the home and family since he violates in essence the principles of the nation. This nation we can assume is the nation of Hoxha and the communist party and Bako was an officer of the dictatorship.



Figure 4.3.3: Raman Bako's medals



Figure 4.3.4: Extreme close-up on the lips

The governing factor that led Eduart to migrate to Greece was patriarchy. The strict and authoritative fatherly figure deprived him of the love and affection that would fuel him to reach his full potential as an individual. We have been told in the first encounter with the father that he would beat Eduart when he was younger. In prison, Eduart reveals to his cellmate Elton the reason why he left for Greece. "So what did you do in Athens anyway? I wanted to be a rock star. In the end I became a thief. Where did things get fucked up? I never believed I could make a go of anything".

This is a key moment in which the migrant imagination emerges. It is noteworthy that this is articulated in prison, in a bleak *mise en scène*, underlining the fact that not only did his dreams not become fulfilled but that eventually his journey of migration led him to an unfortunate conclusion. This is not due to an inherent tendency of Eduart to fail and to be merely a thief. It is implied at first and directly described to us that the father and by extension the nation have paralyzed Eduart. When Eduart's sister Natasha returns from her visit to the prison she encounters her father. Their discussion reveals precisely how patriarchy deprived Eduart from a fruitful life. According to the father, the reasons why Eduart "turned out like this" are unknown. He had to turn him in because he "dishonored"

the family. Although Natasha reacts by saying "he is my brother" her father replies with the same strict words: "he's useless, selfish and ungrateful". 'You never believed in him' says Natasha and leaves.

Eduart sought to make it as a rock star in Greece but one could also argue that he fled from the family and its oppressive principles merely for the sake of leaving, unaware of the fact that he would eventually fail. The need to flee is evident in the scene of Eduart's transportation to jail. Here, the flashback functions in an expressive manner highlighting the desire for escape while at the same time the alternating shots of Eduart in a police van counteract and suggest that for him there is no way out of the straitjacket. Contrary to the flashbacks and the memories of Elion that emerge suddenly, suggesting that these scenes are memories or even distorted dreams of a man with a fraught psyche, here Antoniou has total control over the flashbacks utilizing the memories in order to underline the current unfortunate predicament of her protagonist instead of a distraught and traumatic memory.

The scene of Eduart's transportation serves as a short musical interlude. As Eduart is transported to prison, we see flashbacks from a moment when he would get together with his two closest friends in a rundown stone building and pretend to play rap music with a radio playing in the background. The lyrics of the song that the company sings underline the need for escape and eventually migration, not necessarily to Greece, but anywhere, as long as it is far away. Interestingly, the lyrics highlight the importance of mobility which in this scene exists only in the time that Eduart is taken to prison, where mobility is hindered:

I wanna go away, go any place, any place! Any place, yeah, yeah, any place, any place! Doesn't matter where you go, as long as it is far, far away...yeah yeah, doesn't matter where you go...Bright day black night, it kills me every day. Yeah yeah, it kills me every day. Just go far away, doesn't matter where.

The migrant imagination of Eduart does not share characteristics with the migrants of the other films I have discussed here. He did not seek for work or to return to the fatherland. He sought to become a rock star, infatuated by Greek rock music which he listens to in various sequences. His imagination in this case is linked to capitalism in the world beyond the borders where rock music exists. In Albania, rock music was considered a western product which became accessible during the transition to a market economy. Once he would become a rock star, he would have made it. Eduart is deluded, like Elion and Achilles, believing that a promised land exists in Greece where this time there is rock music and hence a good life.

The scene that reveals this imagination is part of a flashback from when Eduart was in high school and would pass leisure time with his beloved sister. This scene is inserted when Eduart sleeps in the infirmary, as a dream. They are shown sitting by a river under bright sunlight listening to Greek rock music from an old radio. Eduart then announces that when he graduates he will leave "anywhere, wherever there's rock music". The conversation reveals Eduart's deluded image of the cliché rock star life style that is presumably adorned in riches, fame and ease. Natasha believes however that nowhere else in the world can one find "such a beautiful river" which is enough for her to justify staying in Albania. To this Eduart replies "what do you want a river for when you can have a pool?"

This strong faith in capitalism is manifested in Eduart's dream where, in addition to the scene with his father, we see the moment of arrival in Greece. Eduart and his two companions crossed through the snowy mountains. They assume that they arrived the moment they see a Pepsi can half buried in the snow. Eduart lifts it and starts to cheer with one of the two other men. In the meantime, the third member, being very sick, falls to the ground face down and is dragged by a hungry wolf. The Pepsi can is a product of the capitalist world that was not sold in communist Albania and is therefore a sign of the world beyond where nevertheless great danger lurks. Indeed, snow, wolves and patrolling soldiers, particularly in the spring and summer, are the hazards that make the journey to the world beyond less appealing and idyllic as imagined. The sight of the Pepsi can suffices to make the migrants ecstatic. It seems as though the over idealized notion of a lifestyle of consumerism and commodity is the rubric of the Albanians' imagination in the films I have been debating thus far. This impression is deeply rooted in their minds and it is clear that they have no way of escaping from the dead end to which capitalism will lead them to. In the straitjacket of Hoxha's Albania, learning to live according to the extremities of the communist regime that deprives them of any of the values and products of the (seemingly) inclusive capitalist West, the Albanian men will subsequently immerse themselves in the fallacy of capitalism, as it is considered the exact opposite of communism and, therefore, presumably, the road to prosperity. In their imagination, the enemy of communism can only be a good thing. This is what Elion displays in his sentence "ten million for Greece is nothing". The confidence in his tone and in the choice of words reveals that, as Elion imagines, for Albania ten million is unobtainable but for Greece it is "nothing".

Interestingly, a capitalist product, television, which existed in Albania as a tool of the propaganda machine of the communist regime can be considered as the primary source

of this imagination. A small number of Albanian channels were broadcast with a program strictly limited to praising the regime, its leader and to condemning the enemies of the State. Nevertheless, as Kapllani has discussed, the aeriols on roof tops could be tuned to receive a signal from Italian channels, which many Albanian houses would, clandestinely, follow religiously as a means of escape. Moreover, as television was, since its inception and mass circulation in the American and British households in the 1950s marketed as a "window to the world" (Spigel, 1992: 99), through which one can see images of the world in their domestic space, one may argue that this possibility was liberating for Albanians. For them, the images from foreign television stations and foreign worlds were those of the world beyond the borders. The domestic space became the area from which Albanians began to romanticize and fetishize the West, and particularly Italy, constructing the image of an Eldorado. According to Kapllani,

lonely people who don't go out much watch a lot of television. Television used to be the pre-eminent source of your fantasies, the only window through which you could escape and travel in your imagination, dreaming of magical, forbidden worlds: the West, freedom, equality, prosperity. You created in your mind a world of harmony and beauty, and with this construct in your head, you crossed the borders (2010: 101-102).

Eduart is equally deluded like Elion, believing in the fallacy of capitalism and its assumed riches. The aforementioned scene by the river is shown as yet another flashback of Eduart in prison. When he returned to his home the first question that Natasha asked was, with an ironic tone, "so are you a rock star now?" The futility of Eduart's migrant dream is highlighted throughout the film since his dream of escape is inserted when in prison. The director thus justifies Eduart's migration and misguided beliefs. They stem not from an inherent criminality or vanity. On the contrary, Eduart's father, the intimidating and authoritative figure that represents the Albanian nation and military of Hoxha is to blame since he deprived his son of confidence and freedom. Antoniou, like Giannaris, criticizes the Albanian nation for its oppressive principles that denies its youth of a sense of promise for the future. In *Hostage* this youth is represented by Elion and Mirella who are both bound by patriarchy and conservative traditions. Mirella is shown in two shots. At the table with her parents from where she is asked to leave since the adults have to debate. When Elion leaves, he gazes at her for a few seconds as she looks back at him through a crack in the door, a tight space in which she is framed, seemingly trapped, as she does not utter a word and simply closes the door. By extension, Giannaris and Antoniou criticize

nationalism and intolerance and establish an inclusive discussion on Greek cinema, nationalism, identity and culture. Moreover, they address their migrants, who we must emphasize are not Greeks from Albania but Albanian "others", as more elusive figures, as men and youth and above all as individuals, with desires and hopes, beyond the racist label "Albanian", negating thus the criminality of the dreaded "stranger".

Through the migrant imagination, a loose concept that refers overall to the expectations, motivations and hopes of migrants, the filmmakers and their films I examined in this chapter challenge the Greek and Albanian nations and endemic nationalisms. At the same time, the filmmakers refrain from entirely negating national identity and, above all, the dictum of national cinema which commands a representation strategy that evokes one nation. The filmmakers convey the principles and moral fibre of the Greek and Albanian nations, highlighting their deficit.

We also see how globalisation and capitalism become blinding factors that establish the notion of a Promised Land in Greece, where the migrants will allegedly discover a surplus of work designated exclusively for them, with good wages and a fruitful life making migration and exile more attractive, as though luring the men into a trap. In this respect, the notion of the world beyond the borders highlights an over idealized imagination according to which Greece figures as the very opposite of Albania. In *From the Snow* we perceive the notion of returning to the fatherland, where presumably the Greek men from Northern Epirus actually belong according to the discourse of *patrida* which assumes a shared bloodline with indigenous populations. In *Hostage*, Elion, embodying Flamur Pislis, hijacks an intercity bus on a mission to vindicate his wounded manhood which has been under erasure by agents of Albanian and Greek nationalism. He very obviously perceives Greece as a rich country where he can, according to years of Albanian migration to Greece, obtain a good life and the chance to prove himself. In any case, Elion and the Greek migrants are driven to destruction by the imagination that nationalism and globalisation establish. Patriarchy is the determining factor that forces Eduart to migrate and which at the same time fires up the migrant imagination which eventually leads to another trap. The migrant imagination sets the films into motion and functions either in a linear fashion as part of the linear trajectory of the journey of hope, or as flashbacks and dreams, illuminating the reasons for the ill fated predicament of the migrants. *Hostage* and *Eduart* begin at the point where the migrants have reached the stage of entrapment in Fortress Europe and as the films progress, we perceive the reasons for this

predicament challenging thus xenophobic discourses and exposing the deeper and more elusive features of the men.

## Chapter 5

### At the border and beyond

#### Journeys of hope to Fortress Europe and representations of border syndrome in *From the Snow, Hostage and Eternity and a Day*

##### Introduction

In this chapter, I address for the first time the journey per se as we proceed to follow the trajectory of migration from a discussion on the migrant imagination and its capacity to incite flight. In *From the Snow* and *Hostage*, we follow the trajectory of a journey of hope, which, contrary to what the title implies, transforms hope into a nightmare as a result of the harsh and unexpected reality that the migrant encounters in Fortress Europe which refutes the migrant imagination. Consequently, the experience of migration is traumatic and results in border syndrome particularly as mobility that puts the journey into operation transforms to inertia.

In *Eternity and a day*, Angelopoulos addresses other issues that are linked to the journey of the child refugee, namely cosmopolitan homelessness and particularly trafficking. In his film, the journey obtains an abstract allure, as an internal journey and drifting through the city of Thessaloniki, in order to refer moreover to an equally abstract meditation on postmodern existentialism and loss.

In all three cases, the migrants are represented as border subjects, plagued by border syndrome/effect. Consequently, other concepts that play a significant part in representation, and which are fundamental components of cinematic journeys of migration are mobility and movement (emancipatory and contained), portrayals of borders, border control, flight and stasis. Mobility is at one moment a governing factor that determines the certain features of the journey and conceptualises migration but, on the other, mobility, as a result of the migrant's interaction with Fortress Europe, is contained and transformed into stasis, leading to a marginal life and a perpetual state of departure and arrival. I will use textual analysis here in order to discuss representation before concluding with a critical cap on the principles of postcolonialism and the cinema of duty which respectively challenge eurocentrism and a cinema that speaks in "our name" through representations of Europe's "others".

## 5.1 From one border to the next and towards a marginal life: *From the Snow*

For Kapllani, being born in Albania meant that when the state collapsed, a sudden and violent departure towards an uncertain future took place (2010: 1-2). At that moment the migrant experiences conflicting emotions as this sudden departure is marked by a desire to reject the homeland while becoming increasingly nostalgic since "leaving your country means breaking with it" (ibid.: 9-10). The very moment of departure evokes these emotions, the peril of the journey, the state of affairs in Albania, the immediacy of mobility and fear for what is to come. *From the Snow* opens in this very moment of flight to Greece and towards the first of many borders that emerge throughout the film underlining the wanderlust of the migrants and simultaneously fear for what awaits ahead. This is also the first key moment in Greek cinema where we follow the flight of Northern Epirotes from Albania to Greece.

This sudden and violent departure marks the opening scene at the threshold of the Albanian border, where mobility governs the frame. Various men are standing in the wagon of a tow-truck. Through successive tracking shots the viewer gets a glimpse of the truck's trajectory. A cut to the interior of the wagon reveals several covered bodies. This tow-truck represents the numerous means of transportation that carry migrants across Europe, stacked up, alive and dead, their hopes piled up in a desperate attempt to reach the promised land, relying very often on traffickers who are always concealed alluding to their invisibility in Fortress Europe (fig. 5.1.1). Tracking shots document the truck's movement and follow its uncertain trajectory while static shots expose the landscape (fig. 5.1.2) displaying also the densely populated wagon. The mountainous landscape is deserted, without a sign of life. Already we can tell that this place is being "emptied".

Static shots from the interior of the automobile evoke mobility in a bizarre manner as we perceive the movement of the truck and simultaneously the static movement of the men. The effect is dizzying. The men are being taken somewhere, an issue that is highlighted by the passive movement in the frame. The driver of the truck is possibly a trafficker. Movement is not linear. This is not a single lane on a road that treads endlessly towards the horizon, but only one of many transitory spaces from where we will reach a threshold. The open road, the wild, isolated and deserted landscape, "icons of mobility" (Naficy, 2001: 227), is not a majestic landscape of road movies and of the American western landscape of the American dream. This particular brand of romanticism associated with freedom and exploration and the pleasures of mobility is a distant theme in this scene which depicts and evokes the scattered and sudden descent from Albania. We thus observe



here the movement of people which was happening already at the time of the film's release. Goritsas articulates in this moment the here and the now and generates a sense of immediacy linked to a social and political concern of the time moving thus the battlefield of cinema from the artistic to the political and social arenas.



Figure 5.1.1: Standing in a tow truck



Figure 5.1.2: Treading a rough landscape to the border

This scene marks the emergence of a transnational Greek cinema that figures on an elusive portrayal of mobility and representation of difference. It opens with a rear view close up of Achilles. The frame is governed by movement as Achilles stands on the wagon revealed in the next shot. The close-up makes him seem as though floating in mid air, going around in a circle instead of literally moving on a straight line (fig. 5.1.3). The close-up enlarges the figure enhancing an impression of levitation. This framing of Achilles suggests an aimless wandering and implies a sense of futility and fatality that is inserted in the dialogue, as though Achilles will ultimately be left hanging in the balance. The passive nature of mobility enhances the fatality of non emancipatory movement - being driven instead of driving. The words of Thomas ("to disaster") highlight this fatality but also an indication of border syndrome, in particular the domineering fear of homelessness and perpetual departure.

In the wagon lie the bodies of four children who were shot by Albanian soldiers who were presumably ordered to enforce law and order in the last days of the regime. Being born in Albania, as Kapllani implies, anticipates the emergence of border syndrome as, in *From the Snow*, violence and death are obvious and imminent threats which are crucial since they run through its introduction before even the opening titles which fall at 1:25. The sudden death of the children and the recurring theme of "disaster" are the precursors of border syndrome.

The flight to Greece is triggered by insurrection. The decision occurred after Achilles and other Greeks decided to take the dead children to Aghious Saranta, a border

region in Northern Epirus. According to Achilles' narration, the men invaded and looted abandoned state houses in anger over the killing of the children. Outside Aghios Saranta, soldiers began to fire at them. The anger and fear that this incident brought triggered the decision to abandon Albania permanently. The determination and focus of Achilles is evident in the voice over: "Thomas and I made up our minds. Tonight we leave to Greece".

Goritsas displays the entire process of border crossing, from the resolution to flee Albania to crossing over to Greece. According to Kapllani, "the migrant is a creature surrounded by borders" which hinder the efforts of the migrants (2010: 79). Achilles and Thomas encounter two different material borders - the Forbidden Zones and the Greek-Albanian border. The first is the border of totalitarianism, "monstrous visible borders" (ibid.: 151) and the borders of nations, a product of nationalism. From the onset, their journey is a life threatening endeavor as they have to hide from Albanian guards who fire at any indication of clandestine crossing.

Achilles and Thomas cross the Forbidden Zones in the night. A close-up on Achilles hiding behind a rock (fig. 5.1.4) evokes the apprehension that anticipates every step towards the first border, fenced with barbed wire. Cut to an extreme close-up of a blinding spotlight. The other migrants try to cut through the fence when gunfire is heard, injuring some of them and killing the mother of Nikos. The presence of the Albanian soldiers is ubiquitous. The shining spotlight fills the frame and exists in space as a threatening method of detection. It is light without form or a source and is composed of nothing but a variation of light, as though the cinematic apparatus itself is capturing the hiding migrants. In similar fashion, hostile gunfire comes from an unknown direction seemingly from anywhere and everywhere.

In the eyes of the soldiers guarding the Albanian borders, anyone crossing over to Greece is a target. To the border patrol, the migrants "are not human beings in flight from deprivation and misery [or returning to their homeland] but moving duck targets" (Loshitzky, 2010: 123). This description of border patrol corresponds to the way Albanian border patrols functioned in the early 1990s. Due to the lack of concrete evidence on this, I rely on the documentation of Kapllani's memoir. He fled from Albania in the fall of 1990. At the border, Albanian soldiers stood guard bearing Kalashnikovs (2010: 41) closing and opening the borders at will and even "taking pot shots at the fugitives for the fun of it" (ibid.: 100). The journey to the world beyond the borders is highlighted by terror which underlines the overall terror associated with borders - the definition of border syndrome. One can parallel this crossing to a rite of passage which entails a life risking encounter and

a traumatizing experience without the rewards that are usually associated with rites of passage.



Figure 5.1.3: Achilles seemingly floating



Figure 5.1.4: Apprehension at the Forbidden Zones

Thomas and Achilles cross the Forbidden Zones and reach the Greek fraction of Epirus at Tsamanta. Tsamanta is a mountainous village located on Mount Tsamanta, north of the municipality of Thesprotia. The village is three kilometres from the border and the mountain ends in Albanian territory. Tsamanta is essentially another transitory space separating Greece and Albania, in other words, no man's land. Transitory spaces and particularly borders are governed by the presence of authority guarding the passage while they additionally highlight the interstitiality of border regions and the interstitial life of the migrants. Quite expectedly, the men are apprehended by two Greek soldiers. Thomas and Achilles are still being driven, even though they managed to flee Albania into the fatherland. This is the first encounter with the Greek border forces.

The state apparatus of power is manifest in the delineation of the two soldiers who wake up the migrants at a tree trunk. They are dressed in full military attire, bearing their MK-5s and interrogating the migrants, seeming surprised that they are actually Greeks and not Albanians (fig. 5.1.5). The migrants are equally surprised by the soldiers' bewilderment. Despite the official invitation issued by the Greek government, the state was not properly informed, making it easier thus to identify the Greeks of Albania as Albanian "others". Here is what Gabriella Lazaridis and Iordanis Psimmenos write on this:

Although in the early 1990s an invitation by the Greek government was addressed to the Ethnic-Greek Albanians of Southern Albania for a renewal of cultural contacts, the influx of tens of thousands of ethnic-Greek and 'other' Albanians found the Greek authorities woefully unprepared for the scale and suddenness of the immigration. In particular, there was a lack of administrative expertise, and

there were no appropriate legislative and social policy measures in place (1999: 175).

The latter is obvious since this "welcome" exposes an extreme and inhumane response as the modus operandi of reception instead of a smooth process of integration that would surely require a more appropriate welcome instead of a military wakeup call. Assertion of power at the border is established as the soldiers, wearing full uniform and carrying guns at standby, stand above the migrants who are dressed in shabby clothing and who adopt a submissive tone towards the military interrogation. This is the "violent first encounter with the unknown country" at which point the "first instinct is to stay silent. Fear; caution; the violent escape [...]; that feeling of being uninvited; longing and rejection of home" (Kapllani, 2010: 4).

Achilles and Thomas, alongside a plethora of other migrants, are transported to a military camp before the next stage of reception at what seems to be a refugee camp<sup>80</sup>. At the camp the migrants undergo an initial process of identification. Inside the office a long queue of migrants and refugees awaits inspection (fig. 5.1.6). A military officer asks each one for name, age and city of origin and dictates back to the secretary. He performs this task in a clinical fashion and adopts a stern look and assertive tone as though the migrants are mere soldiers under his command. His ranking is marked by his military uniform and posture, standing tall right above the secretary who is merely a public servant. He ranks higher than the migrants and the secretary who is the only woman in the scene, marked by the typical casting of the role which is traditionally conceived as an exclusive post of women.

According to Loshitzky, this process of identification, conceived also as a "screening" process practiced by the host society, "is often more hostile than hospitable" (2010: 2). Screening requires scrutiny of the migrant who, as Kapllani clearly illustrates, is a terrified individual who does not wish to reveal personal information which may easily mean deportation. In Greece, during the 1990s and still to this day, screening is performed through undeveloped and ineffective methods, at ill equipped abandoned military barracks that are situated far from populated areas, bringing to mind concentration camps. Refugees and asylum seekers are thrown into cells, deprived of their rights, living in unsanitary

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<sup>80</sup>One can assume so based on the fact that the only facilities, apart from military camps, designated for the reception of Albanian migrants in the early 1990s were refugee camps where the multitude of migrants were disposed (see Lazaridis & Psimmenos, 1999).

conditions and transit for months and most importantly contained since the results of screening dictate that the migrant is an invader<sup>81</sup>.

This identification process, as portrayed in the film, served to create the impression of a functioning migration management scheme which is however entirely absent. Undocumented migrants entering Greece since the early 1990s are stacked in refugee camps for an indefinite period. This leads to a state of suspension since the migrants are stuck in transit, either on the outskirts of major cities, or in abandoned buildings and detention centres near the borders. This treatment is displayed in the refugee camp sequence. It is the treatment of border subjects who are *persona non grata*. To the authorities, everybody in the queue is Albanian. This becomes obvious when Nikos is questioned. In a close-up, he looks down, still and silent. Despite his age, Nikos is treated no differently from the other men. Faced with the boy's persistent silence, the military agent in charge exclaims to the crowd in the back: "who's is this?". The derogatory nature of the question and the clinical tone in the agent's voice reveals the perception of Nikos as *persona non grata* and the nature of the host's hospitality - clinical and hostile. The military agent then exclaims "what do we do now?" This question exposes the lack of policy and additionally the indifferent treatment of Nikos which is devoid of any humanitarian appeal. It is in this key moment when Achilles becomes Nikos' surrogate father.



Figure 5.1.5: Military wake-up call



Figure 5.1.6: Screening the migrants

The migrants are piled up in various stages. In the military camp they queue in order to show their documents (those at least who have them). This process seems to serve no purpose apart from creating a list of names and locations and to offer a false impression of a functioning policy scheme. This is the first moment in the film where migrants from Albania are depicted as a herd, transferred from one camp, or, more appropriately sheep-

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<sup>81</sup><http://www.avgi.gr/article/785300/stratopedo-amugdalezas-to-xroniko-mias-proanageltheisas-exegersis> last accessed 27 July 2014.

pen, to another. The process is indicative of the function of panopticon Europe that surveys and channels movement particularly clandestine.

Indeed, the so-called refugee centre brings to mind a camp: it is a fenced plot where local women serve food to long queues of migrants (fig. 5.1.7) who then retire to makeshift dining areas under dilapidating roofs (fig. 5.1.8). Mattresses are lined up for the night although not enough to accommodate everyone. Thomas gets into a fight with an Albanian whom he later accuses of stealing his wallet. The fight is interrupted by the stalking presence of a policeman surveying the overall area.



Figure 5.1.7: Queuing for a meal in the camp



Figure 5.1.8: Eating under makeshift structures

In this five minute sequence the various individuals have a solitary existence as they wander aimlessly within the fenced plot. Silence and a pervasive murmur takes over the soundtrack generating a sense of secrecy and dystopia suggesting that the camp is a more of a prison, where surveillance and alienation feature strongly. The notion of a plot of land can be associated with farms where grazing animals are herded and aimlessly dwell. Loneliness and dislocation prevail in the scene as there is no dialogue. The space of the refugee centre is a no man's land designated for migrants who, within this particular space, are stripped of their identity. The transitory nature of the centre underlines the interstitiality of the migrants who are between the national and transnational, exile within exile, inhabiting thus "no place, no space, and no identity" (Loshitzky, 2010: 124).

At the same time, we witness another function of the camp that is pertinent to its existence at the border where traffickers and in particular hustlers wait to examine female newcomers from where they capture them and circulate through prostitution rings. The border functions as a station where the migrants and refugees are stacked, as though on display and from where it is easy for traffickers to lure them. In the film, two shots of

suspicious looking men on the other side of a fence "checking out" various women and exchanging nods highlights this feature of the camp. Eight alternating shots of the traffickers reveal the process of display, surveillance and selection. They casually examine the queue. The multitude of murmuring sounds dominates the soundtrack creating a layer of mystery that conceals the dialogue and more obviously the intentions of the traffickers as we move from a respective shot to one of the queue and the dining area where Achilles looks at the traffickers as though aware of their presence without any power nor, seemingly, intention to intervene as he becomes moreover aware of their target. We cut from the traffickers to the queue, Achilles, to the queue, the traffickers and so forth till in the sixth shot they become aware of a young docile woman - their ideal target. They try to lure her but she looks away. The scene is disturbing in many ways as it evokes the silence and indifference that is associated with trafficking and the more therefore vulnerable existence of women. The incoherent murmuring reinforces the sense of dystopia as it turns the entire sequence into an almost casual and routine function treated with indifference.

At the 36th minute of the film, at a cantina on the highway to Athens, we reencounter the trafficker this time in person as he interrupts Achilles to make an order. The woman behind the counter asks him if he managed to "pick up something good", while we glimpse into the car where the trafficker's "prize" sits silently. "Nothing much, she's a real deadbeat but she'll shape up" he replies, exposing the nature of the woman as a commodity who, as we are informed in the next shot, is destined for a gentleman's club. These short interludes that show the traffickers assert additionally their ubiquitous presence, which goes unnoticed and unpunished.

The limitations of the institutional space are obvious through a representation of a functioning state of detention. The migrants are first screened as though posing a danger and are then transported to a camp where they are kept in detention as though moving on a conveyor belt that ultimately leads to containment. The state's limitations come across also through a *mise en scène* which deterritorializes its subjects since the borders of the camp are not portrayed generating thus a sense of boundlessness evoking the locality of the refugee camp: beyond the populated urban landscape and boundless. The events that take place in the camp are not related to the narrative making it obvious that we are witnessing, like voyeurs, the life of prisoners. The setting moreover is within an agricultural plot, revealing thus the conspicuous lack of policy and infrastructure. With severely reduced mobility and human interaction, claustrophobia and dystopia are intensified.

Goritsas integrates the vast problems regarding the reception of migrants in Greece in 1991-1993 in the narrative. The various scenes at the border and afterwards affirm the immense lack of migration policy in the country and become the backdrop of the film's journey of hope. The portrayal of the journey and consequently the conceptualisation of Northern Epirotes as border subjects are enhanced by the particular articulation of this social crisis in migration management which has a heavy toll on the migrants who thus become border subjects.

Goritsas is faithful to the facts regarding the journey of Northern Epirotes to Greece. Simultaneously, the film bears many similarities to that of Kapllani's tale of border crossing. This reveals indeed that Greeks and Albanians suffered in similar ways, even though the former were invited. A passage from Kapllani's memoir highlights this similarity and the particularities of migration within the Balkans:

The truck came to a standstill [at the refugee camp] and we realized we were supposed to get out. When we did, we saw Greek policemen shouting and brandishing their truncheons in an effort to impose order. A single spotlight illuminated the scene: Greek soldiers and an enormous crowd of Albanian fugitives. From the policemen's gestures, we gathered that they wanted us to stand in line. We formed a huge queue, new arrivals all of whom had to be registered: name, surname, father's name (2010: 54-55).

Kapllani conveys the same impression as Goritsas; the migrants need to be ordered, placed in a queue and registered by policemen while soldiers bring in new arrivals as though circulating on a conveyor belt. The treatment in both portrayals is one that would be suitable for military recruits. Both scenes bring to mind "the sinister connotations of the 'camp' associated with the Nazi concentration camps" (Loshitzky, 2010: 119), surveillance, discipline, punishment and imprisonment. The military camp and the refugee camp are spaces of exclusion which the migrants are forced to inhabit. Once this transitional stage is completed, they encounter similar conditions of living since they are still left with no alternative than to dwell in periphractic spaces. These spaces overall signify claustrophobia and generate paranoia.

Structures of paranoia play an important part in the trajectory of migration to Greece and particularly in the portrayal of life as a border subject. During their departure to Athens, the trio separate, and reunite halfway through the film. Homeless and jobless, they are forced to occupy spaces of exclusion, derelict hotels where prostitutes and drug addicts



dwelling, unfinished construction sites and underground walkways. In a similar fashion to Goritsas, Kapllani outlines, with attention to the emotional plight brought by this experience, how he and his fellow migrants were forced to reside for weeks in an abandoned warehouse. These abandoned sites that very often lie within the very centre of the city, are hidden from public view and are inhabited by social pariahs. Their existence is familiar to police forces who would perform sweep operations very often and infrequently, as though to surprise the inhabitants of these spaces. It is a violent, inhumane and indeed inefficient method of apprehension since eventually the migrants are simply thrown out, given thus very limited choices of where to reside afterwards. Sweep operations as well stem from a racist discourse that seems to be an exclusive trademark of the Greek police and state apparatus. It directly hints towards the discourse of contamination of the nation by the foreigner.

Such a scene is depicted in *From the Snow*. The trio hide in an underground phone booth space together with other Northern Epirotes. They all seem to be stacked, sitting next to each other. They begin to sing a traditional Epirote lamenting song that speaks of tall and free mountains that are fortunate to be so. The sense of loss, nostalgia and melancholy is evident as the trajectory of migration has led to this unfortunate moment from where things can only become worse. The scene evokes a sense of collective loss amongst Ethnic Greeks. The next establishing shot opens up to reveal the entire space and its inhabitants. A woman passes through quickly, without casting an eye on the scene, exposing thus the indifference of the public. This site is the trio's temporary home. The next night, they are shown sleeping beneath the row of phone booths (fig. 5.1.9). From a close-up on the face of Achilles sleeping, we cut to his dream (fig. 5.1.10).

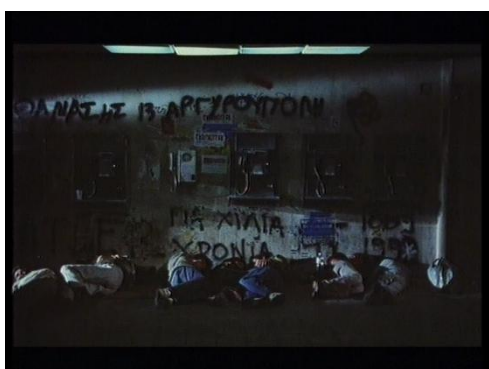


Figure 5.1.9: Sleeping beneath a row of phone booths



Figure 5.1.10: Cut to Achilles' dream

The scene takes place at a lake surrounded by rich vegetation. A tracking shot from the right diagonal corner swiftly moves through the water as though floating. On the lake's edge, Achilles sits with Eleni, the secretary from the military camp. The contrast from the previous scene is staggering, creating a discussion between the claustrophobic enclosed space with the open and free natural environment. The colours are bright and soothing contrary to the grey undertones of concrete and the darkness of the abandoned underground passage. The camera continuously tracks the space, closing onto the pair. A jump-cut cuts to a shot of the pair further back, with the same camera tracking movement, even faster now and closer. Camera movement and the jump-cut evoke the fluidity of the dream state and libido where indeed fluidity and more importantly mobility suggest that only in his dreams can Achilles be free and actually in love in Greece, and not a border subject. Mobility in the dream and immobility in the present creates another antithesis that highlights the dream turned nightmare. This scene is yet another manifestation of the migrant imagination in a moment of desperation highlighting the unfortunate present. The migrant imagination nevertheless develops and spurs hope even in times of utter desperation which highlights claustrophobia. The camera continues tracking faster through the vegetation and seamlessly cuts back to the stark space beneath the phone booths within the same tracking shot from the front of the frame. This evokes the passing from dream to reality only now this is not the gaze of Achilles but of the police who have arrived at the site. The trajectory of migration and the dream reveal the development of life from hope, flight and eventual decline into defeat and nightmare.

Goritsas at this moment articulates the here and now in creating a faithful to actual events depiction of a sweep operation. A local resident has informed the police of the situation. The handheld camera closes in on the sleeping migrants, shaking and moving fast generating a sense of fear and dystopia as the *mise en scène* turns grey. A shot from below reveals a seemingly tall man holding a water hose together with a police officer in full uniform. This a scene where a civilian, fueled by xenophobia, takes the law in his hands sanctioned by the official state apparatus.

The man screams to the sleeping migrants: "come on...let's go...its all over" before unleashing with the police officer a violent attack. "Pack up and get out of here. Beat it!" The immediate question at this point is "where to?" Interestingly, as Psimmenos points out, the answer is simply to continue occupying clandestine sites since "where" in this case is the symptom of the interaction between Greeks and Albanians. In particular, this is not merely an issue of geographical distribution within the city but a process of exclusion

linked to a varying spectrum of political and financial ties that define and shape spaces of exclusion according to xenophobic discourses (1995: 58-59). Extensive interviews of clandestine Albanian migrants by Psimmenos expose this problem in the heart of Athens:

[...] I was sleeping at the train station with others, next to the urinary, when police suddenly showed up and arrested me. They interrogated me and searched for knives and finally let us go. I remember they told us that it is prohibited to sleep at stations while I struggled to explain that these are the only places where Albanians can actually sleep (Psimmenos, 1995: 119).

Papailias also points out the deeper and most dreadful implications of sweep operations in regard to one in 1999:

The *skoupa* of summer 1999 is considered to have been one of the most brutal undertaken in the 1990s. The Ministry of Public Order announced to the public that migrants without papers, including those who simply did not happen to have their papers with them during spot searches, would be immediately deported. In order to demonstrate its new tough stance on illegal immigration, the government even encouraged television channels to broadcast scenes of migrants who had been rounded up in stadiums awaiting deportation. The word *skoupa* evokes the moral and gender ideals associated with keeping a clean home. The metaphor of the household has often been extended to refer to the nation. It is no surprise, then, that when the state attempts to establish public order it grabs a metaphorical broom to expunge malignant 'foreign dirt' (2003: 1075).

In this moment we become more aware of paranoia and claustrophobia, two concepts associated with the deterritorialized spaces that the migrants occupy and which is evidence not merely of the symptom of a disorder and of border syndrome/effect. Paranoia is reality and reality is paranoia. This scene confirms how rejection can occur at any given moment. "It is tough" Kapllani writes, "because the police can catch you anytime they want to" (2010: 107). Spaces of otherness not only reflect the migrants' exclusion but are a direct result of police intervention. The migrants do not chose to inhabit the phone booth area in order to correspond to the supposed expectations of the host society to which the migrants conform, as Naficy has argued in regard to migrants who "behave themselves".

The migrants are contained within tight spaces even when they are mobile, as the opening scene of the film reveals. Mobility is not emancipatory but imposed, deciding the trajectory of the journey and mode of movement. The migrants live a clandestine life

within borders, be it on the actual borders or in spaces of otherness leaving no other alternative than a somber return to Albania or to nowhere, as the journey of hope ends with the beginning of one of homelessness. The seemingly endless encounter with borders implies additionally rejection of the possibility of reunification with the fatherland.

*From the Snow* is the first Greek film to chart the homecoming journey of Greek ethnics from Albania. It follows the entire trajectory of the journey, from flight, at which moment fear and wanderlust figure strongly, and to inertia as the migrants adopt a clandestine life, moving from one bordered space to the next. These spaces may be part of a state apparatus that serves a duplicitous role, in particular to offer the impression of a functioning border control that screens, surveys and detains. En route to and in Athens, the migrant trio encounters rejection violence and xenophobia, instigating inertia that transforms the homecoming journey to a nightmare, affirming the words of Thomas, the migrant/seer, that disaster awaits in the fatherland. The trajectory of the journey, from the mainland of Albania, across the borders and into Greece, evokes the collective flight of ethnic Greeks from Albania and their unprepared and hostile welcome in Greece as much as the nature of their journey - a descent into inertia and stasis between borders.

## 5.2 Tragic pathos and border syndrome: *Hostage*

*Hostage* deals directly with border crossing and mobility and displays a journey with multiple beginnings and seemingly no end to the encounter with borders and interstitial spaces. Every beginning brings hope, linked to the migrant imagination, but eventually leads to a fatal encounter with the border. At every point, the border is the starting point of another journey. I will focus on one such key moment in order to assess how Elion becomes a border subject who encounters various spaces that serve as borders but also the actual Greek-Albanian border, seemingly caught in a vicious circle.

81 Minutes into the film the bus stops at a toll control point at the border. This is a key moment in the film's narrative and the journey's trajectory as a flashback shows a moment in time when Elion crossed the mountains to Greece, the other direction of his current trajectory. The trajectory of Elion's journey and his encounter with borders is revealed through scattered flashbacks. The very nature of the flashbacks, conveyed through a non diegetic montage, evokes his fragmented psyche and in addition the traumatic experience of encountering borders, in other words, how Elion suffers from border syndrome. The claustrophobic space of the bus underlines entrapment as a permanent *modus vivendi*. Additionally, it informs us of the claustrophobic space of his memories which stem from the confinement of the bus, a neutral transitory space which distorts his memories and influences his entire existence. It is no coincidence that the memories of borders emerge while Elion is in the bus, without any escape route. His present state keeps him in a perpetual dialogue with the events that inevitably transformed him into a border subject and with the migrant imagination that perpetually fuels his flight and tenacity.

The bus arrives at the Greek-Albanian border, where toll control is stationed. Tension escalates as the soundtrack is compiled mostly of low frequency sounds that generate a sense of dread while the soft focus of the camera creates uneasiness and a sense of dislocation within the claustrophobic interior of the bus. At that moment, Elion asks Grigoris: "have we arrived?" The question begs the answer: where have we arrived? Arriving somewhere *per se* also implies arriving at a final destination. To arrive also suggests a sense of relief. For Elion, a border subject, the question "have we arrived" persistently accompanies him through his journey(s). The irony of this is that arriving at the border does not signal reaching a destination, but simply passing through another transitory space. The transitory nature of this "arrival" is highlighted further by montage as we cut and regress to Elion's second crossing through the mountains where he encounters the signpost of the Greek border. The pointlessness of this "arrival" and the futility of the

notion per se, is further emphasized since Grigoris asks Elion "where are we going?" returning thus to Elion's first question which points out his dead end track and of his hostages who have been transformed by that point into border subjects and social pariahs through their identification with Elion as sacred "other" (Stockholm syndrome). "Straight ahead. There is only one road" answers Elion unveiling thus the direction of the bus - to nowhere. Elion sounds confident but his words betray him.

Before this, we get a glimpse of the Greek-Albanian border through an establishing shot. The welcome prepared at the borders, which reveals also the criminalization, ethnicization and policing of borders in Greece, includes a police squad and soldiers who are shown in a quick montage sequence exiting their automobiles, bearing machine guns and a stern look while a group of skinheads implies the existence of paramilitary groups. The chief approaches the bus in which Elion is hunched behind a partition, looking terrified, the machine gun in his hand seeming like a useless prop. The frontality and narrow framing of the shot of each man in close-up (fig. 5.2.1) enhances furthermore the sense of claustrophobia (fig. 5.2.2).



Figure 5.2.1: Police chief tightly framed



Figure 5.2.2: Elion tightly framed

Elion's inescapability is highlighted by the Albanian phrase "mirupafshim" which the chief says to Elion. This translates as "till we meet again" implying that they will meet again and possibly for the last time. The power of the borders asserts itself on the migrant reminding him of his curse as a border subject. It is in turn implied that Elion will "meet again" the border. The barrier and stop sign that lay ahead dividing Greece from Albania, shown through the interior of the bus, stand as signifiers of the criminalization of borders suggesting directly the illegality of border crossing (fig. 5.2.3). In this respect, Elion and his hostages are all border subjects, clandestine and moreover illegal immigrants.

In the bus, Elion is framed from a close-up through a handheld camera with the interior space in the background in soft focus implying his dislocation from the space he occupies (fig. 5.2.4). His detachment from physical space and his increasingly constant dwelling in the space of his memories, seemingly with no idea of a realistic future plan,

underline the pathos of a tragic hero gradually departing from this world. In this moment, montage emphasizes the notion that Elion is a dweller on the thresholds of exile.



Figure 5.2.3: Criminalisation of the border



Figure 5.2.4: Elion becomes increasingly detached from his surroundings

The contrast that the montage generates in conjunction with the change in the soundtrack is staggering. The ominous low frequencies alternate with a fast paced and suspenseful beat that evokes a heartbeat and the suspense of border crossing. At the same time, from the stark interiors and Elion's gaze into the darkness, we are taken to the mountainous area of the Greek border. A panoramic shot reveals a tiny solitary figure walking in a vast clearing in a pine tree forest on a bright sunny day (fig. 5.2.5). A dialectic discussion emerges between this and the previous scene and suggests a set of juxtaposed binaries, primarily the openness and freedom of the wilderness and the pleasures of mobility in contrast to the prison-like environment of the bus, the bright and vibrant colors of nature versus the dark, blurry and bleak interiors and the layered display of mobility that is free from claustrophobia in the memory of Elion which highlights a desire to break free. The pace of the beat soundtrack creates further a sense of immediacy that negates the ease and freedom of the wilderness, as a close-up on Elion, through a shaky handheld camera is a sudden transition from a panoramic, almost postcard view of a beautiful landscape, to the face of a man on the move who seems not to be simply spending leisure time in nature (fig. 5.2.6).



Figure 5.2.5: A panoramic vista



Figure 5.2.6: On the move

The scopophilic nature of the gaze is replaced by a shot that denies this and draws attention to the movement of a man who is not in the least preoccupied with the idyllic landscape.

The moment that they are asserted, almost immediately, binaries are negated. Elion's erratic pace is suddenly interrupted as he stops to gaze at the border signpost (fig. 5.2.7). A 180 degree tracking shot that moves behind Elion's shoulder reveals the large sign standing tall in front of him, as though a dialogue is taking place in that moment. The large board that has been erected at the end of the clearing in a forest writes in big letters: "Hellenic Republic. No crossing beyond this point. Entry strictly forbidden". The arbitrary nature of the mountainous border is obvious as there is no entry point at the particular location but simply a sign that suggests that beyond this point is Greek soil. On the sign, the Greek and European Union flags are juxtaposed, exposing thus the intention of Europe to fortify the South from potential invaders.

The sign introduces a familiar impression of claustrophobia similar to the previous bus scene. The restricting nature of the border signpost generates claustrophobia which is present regardless of the claustrophobic environment per se since for the clandestine migrant hiding and feeling trapped are inevitable and signify a general state of being. Elion crosses the invisible border and treads through the rough environment. The handheld camera that shoots from a close-up, alternating four times from Elion's front to his rear creates a dizzying effect enhancing the notion of a rough path through the border. Elion then stumbles onto a military border patrol which has apprehended a convoy of Asian migrants. Although the mountainous terrain is not easily policed, danger always lurks en route to Greece. Kapllani illuminates his readers on this issue:

The route is full of dangers. In summer there are usually soldiers guarding the footpaths who arrest anyone trying to get through illegally. There are just as many armed bandits lurking too, waiting to pounce and rob the illegal migrant of what little he owns. Whoever refuses to empty his pockets gets the thrashing of his life. In winter there are fewer soldiers, fewer bandits. Instead it's a toss-up between dying in the snow or being eaten by wolves (2010: 32-33).

Elion immediately hides behind a bush and looks onto the passing convoy (fig. 5.2.8). One of the migrants falls on the ground and a soldier stands over him pointing his machine gun. Interestingly, the first danger that Elion encounters derives from the state and not bandits. The frontality of the shot of Elion behind the bush, his apprehensive look and



hunched posture are similar to the shot of Elion hiding behind the partition in the bus. Claustrophobia haunts Elion, who, as a migrant is constantly trapped in spaces which, either natural or artificial, are equally claustrophobic.

The flashback disturbs the linear narrative of border crossing. How much time has elapsed since they crossed into Albania? Back in the bus Grigoris stands up to talk to Elion, who is crouched and sleeping behind the same partition. One may assume that the flashback was actually a dream of Elion, who is indeed haunted by the borders so much that his dreams always remind him of his bordered existence. This may be paranoia, or, in other words, persecution mania, but Giannaris suggests the opposite through montage. The irregularity of montage raises many questions: It could be argued that before the flashback, Elion actually fell asleep and what we saw was his dream which is also reality. The feeling of time elapsed before the flashback till the question "where are we heading" is confusing. Time and narrative are essential for a diegetic montage yet, in this scene, fragmentation evokes the fragmented man haunted by borders. Ultimately, Elion's paranoia is real and tangible.

What is important here is that both scenes suggest similar connotations but are staged at borders. While one border resembles much more an actual entry point and is on a developed and clearly guarded urban landscape, both generate border syndrome. Let us consider here that in the first scene, Elion crosses the border to Albania for a second time while in the other, we see the flashback of him crossing to Greece for the second time. Montage materializes numerous connotations as we have seen, amongst which the impression that Elion is indeed a dweller on the threshold, crossing borders in a circular pattern.



Figure 5.2.7: Gazing at the border signpost



Figure 5.2.8: Elion hides behind a bush

However, considering the objective background as well, the particular case of migration is directly linked to the phenomenon of Albanian migration and that Albanian migrants would cross numerous times to Greece despite getting caught and deported. The trajectory of Albanian migration meant very often treading the same path back and forth

particularly because of geographic proximity and sweep operations. This connection is established through the montage and dialogue, particularly when the police chief parts with Elion with the phrase "mirupafshim" as a subtle reminder of the border. The migrant is haunted by the border particularly every time he struggles to become something more than a border subject:

The fact that you arrived uninvited makes you feel uncomfortable, and deeply guilty, and you may never get over that feeling. Because apart from everything else, they won't let you forget it. This is your original sin. Each time you try to stand up for yourself, you'll hear it: nobody asked you to come. Each time you try to break out of this obscurity, they [the border]'ll be there to remind you that you're persona non grata (Kapllani, 2010: 57).

For Albanians, the Greek-Albanian border was indeed very often the background of their dwelling. We can moreover add that Kapllani's haunted memories represent Elion's plight:

He suddenly makes another calculation: thirty-four times in seven years, Albania-Greece-Albania-Greece. If you added on the days spent in detention centres each time they deported him, it was unbelievable. Of the last seven years of his life, two of them have been literally spent on the borders (ibid.: 34).

Elion is portrayed as a border subject in the past and present, someone who occupies exclusively claustrophobic and interstitial spaces, the borders being such a space by definition. It is as though he was born a border subject. Has he ever been anything more than that? This is another feature of Elion which further enhances his tragic allure as a man condemned to marginality.

The entire story that unfolds, transforming the linear journey of redemption into a repetition of his past, becomes an orbit that gravitates on Elion creating a sense of permanent loss, as though his fate is already decided apriori by an unwritten law of Albanian migration. We can argue hence that Giannaris' representation of Albanian migration (more than merely a portrayal of a true event), is indeed a "modern (ancient Greek) tragedy", a quote by the Seattle Post that is printed on the film's DVD release. Moreover, to quote Naficy's assessment of exilic films, "this circular structure helps drive home the dystopian point that for exiles in the societies of control there is no outside anymore" (2001: 195). In other words, a cinematic portrayal of migration can serve as the

backdrop of an existential meditation and particularly the loss of identity as the protagonist delves into otherness.

The notion of claustrophobia and no outside escape route is highlighted further in the next sequence as, following the flashback, Elion is crouched behind the partition, clutching his Kalashnikov. The camera closes on his face as he wakes up seeming bewildered, cutting back to an extreme close-up on Grigoris, back to Elion and, while the latter describes the "road ahead", cut to Grigoris. Cut then to the driver who breaks abruptly as Albanian police cars arrive, seemingly out of nowhere. The extreme close-up and erratic montage highlight the sense of claustrophobia and of a dislocated space within the bus, where the subjects are as well fragmented with "no outside anymore". The montage evokes moreover the panic of escalating tension as the plot reaches its climactic conclusion.

The Albanian police seem to have literally appeared out of nowhere. The montage is erratic and fragmented evoking the shock and panic of Elion and passengers. The camera cuts forty times from 1:16:33 until 1:17:33. We cut from a close-up, to a tracking shot and to multiple static shots through distorted lenses and from bizarre angles increasing the sensation of dislocation. The montage sequence of the passengers closing the curtains resembles a series of jump-cuts, underlining the panic of this very moment. Undeniably, Elion is not paranoid to feel persistently persecuted, for he is indeed so as the presence of the police is ubiquitous and yet strategically concealed. Elion's fear is thus justified. Flashback to a scene where two police officers carry Elion into an abandoned reservoir where he is raped.

The beginning of Elion's journey signals also the end of his journey. The dislocated narrative reveals Elion's encounter with the border more than the beginning of his journey, as it is displayed in *From the Snow* where the narrative is linear in order to create the impression of a certain trajectory, of hope, struggle and failure. In this way, Goritsas displays the journey of the Greek migrants more than a certain conceptualisation of migrants. Giannaris utilizes montage, inserting scattered memories of the journey and, more significantly, Elion's encounters with borders and the official and unofficial authorities of the border asserting thus a representation of Elion as a border subject which is enhanced by inserting strategically the moment of border crossing.

The narrative works against Elion's mobility. The film begins with a sequence within the dilapidating space that Elion has transformed into a home (fig. 5.2.9). It is in all

likelihood an abandoned building within a larger construction site that belongs to the Greek police chief who illegally employs Elion - a form of neo slavery that was popular during the 1990s and required that the migrant lived in situ (Psimmenos, 1995: 35 ). His house has access to water but otherwise it is obviously nothing like a home (fig. 5.2.10). Elion's dislocation from the familial hearth, the nation and his mother is highlighted by the latter's letter who reads in the voice over: "my darling come home. In your own land people will exploit you to the bone. In a strange land they will devour the bones as well". Apart from a visceral understanding of exile as inflicting terror on the subject's body (an issue that becomes apparent as Elion's body becomes a site of such terror), it reveals that home is where mother is. Elion's mother embodies and disembodies the nation. The former, as an integral function of an Albanian ethos, is articulated by the Albanian chief: "no home without a woman. Especially when there is no man around".

The letter brings to the fore this sense of dislocation which is heightened in the bus. Elion's mobility is negated as he inhabits a transitory space and a mobile vehicle which nevertheless does not transport him to a definitive destination which would imply that mobility is emancipating. In the present tense Elion is trapped in a claustrophobic space while he (seemingly) is mobile in his memories. By inserting sequences where Elion is mobile, while maintaining inertia in the present, Giannaris denies the migrant of the opportunity to break free of his constraints. Linearity would thus function in accordance to the trajectory of the journey and not the representation of the migrant, as much as of the journey. In this way, Giannaris accomplishes to highlight the notion of a border subject challenging once again the alleged criminality of Albanian migrants.



Figure 5.2.9: Close-up of Elion in his "house"



Figure 5.2.10: A clear shot of Elion's "house"

### **5.3 A meditation on postmodernity, Left patronage and Eurocentrism: *Eternity and a Day***

#### **5.3.1 Dislocation and loss**

In *Eternity and a Day* there is no beginning or end per se to the boy's journey. As a journey of homelessness, in which perpetual aimless drifting negates the notion of a particular trajectory or destination, the boy's wandering covers a geographical line of movement towards a destination, interrupted by internal psychological journeys where aimless wandering figures as the *modus vivendi* of a self exile. In every case, every journey has a beginning but is interrupted launching thus another journey, as though the boy's life consists of continuous flight.

Aimless wandering and internal journeys are popular themes in Angelopoulos' trademark art cinema which has been associated with high modernism and particularly an original function of the sequence shot (Orr, 2000: 74-81; Makrygiannakis, 2008: 272-310). His notorious slow long takes are the main vehicle of wandering which convey the pathos of border subjects and drifters. In this respect, the film deals implicitly with notions that are linked to exile and migration - the loss of home, language and the mother tongue. Border subjects are hence portrayed as agents of existential meditation. Angelopoulos does not address a Greek-Albanian confrontation or questions on respective nationalisms and xenophobia. His focus is less on the current concerns of Greece and Albania and more on intellectual questions of a rather obscure nature. His portrayal therefore of border subjects and crossing mark a radical yet problematic departure from the other films.

The film tracks the wandering of Alexander, a poet and self exile diagnosed with terminal cancer. The film opens with a childhood memory as a dream, in which a slow tracking shot and the voice-over evoke the fluidity and boundlessness of a dream. Children walk out of a white mansion and jump into the tranquil sea, while the voice over addresses the notion of time and its passing. Cut to Alexander in the present, vacating his apartment to spend his last days in the hospital. The contrast between the two scenes is intense as the first is bathed in the natural colors of the sea and the bright white of the children's costumes. In the present, grey undertones and low focus lighting set the tone of the film, signifiers of a pervading sense of melancholy (fig. 5.3.1.1). The past memory, which is not attributed to a particular subjectivity as much as to a dislocated signifier, is characterized by melancholy as the voice over tells of fragmented columns, statues and marble slabs - fragments of an ancient city buried underwater, broken foundations. The scene evokes dislocation as a signifier of a fragmented memory and a past that is implicitly lost and

broken. Kolocotroni describes this as "an appropriate sequence, setting the tone for a meditation on time, memory, nostalgia, loss." According to her, "the broken statue represents [...] what was once whole" (2000: 400). In this respect, various sequences of regression to childhood memories and to the letters of Alexander's deceased wife, that she reads in the voice-over, enhance the pervading dislocation since in the present he is dying and in his memories he is old suggesting that indeed the past is lost and broken. Alexander wanders aimlessly until he befriends the Greek refugee from Albania who breathes new life into Alexander.

Alexander is a vagabond, dressed seemingly in rags: a worn out trench coat and bulky shoes, while his overall appearance is shabby and equally worn out. He is a modern day Ulysses who after years of wandering, decides, contrary to the Homeric Epic, to abandon his home and continue drifting aimlessly till the imminent End. The reversal of the myth of the "nostos", of Ulysses' forlorn separation from the hearth and the long awaited return home, is substituted by rejection of the latter, as Alexander seeks for an appropriate home for his dog. His dog, according to Yannis Makrygiannakis (2008: 273), is a reference to the Odyssey, one of the various texts that Angelopoulos very often sites indirectly. When Ulysses returns to Ithaca he is disguised as a hooded drifter. There, he finds his dog Argos, a long-lasting and cherished companion who signifies also the hero's homecoming as the dog recognizes the estranged hero and king. In *Eternity* however, the persistent efforts of Alexander to abandon his dog after his own "voyages" signifies a desire to abandon the home and life itself.

Alexander is transformed into [a] "nobody". The latter is not only a reference to the self appointed name of Ulysses that he gives to the Cyclops Polyphemus, tricking him to believe that indeed nobody is there. It is also what "A", the protagonist of *Ulysses' Gaze* (Angelopoulos, 1995), utters when asked who is on the vast cargo ship that carries the broken statue of Lenin, the vestige of "broken" revolutions. The existential plight of "A" as a dislocated man is highlighted through the Homeric reference which one can assume is passed on to Alexander as he drifts into anonymity, an allusion to the death of identity, as a symptom of the death of modernity and the personal obsolescence that overrides Alexander's existence.

Alexander visits his estranged daughter who announces that she is selling the old beach house she inherited from her parents. The beach house is a symbol of an idealized time and space, the remnant of Alexander's childhood fantasies. It is also the only space which his dead wife still inhabits and which he revisits countless times throughout the film.

The film thus sets the tone for an elusive and layered meditation on loss which comes across through metaphors on all things "broken", material, spiritual and intellectual. These signifiers come to life and are culminated in the figure of the refugee boy, and other "broken" refugee children, trafficked into Fortress Europe, who reflect to Alexander his own dislocation, while giving him courage and faith for his "journey" and for the future of humanity that, as Angelopoulos' oeuvre suggests, depends on children<sup>82</sup> .



Figure 5.3.1.1: The colours of loss

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<sup>82</sup>See also *To Meteoro Vima tou Pelargou/The Suspended step of the Stork* (1991) and *I Skoni tou Hronou/The Dust of Time* (2008)

### 5.3.2 The greater picture: a world of border subjects

Eleven minutes into the film, Alexander encounters the Ethnic Greek boy from Albania. He is a member of a squad of so-called "traffic light children" ("paidia ton fanarion") which is the derogatory title of immigrant and refugee children smuggled into the metropolitan cities of Europe. In Greece they are exploited by employers who place their slave workers in prostitution rings, garment sweat shops, or on the streets selling goods and cleaning car wind shields at traffic lights.

A sequence shot introduces the boy. The shot is characteristic of Angelopoulos' virtuosity and the ease with which he "sculpts through time", to use Andrey Tarkovsky's term (1987). The latter refers to the capacity of the sequence shot to document an event in its entirety incorporating a sense of time elapsed and space traversed and which can incorporate in a single take a large fraction of action and thus of the narrative, as though the director "sculpts" time. Tarkovsky's term parallels the work of the filmmaker to that of a sculptor who carves a marble block, discarding various fragments in order to form a certain figure. Similarly, the filmmaker carves time and compresses it in order to convey an event in its entirety and a sense of time elapsed and elapsing. In this case, a certain social issue is displayed in its routinely normality. Instead of using montage as a narrative tool, the filmmaker uses camera movement and utilizes time connecting various fragments of action establishing a sense of duration and space that surrounds the event. The scene is revealed as part of a vision that is inherently mobile. In other words, the sequence shot is self reflexive since it directly links mobility and mobile vision that are integral to cinematic representations of migration and, in this case, trafficking, which connotes emancipatory movement as much as sinister associations linked to the coerced and clandestine movement of people as commodities.

The scene opens with an establishing shot of Alexander on a busy street. Before entering his car, he pauses to look at the queue of children. The site is not part of an inherently human vision and, in this case, of a poet, but of the cinematic apparatus, a mechanical gaze devoid of any emotive input that moves past Alexander to reveal the reality of the street. During the course of the sequence shot Alexander drives away - an ordinary reaction to an ordinary event. From a distance, the camera pans and observes the queue of children as it approaches revealing their equipment of plastic water spray bottles and wind shield wipers. Angelopoulos maintains the slow almost ritualistic rhythm of the sequence shot as the children run towards a straight line of cars waiting at the traffic lights.



The shot displays four cars placed horizontally each one assigned to two children who frantically wipe the wind shields (fig. 5.3.2.1).

The sequence shot has a monumental appeal conveyed through the geometric setting of children and the panning action that reveals the larger picture. This panning action opens our vision to a larger scene, conveyed in its entirety. This technique is used often to reveal the majestic and sublime within the mundane which is characteristic of Angelopoulos' fusion of realism with a theatrical and dialectic *mise en scène* that is exposed through the revelation of the sequence shot, introducing a semantic space within the ordinary.

The sense of irony in this moment is intense as the monumental shot, which would be traditionally conceived for a scene of natural beauty and grandiosity, discloses an unfortunate and yet mundane reality which is far from monumental in its conception and appeal. It is indeed on the one hand a reality that is encountered routinely in Greek cities that is dismissed, in the same way that trafficking and the trafficked subjects are neglected and respectively invisible, smuggled into the city and kept hidden from the radar only to emerge when they are summoned. On the other hand, it is a harsh reality that is becoming increasingly a flaming issue of global public awareness. This is indeed the larger picture as Angelopoulos suggests. It is the staggering presence of dislocation that governs everyday life which becomes ordinary as though dislocation is ubiquitous and accepted. The sequence shot may document indeed action, but its purpose is semantic rather than diegetic since Angelopoulos conveys an issue that highlights a deficit of social awareness.

The style of the shot is characteristic of Angelopoulos' "cold" form whereby any emotive input is negated for a clinical approach. The camera does not focus on the faces of the children and documents their work as clinical thanks to the geometric framing of the sequence and the distance of the camera that "flows" just past them. Angelopoulos displays here a certain function that is inherent to the routine of the city. Its ordinariness is heightened by the accuracy and geometric placement of the children standing by each stationed car and their synchronized wiping movement. This action is not documented entirely, as the sequence shot continues and Alexander drives on a straight line while the site of the children in the background becomes blurry (fig. 5.3.2.2), suggesting that indeed this is a background issue in the bustling streets of the city which becomes invisible.

The implications of Angelopoulos' approach to trafficking are numerous and challenging. The ordinariness of the action is underlined and conveyed initially through the

panning movement of the camera that reveals through a monumental vision a scene that has no monumental qualities. The irony intensifies the message as Angelopoulos arguably draws attention to an event that has no implications for the narrative, but introduces us to the larger picture. By highlighting the more immediate and urgent issues of loss and dislocation that are characteristic of the postmodern condition of societies ridden by commoditization, Angelopoulos raises awareness while simultaneously emptying the scene of its emotional implications denying the opportunity to his audience to partake in the event positing thus the issue at hand as a social crisis that cannot be managed through an emotional response. By leaving the scene in the background, he highlights how the public casts a blind eye. This is implied by the narrative of the sequence shot: our mind is not on the children, but on Alexander. As his car enters the frame, his figure is posited frontally and the children are in the background, an issue which seems at this moment to be in the back of Alexander's mind as he drives on.



Figure 5.3.2.1: Each child assigned to a car



Figure 5.3.2.2: Alexander drives past the children

The boy enters the frame from the right corner and sprays water on Alexander's windshield. The sequence shot lasts 1:18 seconds. In its last twenty seconds, tension escalates. The boy pauses and hides in front of Alexander's car in a close-up while, with the same slow and steady movement, the camera displays that in the meantime a police van has arrived, seemingly out of nowhere, asserting thus the ubiquitous presence of authority. The geometric features of the setting generate a sinister appeal as one can see tiny still dark figures sitting in the cars, as though indifferent to the fact that children are being chased in front of them. The *mise en scène* of stationed cars on an empty street and the terrifying presence of the police accentuate the sense of dread while the uniformity of the policemen, running after the children in a geometric form suggest a strategy of capture as though each child is individually targeted (fig. 5.3.2.3).

The boy is taken under the protection of Alexander who becomes a surrogate father underlining the Platonic dictum that the philosopher, or in this case the leftist poet, is the

only suitable guardian of society and the weak. The geometric qualities of the scene are overwhelming as seven police officers run after seven children, as though each one is assigned to one child. The large white arrows on the street seem to point the way to the children as though they, or the policemen, require directions. The mise en scène is compiled of these geometric qualities that form a clinical representation of sweep operation which functions here efficiently, in one "swoop". Kapllani evokes the terror of a very similar scene:

Police! Police! At a distance of less than 100 meters we could see a patrol car [...] that was coming our way. [...] We all started running for our lives. I can't even be sure that the police car was coming for us. What I do remember is that we ran into a building site and hid panting from the exercise, terrified we'd be caught [...] (2010: 95). [...] Your life is a tough one [...]. It is tough because the police can catch you whenever they want to, and hold you at the station for as long as they want to. Your bitter moniker for the police, the *astynomia* (civil guard) is *astronomia* (guards of the stars) because your fate on this earth so often depends on them. A tough life because some of your fellow countrymen commit crimes, and when they do you have to keep out of the way of the Black Marias on operation sweep-up (ibid.: 106-607).

The urgency of the scene, conveyed more as an urgency to capture the children than for the latter to escape, is showcased as the policemen run frantically, as though the children pose a danger to their current social settings. Kapllani's description associates the police with a certain violent response but in this scene the police respond mechanically, without talking or shouting, as though they have been programmed to capture traffic light children. The geometric, slow and methodic filming generates a sense of futility and fatality as though the children will inevitably get caught since it is part of the event's ordinariness. In other words, resistance is futile.

This clinical approach is even more evident in the next tracking shot from the interior of the car where Alexander and the boy sit motionless and silent observing the police catching one by one the children who are now running ahead of the car. The camera is poised behind Alexander and the boy, as though a third invisible observer that is conducting the action in front of us is also partaking in the scene (fig. 5.3.2.4). There is however no point of view from the back seat, only a vacant outlook from the cinematic apparatus that seems to have replaced the eye of an invisible conductor of arrest. The car begins to move and maintains for the duration of the shot a smooth pace while ahead the

seven police men race to catch the children with military precision. Alexander puts the car into third gear and assumes a faster pace, as the commotion is over. The "cold" approach of Angelopoulos, which heightens the terror of the sweep operation, generates the impression that all this was simply traffic.

Angelopoulos addressed the larger picture in order to proceed to a more particular issue and portrayal. Remaining faithful to the dictum of Eisenstein's illustration of the masses as the sole protagonist, Angelopoulos initially introduces us to the squad of children and then the boy whose name however is never revealed, nor is his particular ethnic identity asserting thus a symbolical and universal facet. Angelopoulos initiates his meditation on immigration and exile by focusing on the whole, in order to proceed to the more specific which nevertheless is never specified entirely to us since the boy is utilized more as a symbol of all refugees and displaced people and, more appropriately, "ksenitis" ("ξενίτης") an exile and simultaneously stranger - a word which the boy articulates in various key moments.



Figure 5.3.2.3: A geometrically directed sweep operation



Figure 5.3.2.4: An invisible conductor observes the "traffic"

Angelopoulos' representation of Albanian migration is not so much focused on the particular issues of Albanian migration to Greece. His portrayal is steeped within his personal use of form and theme that has crowned him an auteur. He utilizes narrative, mise en scène and his subjects as a canvas on which his personal reflection on the death of identity, language, modernity and its high idealism are envisioned. The aforementioned sequence shot is an introduction to this discussion. The ordinariness and banality of this given moment in the lives of exiled children in Greece underlines the sense of loss and futility that Angelopoulos observes in the developed world in the twilight of the twentieth century. The expressive means that he employs in order to bring to life his considerations suggest that Angelopoulos is clearly distinguished from the other filmmakers who deal with Albanian migration and who are keen on portraying Albanian migration per se rather than an abstract and elusive contemplation on the more general theme of postmodern

dislocation. The other filmmakers address directly Albanian migration and a Greek-Albanian confrontation. In this manner, Angelopoulos' depiction of border subjects is a unique example from this corpus of films and more so since he addresses trafficking and its capacity to transform people into commodities and, pertinent to this discussion, border subjects.

### 5.3.3 The universal border subject: inertia and the pathos of exile

Alexander drives to a narrow alley where the boy gets off and disappears, while Alexander resumes his wandering. Back on the street, he notices again the boy accompanied by another one. They are lured by traffickers, snatched and thrown into a van. Alexander follows the van to an abandoned building near the Albanian border where the children are sold to rich buyers from the United Kingdom. I shall address this scene in detail further on. Alexander saves the boy again and drives to a bus station near the border region of Pentalofo, two hours driving distance from the Albanian border.

From this point on, Alexander attempts three times to send the boy back to Albania. He believes strongly in a moral obligation of protecting the boy, which embodies the overall notion of a leftist intelligentsia as guardian of the weak (or in any case those stereotypically considered weak). He consequently adheres to the function of returning the boy to his "home", where his grandmother allegedly lives. In Greece the boy is doomed to dwell aimlessly while traffickers loom. He tells the boy that he cannot simply "leave him like this", to merely abandon him after rescuing him. Alexander tries to reserve a seat for the boy on a bus that goes to Pentalofo and which has made a short stop at the station where Alexander and the boy wait. Alexander talks to the bus driver while they walk back to the car, only to find out that the boy has run away. The driver informs Alexander that "the cops keep catching them [immigrants] and send them back home...All in vain! They keep crossing the mountains". This highlights the notion that migration is mobility while also alluding to the obvious fact that migrants cross the borders repeatedly. The boy, as a symbolic and universal refugee, embodies the tenacity and utter willpower of migrants to repeatedly cross borders, overcoming the defeat of getting caught every time. His silence, steady and vigorous pace underline migration as movement - movement towards any direction as long as it is "far from here" as the lyrics of Eduart's rap song describe<sup>83</sup>.

Mobility is emancipating as much as futile - free movement towards any direction and to nowhere. While the driver says his finishing sentence, the scene cuts to the image of the boy treading the seemingly endless road back (fig. 5.3.3.1). His movement is brisk and his pace is evidence to the determination that is required to walk for miles. A tracking shot covers the distance from the bus up to the point in the road where the solitary figure of the boy has stopped as Alexander walks towards him urging him to stop. The tracking shot lasts 41 seconds conveying the sense of time and space elapsed as well as the required

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<sup>83</sup>See chapter 4.3.

effort, the anticipation and patience that this kind of movement generates and requires. The camera tracks back on the same thread as Alexander escorts the boy into the bus.

In every moment, the boy is the most mobile, tenacious and determined border subject discussed in this chapter and is capable of assuming movement on his own accord without any prior incentive and aim. His silence, anonymity and almost performative appeal posits his mobility as movement for movement's sake. In this respect, Alexander's heightened sense of morality and futility is exposed again as he tells the boy before entering the bus "I could not leave you like that. I had to find a solution". Paradoxically, the boy follows Alexander, although he ran away from Alexander who seeks to execute the same duty that the "cops" have - to return the boy back home. His initiative is not merely futile but also disturbing since he performs yet another form of interruption which comes across as interruption exactly because the boy's movement is so strong and governing in the sequence.

The bus begins to move only to stop again across the road. The boy gets off the bus and stands across from Alexander who seems increasingly desperate to get the boy back to Albania (fig. 5.3.3.2). The particular representation of mobility in this scene is of great interest. We have seen how the transitory space and apparatus of the bus in which Elion is trapped signifies entrapment. It is a space dislocated from the outside, although the bus per se is not confined. It is a mobile object that incorporates claustrophobia and confinement. Within the bus, Elion is simultaneously mobile and immobile, inherently disabled and bound. In a key moment in the film, it becomes obvious that Elion can jump from the bus and flee. However, the implications of fleeing to the open natural landscape are devastating since he has nowhere to go to. In *Eternity*, these implications become increasingly obvious and suggestive of a dead-end life in the case of the boy who, as a nameless and ahistorical figure, is a symbol of the thousands of exiled children, the future generation of dislocated subjects, without identity and home, living in a globalized world dictated by commoditisation. Their mobility is under erasure since trafficked children are often raised as slaves and brought into the world with no other alternative than entrapment.

Nevertheless, mobility is not sacrificed or hindered as the boy persistently is on the road, moving ceaselessly, defying the terror that he encountered earlier and which lies ahead, as the shot of the traffickers driving by the station suggests (fig. 5.3.3.3). The boy is indifferent to their passing and to the "message" of their presence. He defies the perils of being a refugee child, and stays on the path.

While it seems that the boy is moving towards no particular direction and without any purpose, he is mobile and bound to the open road. Contrary to Elion, the boy reacts immediately once his mobility is threatened and will leave the bus even if that signifies a similar situation of entrapment. His journey is thus one of perpetual movement and struggle. Mobility is a prerequisite of the boy's life as indeed he defies all obstacles, in order to move with liberty even on foot. The greatest impediment however is his self appointed guardian.



Figure 5.3.3.1: Mobility



Figure 5.3.3.2: I can't leave you like this

At every given moment that the boy chooses to flee, it is Alexander who hinders mobility. In their first encounter, Alexander calls out to the boy to jump into the car. This makes hardly any difference since the boy again flees back to the streets where danger lurks. Alexander makes a conscious decision to "save" the boy. In the aforementioned scene it is apparent that the boy has a drive to be independent. Interestingly, from one border region where the traffickers seek to sell the boy, Alexander moves him to another border region and transitory space - a bus station. He deems it necessary, according to his principles that foster his self appointed role of guardian, to send him back home, one may assume because he is a child. After the boy defies once more the efforts of Alexander, Alexander tells him "I know what you want, but I can't leave you like that, I just can't". The words of Alexander raise many questions. Apparently, for the boy, mobility is the last vestige of life, his only way of surviving in a hostile world, despite the unfortunate fact that in such a world he ultimately has nowhere to go to. Nevertheless, that is his choice, even though he does not directly articulate it (overall the boy has very few lines in the film underlining the issue of his limited subjectivity and power of enunciation). Alexander's moral obligation is not necessarily linked to the well being of the boy as much as to fulfilling a "good" deed before dying. This is suggested by the phrase "I just can't". He must "protect" the boy at all occasions. The boy's display of mobility nevertheless suggests that Alexander could actually "leave him like that". Eventually, Alexander steers the boy's



subjectivity especially as he turns from guardian to educator of poetry and history in his own subjectivity which the boy is lured into.

The ambivalence of the boy, running away from the bus, boarding and jumping off, accompanying Alexander to the border only to run away again, reflects the latter's ambivalence since one moment he is concerned for the boy so much that he will drive him himself to the Albanian border while, later on, he tells him he can't be with him because he has to go on a trip - to die. Alexander's ambivalence is suggestive of a Shakespearean pathos, torn between moral obligation and subjectivity. In the case of the boy though it is not clear why he displays on the one hand an iron will that manifests through movement and on the other, stasis through submissiveness. Alexander's pathos highlights the burden of his moral obligation which in any case showcases additionally his "good" intentions, which come across as justified.

Let us examine this through another case study. In *Blackboards* (2000), Samira Makhbalbaf depicts, amongst others, the movement of a large group of refugee children from Kurdistan en route to Iraq smuggling drugs across the border in large heavy crates that they carry on their backs. The entire film is situated on the mountainous and full of perils road between Kurdistan and Iraq, observing the perpetual movement of these various groups seeking to cross the border. One of the stories and trajectories of migration is that of the children. An unemployed teacher from a group of teachers all of whom carry as well their blackboards on their backs, one of many dislocated from an abandoned school, abruptly stands in their way asking them persistently where they came from, where they are headed to and if they need a teacher since he seeks to teach and as he insists, children need to learn how to read. One of the children answers back obviously irritated, "let us get past mister. You can't stay there like that". The rest of the group join in and insist that he is "holding them up". Eventually he lets them through without receiving any answer or a pupil to mentor. The paternalistic aspect of education is addressed here by the director and moreover the educative opportunities of hardship and life on the road that do not require an official course of education or, in other words, that someone "educates" the children. The children are fulfilling an arduous and hazardous task without parental supervision and, regardless of their illiteracy and young age, they do not need a tutor or mentor in their lives.

Similarly, Alexander's paternalistic tendencies emerge. In a comparable fashion as well, the movement of the children and the boy display tenacity and unimpeded mobility. The children in *Blackboards* are given a voice to defy anyone who will block their path

while Angelopoulos' boy very easily and quickly assumes a subordinate position that impedes his mobility, particularly since he is later on shown to dwell in the time and space of Alexander's subjectivity, suggesting a process of colonization by the Western man who, as a member of a traditional European intelligentsia is allegedly more enlightened. This is also a major indication of the film's Eurocentric inclination.

Alexander embodies various themes that are abundant in the work of Angelopoulos and which are particularly evidence to his political affiliations that permeate his films. Alexander's morality and its symptom, his self appointed role as guardian of the boy, are linked to what William Brown argues in regard to Slavoj Žižek's meditations on trafficking: "the leftist agenda of liberating others [and also 'others'] is always already paternalistic in nature. [...] This is not to malign any filmmaker that tries to raise awareness of this problem [trafficking] that typically remains invisible in Contemporary Europe" (2010: 46-47).

The latter is characteristic of Angelopoulos' work which advocates a polarized outlook favouring a leftist ideology which is inherently paternalistic. In addition, it is a popular theme in European cinema overall and a common response of directors to policy makers and producers who expect, in way or another, an affirmation of Europe's centrality over its various "others" that populate the continent, always with good intentions that advocate and foster "protection" and "education" particularly since it is a given that migrants and refugees are weak and in need. The boy in this case is not in any need but yet is treated to such patronage.

This brings us ultimately to the dictum of postcolonial theory and the burden of representation since the latter is riddled with structures of power and hierarchy. Ultimately, there is no greater truth to be told and represented. In film particularly there can be no authentic nor true representation but there can be a fair representation particularly if a film on migration and trafficking is made by the trafficked subjects themselves and not by an indigenous and "safe" individual who, as Angelopoulos eventually does, manages to exploit the trafficked child and concepts of migration for their own purposes positing the films visible across borders, in international and presumably European (and eurocentric) film festivals. This highlights the inherent mobility of film but also transportation that are implicitly associated with trafficking which eventually remains invisible in *Eternity and a Day* despite its director's good intentions.

The latter is obvious in the sale sequence (fig. 5.3.3.4). In order to save the boy, Alexander has to buy his way out. Of course, he is left with no alternative but to buy the boy since the traffickers, terrifying in their solid stature and silent demeanour, stand in their way. Interestingly, earlier in the sequence, one of the boys broke a window, during the sale, creating havoc as the children-sheep start running away frantically. The boy runs as well but is again "saved" by Alexander (fig. 5.3.3.5) who escorts him outside, encountering eventually the traffickers. Could the boy possibly have run away, as he did later in his attempt to escape from Alexander? Regardless of the answer, the implications of this scene are dreadful since the boy is ultimately sold to Alexander, even though the latter never sees the boy as a commodity. Yet, the boy, as a commodity on sale, has accomplished his function. The paradox here is ironic, since Alexander as a leftist intellectual would never partake in this role.



Figure 5.3.3.3: The ubiquitous traffickers



Figure 5.3.3.4: The sale of children

At every moment, Angelopoulos looks at the boy through the eyes of a Greek which is not in itself ethically and morally fraught with controversy. However, the boy does not come into the frame without the presence of Alexander whose role of guardian is not questioned, hindering the boy's mobility until the end where their departure and separate ways dictate a new subjectivity, mobility and trajectory free from constraints, as they both stand at the sea, a new passage that they, for the better good, cross alone.

The boy's encounter with the border and the terror it incites is a result of Alexander's influence as the latter transports the boy to the border, evoking the movement of the traffickers. The fact that Alexander "has to find a solution" and that he could not "leave him like that" raises additional problematic implications. The notion of a "solution" implies that the refugee is a "problem" that must be solved as much as the entire "problem" of migration to Greece is one that requires a final solution, or at least to be treated with a kind of finality that is implied by returning migrants "back home". The only solution is returning the boy back to where he came from, constructing thus trafficking as once again invisible. This however is contested further into the film, when one of the traffic light

children is killed and we are faced with its (symbolical) corpse and the truth that eventually the children who do stay in Greece get killed, remaining invisible in a morgue. This is evidence to ambivalence and inconsistency regarding the treatment of this sensitive issue by Angelopoulos.

The role of Alexander as guardian is articulated by Makrygiannakis (2009: 274) as a responsibility towards difference and the "other". According to the author, it is part of the director's humanist discourse that streamlines the film towards a declaration, that a new universal ideal is required in our times of intellectual impoverishment. In recreating the world and a new language, we must acknowledge difference and the displaced refugees and migrants. This argument however only justifies and reinforces the paternalistic nature of *Eternity's* plot which places the "other" under Greek supervision when it is obviously not required. Moreover, acknowledging the right of anyone, regardless of their age and capabilities, to determine a personal trajectory in life, then numerous implications regarding the centrality of Europe and of its left intelligentsia become a problematic issue since Angelopoulos essentially suggests that this language should be built by the "enlightened" leftist. This implicates further many erroneous notions on otherness that justified Europe's colonial expeditions. The fact that Alexander sees in the boy his own otherness affirms this colonization process; Alexander becomes the boy and occupies his position and obtains a central position of enunciation.

Alexander's efforts to return the stubborn boy back to his village in Albania reach their finale at the Albanian border. Alexander drives there himself, revealing thus his determined choice of "returning" the boy, in a way then also circulating him from one space of otherness to another - the border.

At the snow covered mountain, the boy narrates to Alexander how the road to Greece was full of landmines. This retelling is performed on a road covered with snow while mist surrounds the area. The scene that the boy describes is one of utter terror revealing how he has been brought into the world as a border subject, haunted by the border and the violence that is often associated with border crossing. Earlier, we saw how the sequence shot reveals the ordinary through a monumental shot that evokes visual splendour. At the snow covered road, the same technique serves an entirely different purpose. The camera remains poised on the scene as the boy recounts his story of border crossing, probably during one of the two major dates of insurrection in 1991 or 1997. The shot lasts four and half minutes. The camera pans towards the upper diagonal corner of the frame, opening up gradually to expose a vast white landscape. As the steady crane shot

continues to document the landscape, it reveals a gigantic barbed wire fence that is barely visible in the midst, from which black silhouettes are hanging, seemingly levitating (fig. 5.3.3.6).



Figure 5.3.3.5: Alexander saves the boy once more



Figure 5.3.3.6: Black silhouettes hanging at the border

The camera pans to reveal this monumental vision in a panoramic shot. The image is staggering. The fence seems endless, not fitting within the frame - a metaphor for the vast and endless borders that have emerged in Greece and the Balkans. The sense of time elapsed is conveyed as Alexander and the boy enter the frame from the bottom right angle, implying that for the duration of the shot, they were walking slowly towards the vast gate that stands in front of them which now gradually opens. The Albanian flag (the only reference to Albania in the film) waves on a pole in one corner of a watchtower. At the same time, a tall and square looking cloaked figure walks very slowly, almost ritually, out of the gate and towards the pair (fig. 5.3.3.7).



Figure 5.3.3.7: An ominous cloaked figure approaches

This is indeed a grandiose shot that showcases Angelopoulos' virtuosity and simultaneously the pleasure of discovery, of an all seeing gaze that treads space and time. There is however a sense of irony to this. While this spectacle is indeed grandiose and the shot monumental, what is revealed per se is ominous and unsettling. It is the revelation of a

biblical monster. The border here is loaded with many sinister connotations that evoke orientalism. This is not the actual Greek-Albanian border but a representation of it. The actual border evades our attention. The border here is drenched in mist. The single note performed by string instruments on the soundtrack increases the sense of dread as the cloaked figure walks slowly, the sound of his boots treading through the mud evoking a slow and plodding march. He is an ominous figure that hardly speaks and whose face is concealed. It seems almost as though he is summoning the boy back into the mist. The boy then tells Alexander that he does not have family in Albania. They bolt to the car and the cloaked figure shouts back at them. In the background, the black silhouettes are still hanging by the fence, symbols of the various "others" behind borders and fences, struggling to get through but eventually left hanging in mid air, without a prospect, their anonymity and invisibility implied by their representation as black silhouettes, as though they are merely a prop of the film's *mise en scène*.

The camera eye spans from the particular and the ordinary to a grand spectacle which however has none of the attributes of a spectacle that would encourage immersion and pleasure of the viewer. This is a terrifying sight as much as spectacular contrary to the ordinary sight of the traffic light squad. In both cases however, irony unsettles the viewer as the monumental shot reveals in the first case a shocking social detriment as ordinary while the spectacle of the second shot is not of natural beauty and monumental appearance. This is a landscape of loss, not conquest. This irony introduces a sense of vacuity as the majestic spectacle stands for the loss of a universal ideal and humanistic discourse.

The obscurity of the image and the actual reconstruction of the border as a vast gate guarded by dark silhouettes on watchtowers connotes the Albanian borders as the gateway to a respectively obscure place. Obscurity brings with it many connotations on the foreign and strange that could be perceived as threatening, terrifying and hence beyond the Greek border. In Greece the ordinariness and absence of a response to a social crisis is unsettling but beyond Greece, in Albania, there is something more obscure and sinister lurking that cannot be conceived. Ultimately, what lies ahead is threatening because it is obscure. The mist unsettles the viewer as to what lies beyond the border while the vast gate and its gatekeeper, an equally obscure and menacing figure, make one wonder of what terrors exist beyond the border. This is even more problematic since Angelopoulos does not articulate his consideration on borders overall, but on the Albanian border. This has been one of the major issues between the two countries, as European and non European respectively - that they share a border.

## Chapter 6

### The end of the journey as a reminder of Europe's periphery

#### *From the Snow, Eternity and a Day, Hostage*

Up to this point, I have examined representations of migrants from Albania as border subjects in three Greek films. In these, the migrants encounter the Greek-Albanian border at various instances, seemingly caught in a perpetual repetition of the same praxis. Moreover, they inhabit claustrophobic spaces of transit and otherness which force a state of inertia and entrapment. Mobility is hindered and transformed into stasis transforming therefore migration into confinement in the margins of the host nation and, in essence, at the border. In *From the Snow*, the migrants struggle to work against confinement and inertia, forced to embark on a journey of homelessness while in *Hostage* and *Eternity and a Day*, the migrants embark on several journeys that lead respectively to death and to cosmopolitan homelessness. In this chapter I discuss what happens at the end of the journey and what we can assume according to representation.

In the host nation, a dialectic relationship emerges between claustrophobic interiors and the natural and public space of the nation which are often juxtaposed and associated respectively with freedom and civic rights. This imagery instigates a discussion on inclusiveness and exclusiveness, mobility and confinement which overall describe life in exile (Naficy, 2001: 212). Eventually, the tension emerging through these binaries launch the end of the journey of hope as claustrophobia prevails leaving no other alternative to the migrant but to depart for Albania or Europe or from this life. At the same time, binaries of movement and stasis put the plot and finale into operation. Achilles, Nikos and the boy depart on journeys of homelessness but the deluded dreamers who persist die a tragic death; Thomas commits suicide, inflicted with tuberculosis in his tenacious struggle to cross the border through water while Elion is shot in his attempt to vindicate his wounded manhood embodying the tragic pathos of (Albanian) border subjects.

The end of the journey highlights and brings full circle the particular understanding of the migrants as border subjects. An open finale in *From the Snow* and *Eternity and a Day* implies directly that the journey across borders continues ad infinitum and that the migrants perpetually inhabit the margins of the western world. The finale signifies a sombre return to the starting point - respectively a bus station on the Albanian border and a port in Thessaloniki. In *Hostage* a sudden death signifies the end of Elion's journey who lives and dies in the transient space in which he was conceived as a border subject.

Regardless of various particularities, the migrants are conceived as border subjects and conveyed as such per se.

While this portrayal is indicative of the filmmakers' good intentions, it is not without an obvious deficit that it is put into operation. I aim to highlight this by focusing on the journey's end through a close reading of scenes. I will argue that a deficit lies in the very fact that the migrants are conceived solely as border subjects since from beginning to end, their portrayal does not disturb the dominant discourses which dictate that Albanian migrants are confined to spaces of otherness due to their inherent wretchedness. When they finally depart, they fulfil the expectations of the nationalistic state apparatus that pontificates the xenophobic rhetoric of "Greece for Greeks". In any case, Greece is not for the disenfranchised migrant.

Instead of challenging this, the filmmakers make a greater effort to pass judgment on the forces that marginalize the migrants while taking it as a given that they are indeed wretched victims. Otherwise, if not displaying the migrants within the margins, how can filmmakers pass judgement on the intolerant host? The dejection of the migrants can also be interpreted as an inherent deficit which manifests as passivity and thus an inability to be integrated. While the filmmakers articulate the migrants' plight, the migrants per se are not granted a position of enunciation from which they can convey more than their bordered life. It is implied that there is no other alternative in a host country that is more hostile than hospitable which to a degree is true. I aim thus to seal my arguments by arguing that films made by the host nation are not devoid of idealization or exoticization of the "other" (Loshitzky, 2010: 9). I will address the films in a holistic manner, cross examining the end of the journey in all three films together. I will conclude with a brief reference to *correction* and its equally brief and direct representation of an Albanian border subject that refrains from such pervasive and biased terms as "border subject" and "marginal". The chapter closes with an afterword on *Eduart* and redemption on the Greek-Albanian border.

In *From the Snow*, death and a sombre return to the border signify the end of the journey to the fatherland. Desperate and homeless, the reunited "family" seek refuge in an abandoned building in the night. Thomas is critically ill, as his cough deteriorates. They lie down on the roof top of the dilapidating building. The stark mise en scène sets the tone for the ending of the film while the soundtrack, a string section of increasingly loud diminished chords, creates a nearly sinister atmosphere that contrasts the optimistic and naive words of Thomas who seeks for escape, as he suggests joining a distant relative who works on cruise ships: "he papers walls...Nikos Halkiadakis. On big liners. Cruises and



suchlike. He is leaving for Australia in ten days. He'll also come aboard the ship to change the wall paper. He promised he'd take me with him. You'll come too".

At the onset of their journey, Achilles was shown to be deluded, believing that they are heading to a hospitable fatherland, while Thomas deemed the journey as futile. At the end of the journey, these roles have reversed as Thomas displays wanderlust and the inert desire for flight and freedom that Achilles initially expressed and which Naficy aptly describes in his assessment of journey and border crossing films: "Borders and border spaces tend to fire up the human imagination, for they represent and allegorize wanderlust, flight and freedom" (2001: 243). Naficy highlights moreover, through a reference to Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), that "anchor chains, plane motors and train whistles" as much as the image of the sea and ship are "three of the most exciting sounds in the world" (ibid.: 243). Claustrophobia may generate paranoia and desperation but simultaneously fuels the desire for flight which comes into direct contrast with reality highlighting thus the ill-fated end of the journey and the pathos of the deluded migrant.

Symbols of freedom, flight and discovery connote a promising and fruitful future since work in luxurious ships are quite the opposite of cargo ships where work can be arduous and even life threatening and where clandestine migrants often work and live. The destination of the ship, Australia, highlights the desire for escape as it is indeed a distant place, far from the claustrophobic spaces of Athens. The remoteness of Australia spurs the migrant imagination. Australia is the new Eldorado at this moment. It is also known as a once popular destination of Greek émigrés where a large Greek community resides. It is thus a locus of a collective national and migrant imagination. For Thomas, Australia could be a second home and, arguably, a more hospitable one. This reveals how the film rests heavily on the national, rather than on the transnational and on the model of Greek films on emigration and repatriation rather than foreign immigration. The disconnection from the fatherland and from our own people is a major theme here.

A paradox emerges in the understanding of the ship since it is at once a transitory border-like claustrophobic space which also carries the prospect of departing to and reaching a new home. Nevertheless, Thomas' words still echo a sense of futility as, lying on the roof top of an abandoned dilapidating building, another symbol of a failed plan, claustrophobia presents itself as the only realistic option from the aforementioned binary while Australia and freedom seem increasingly implausible. His wanderlust as well falls on deaf ears as Achilles and Nikos are already asleep.

Thomas is thus deluded and his wanderlust merely highlights the sombre conclusion of his trajectory. Achilles wakes up in the night and stands at the edge of the roof gazing at the city lights while the sinister soundtrack stops with a thud that evokes the sound of Thomas falling on the ground where he is shown lying face down in the next shot (fig. 6.1). The abrupt passage to the shot of the dead Thomas evokes the shock of his untimely death and marks the respectively sudden end of the journey as we pass from darkness to broad daylight. His death is not discussed nor highlighted. The shot of Thomas lasts eight seconds. It then cuts to an establishing shot of the concrete landscape of the city centre of Athens, a maze of vast colourless buildings and suspended electric wires. In this unfriendly and inhospitable environment, Thomas will be forgotten, a symbol of the numerous migrants from Albania who died in exile with no one to mourn for them, merely mentioned in a police inventory.

In the city, Achilles and Nikos are shown standing in front of a bustling crowd of people exiting a subway station, their backs turned to the crowd. The frontality of the pair that seems to stand above the crowd, as though levitating, gives the impression that this scene is filmed with rear projection which introduces a sense of dislocation of the figures from their material surroundings, as though hovering above the settings signifying disconnection (fig. 6.2). Achilles ends his journey in a similar state of suspension as in the opening scene of the film where he seems suspended, going around in circles in a tow truck. The sensation of dislocation from the landscape and the crowd of Athenians implies that Achilles and Nikos are permanently disconnected from the fatherland, departing from Greece and still "between eternal flight and eternal return" (Kapllani, 2010: 127).



Figure 6.1: Thomas lying dead



Figure 6.2: Achilles and Nikos disconnected

Before their final departure, Achilles visits Eleni who gives him a letter by Thomas' mother, Argyro, addressed to Thomas. In the final setting of the film, Achilles and Nikos are sitting on a bench in a grey and dilapidating bus station. Achilles reads out the letter in the voice over. The letter displays the nurture and concerns of a mother towards her exiled

son. She wishes him to be "strong, with health, freedom and work". She expresses how she feels "heartsick" listening to an old tape with Greek songs and her desire to meet soon and hear from Thomas.

Achilles' voice over denies even a remote presence of Argyro, highlighting thus epistolarity - the desire to bridge the distance between mother and son and the sense of dislocation that the letter generates (Naficy, 2001: 101). The absent narrator/sender and the deceased receiver introduce another paradox here since the letter, a means of communicating and linking people through the distance with written words that have permanence and resonance, highlights instead the permanence of separation. According to Naficy, letters have often a diegetic role, "they may set off the plot or end it" (ibid.: 103). In this scene, the letter seals the film's finale but does not lead to it in terms of diegesis. It highlights the end of the journey of hope as an inevitable occurrence. Argyro writes how she hopes for an "antiloia" which translates as words that respond to her appeal. The film ends however with this very sentence implying thus the end of the film as there can be no dialogue. The letter seals the end of the journey of hope as a journey into obscurity and death, marked by a letter with no receiver by a distant and unseen author. The permanence of the letter which "can be read, reread and carried close to heart" (ibid.: 133) is negated here as it becomes an empty signifier - a reference to loss, nostalgia and death.

Moreover, this is a letter from a mother to her son. I have already discussed<sup>84</sup> the importance of the mother in Greek and Albanian culture. The figure of the mother is an extension of the familial hearth and the nation and the all encompassing figure of Panagia. Epistolarity underscores as well then loss and longing for the hearth (where the mother traditionally tends to the family and especially the men of the house) and belonging to the Orthodox community from which the Greek migrants originate. Argyro's letter is yet another signifier of exile and that "letters not only link people who are separated but also remind them of their separation" (ibid.: 106). Separation from the mother is inscribed in various ways as much as is, as an extension to this separation, that from the home, the nation and fatherland. This separation is one from the Greek nation which marked the opening of the film and which resonates in the end. Ultimately, the Greek nation, as we move from the particular to the more general, is fragmented and its nationalistic agenda fails to deliver. Nevertheless, the permeating melancholy is a way of lamenting for that loss.

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<sup>84</sup>See Chapter 3.1.3.

The migrants' disconnection from their mothers signifies a disconnection from the homeland and the permanence of exile. We have discussed this in relation to the opening scene of *Hostage* where, in the voice over, Elion's mother reads a letter to Elion which is loaded with connotations on loss and suffering and the separation of a mother from her son and vice versa. While in *From the Snow* the mother is totally absent, in *Hostage* Elion's mother encompasses the symbolic role of a collective Albanian motherhood mourning for the lost sons of Albania in Greece where their "bones have been devoured". The various chorus figures such as the Greek and Albanian police chiefs describe her as a tragic figure whose son turned out to be scum. The Albanian youth that failed in Greece is scum. In *Hostage* the (Albanian) nation is manifested clearly through the figure of the mother and is asserted as one side of the binary Greece/Albania demarcating thus a Greek-Albanian confrontation which is a recurring theme throughout the film. In *From the Snow* the nation and the aforementioned confrontation are not apparent as the signifiers of the nation are not prevalent throughout the film. Argyro's letter highlights the absent nation and the disconnection from it which is quite the opposite of what we see in *Hostage* where both nations are present through allegorical signifiers. In other words, the former showcases disconnection and the latter connection. In this respect, Goritsas' is a nation building narrative, albeit of one that remains in the finale disconnected.

In *From the Snow*, the absent mother is a symbol of the collective loss of the fatherland and the permanent disconnection of Greece from its Orthodox compatriots in Albania. In *Hostage*, Elion is obviously longing to return to Albania and obtain his right place in the Albanian patriarchal nation. The migrants of *From the Snow* nonetheless, are not in exile but are returning to their rightful home. In other words, they have been born and living in exile for a quarter of their lives (apart from Nikos). Yet, the inhospitable hosts make home seem more as exile than the affirmation of the migrant imagination. By the end of their journey they are left with no alternative other than a permanent stay in exile since life in Greece is negated and Albania is the vestige of deprivation (according to the descriptions of the havoc brought on in Albania after Hoxha's death, in the opening voice over).

While in *Hostage* the binary home/exile is more clear and imprinted in the trajectory, in *From the Snow*, exile and home are enmeshed and additionally inscribed in a layered fashion. Albania is home for Elion, even though he is an outcast of Albanian society. For the Greek migrants however, Greece is not regarded as home but as exile. We can thus reveal one the major achievements of Goritsas as he manages to establish a

layered and challenging representation of exile, not without certain setbacks however. The dominance of claustrophobia through the migrants' trajectory transforms the homeland into exile which is however what is awaiting them back in Albania where the Greek community is "heartsick" and longing to "sing our songs and dance our dances" (apparently on Greek soil). Upon departure then, the migrants are dwellers on the threshold of Greece and Albania, fixed within the interstices of the two countries, between the national and the transnational. This understanding of home and fatherland is the foundation upon which the migrants are distinguished as border subjects. This encompassing impression of exile echoes the heartfelt meditations of Edward Said on the experience of exile: "exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience, It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home" (2001: 45).

In the final scene the camera pans out and reveals the inscription "Kakavia" (fig. 6.3). We thus know that Achilles and Nikos are waiting for a bus at the Albanian border. However, the last shot introduces a sense of ambiguity. A rear view shot of the pair through a window is followed by a shot of a bus entering the frame from the left corner while Achilles and Nikos are absent, no longer sitting on the bench in front of which the bus is now passing. There is no visible trace of either Achilles or Nikos through the windows of the bus as well as they may have embarked already (fig. 6.4).



Figure 6.3: At Kakavia



Figure 6.4: No sight of Achilles and Nikos on the bus

I argue therefore that they may have headed back to Greece instead of Albania, defying the adverse conditions. The film thus ends with the prospect of yet another arduous journey back to Greece (or maybe Australia?) and the possibility of Achilles achieving his initial goal but with great uncertainty. This is an open ending which brings to mind the concluding voice over of Jonas Mekas in his film *Reminiscences of a Return to Lithuania* (1972, cited in Naficy, 2001: 229 ): "The minute we left [Lithuania], we started going

home and we are still going home. I am still on my journey home". The journey of hope continues perpetually emphasizing the notion that migration, homecoming and exile are inscribed in each other and are signifiers of perpetual mobility across borders and canonical attributes of border subjects.

The end of the journey in *From the Snow* however brings us to a familiar problem, namely the marginality of Albania. On the one hand, in Albania, insurrection and financial instability leave no other alternative to the ethnic Greeks than to migrate in order to seek for work. By the end it is suggested that the fate of a social and political pariah are the only alternatives and that in Greece there is even the prospect of death. On the other hand, in Albania, Achilles and Thomas have a family and familial hearth. We assume so from the words of Achilles "to bring our folks from up there". In Albania, Argyro and her family celebrate the marriage of a close friend. They sing and dance to Greek folk songs. Arguably, the conditions in Albania are far more favourable than they are shown to be in Greece or at least we can assume so according to the given evidence. As in *Eternity and a Day*, Albania is obscured and is as well an obscure place per se that should be "emptied" by its population according to Achilles. Moreover, as Thomas says following rejection from the Greek home, in Albania "they called us Greeks and here they call us Albanians". In Albania, their original nationality is recognized. The migrants nevertheless persist with tooth and nail to make it in Greece (where they are referred to as "Albanians") despite the adverse conditions, implying thus that returning to Albania would be a sign of failure and defeat.

The migrants are therefore at home only when they "dance our songs...Greek songs" as Argyro writes, supporting thus the argument that the flows of Ethnic Greeks to Greece were spurred by nationalism which goes unquestioned. While she writes to Thomas that she wanted him to be dancing next to her, for him it is more important to stay in Greece even if that means risking death. This affirms the sombre words of Alexander which he utters to his dying mother in *Eternity and a Day*: "Why did I live my life in exile? Why did I feel that I am coming back home only when I spoke my own language? My language". In other words, home is where the fatherland is and where one speaks his language - ultimately this is where one aims to return to at the end of the homecoming journey. The possessive pronoun is surely one approach to asserting this notion and, ultimately, national identity and belonging. One articulates national identity, and, in this case, culture and language, in exclusive terms, exclusivity being the rubric of all things national and the definition of belonging since belonging can be articulated only in these

particular terms. The unfortunate implication of this is that the language, songs and more are only ours. In other words, it is not the language, song and dance of Albanian "others".

This brings to mind the actual racist debate that Albanian pupils, despite their excellence in schools, are not allowed to raise the Greek flag in national commemoration parades, since, in any case, it is our flag, celebration and country. Interestingly, the article, written by Rodanthe Tzaneli (2006: 27-49) and which exposes and reflects on the actual events, the debate between the media, Greek parents of pupils, the administration and the family of the Albanian boy, is entitled "not *my* flag! Citizenship and nationhood in the margins of Europe". Tzaneli exposes the deeper implications and mechanisms of Greek identity, summed up in this very title. This is the underlying issue of hospitality, in terms of belonging and citizenship which is linked to the populist slogan "you will never become Greek, you bloody Albanian" ("den tha gineis Ellinas pote Alvane") for to "become" Greek, with all the obvious pitfalls of "becoming", means to share all things Greek. Calotychos comments on this in his brief examination of *From the Snow*: "[...] the question remains as to what makes someone *our own people*? The concept, as the troubling possessive pronoun indicates, relies heavily on a prenationalist localism built on possession and inclusion, dispossession and exclusion" (2013: 167). The film thus reinforces the discourse of repatriation with ethnic Greeks perceived according to the exclusivity of national identity and culture, while excluding all other immigrants from Albania - mainly Albanians. This is how the constitutive "other" figures in the strengthening of national consciousness.

The engendered conceptualization of the homeland as the mother, to which the migrant longs to return, is rather formulaic. In any case, even if the mother is physically present, ultimately she assumes the abstract role of a national floating signifier, the definitive manifestation of the nation to which the migrants must return because a man cannot live separated from his mother. This is implied in the films and particularly in *Eternity and a Day*. In one of Angelopoulos' typical sequence shots which "flow" seamlessly from one time zone to another, Alexander "introduces" the boy to Solomos, another exiled man who yearns for home when he receives news of his compatriots uprising against their Ottoman oppressors in the nineteenth century. "Inside he felt his lost country, the years of his childhood on the island, his mother's figure who still lived in Greece. He had no peace anymore. He walked and was delirious. Every night, he dreamt of his mother, in her bridal dress, summoning him".

Interestingly, all the migrants in the film are longing for or longed for by their mother but the boy (Nikos as well) does not long for his mother or his home. He is indeed the wretched of the earth, homeless in every sense, and thus he is not returning to the eternal mother - the nation. He embarks on perpetual journeys instead of arriving somewhere or actually ending his long journey. Yet I argue that this signifies again a case of unjust representation for surely this migrant has a history, a mother and a home even if his material home, the house, is gone in the turmoil of insurrection. In the finale, he owns more dimensions of exclusion.

Moreover, it is rather unfortunate that Alexander, Solomos, the boy and the other children are all equated, in other words, they are all exiles in one way or another. Clearly, each exile's status is different in terms of class while ultimately they both arrive to a home, even if that is not the actual homeland where the mother awaits but where there is a form of hospitality. In addition, Solomos and Alexander are both poets and Greeks before being exiles, while the boy, more than a Northern Epirote, a child or survivor (to mention some of his attributes) is a border subject and a signifier of otherness. This is his heading. Exile and the boy's journey to an unknown destination that is terrifying and obscure is equated with the existential journey of Alexander to "the other side". To be an exile away from home and without national identity is to die, a notion which is I argue exaggerated particularly when identity is persistently under erasure and cosmopolitanism increasingly becomes the rubric of a growing number of peoples, not only exiles, suggesting the notion of a citizen of the world who is always at home but not necessarily at the homeland.

It is an unfortunate setback that Angelopoulos and Goritsas adopt cliché notions that can be linked to cultural nationalism and associate home only with national identity and national culture (i.e. songs and dance) particularly as thousands of Albanian migrants found a home eventually in Greece, beyond their homeland, where second and third generation Albanians live. In addition, the abstract presence of Argyro in Albania suggests an engendered division of the two countries. Albania is the motherland while Greece is the fatherland, the more superior and dominant pole of the binary from where national consciousness and identity initially derive according to the primordial model. In this way, Albania is established not merely as obscure but not even as a home or homeland. It is implied that to not arrive at the homeland means homelessness which again underlines the problematic conceptualization of Albania and Northern Epirus as no man's land. In both films moreover separation and the scattered and "broken" signifiers of the Greek nation are



dominant themes revealing that the films to some degree develop a nation building argument.

This is an unfortunate setback moreover since Northern Epirotes own a vibrant individual culture which displays the fusion of Greek, Albanian, Muslim and Orthodox cultures, languages, dialects and traditions - a melting pot of culture and history. The culture of Northern Epirus is articulated by the little boy whose verses from traditional songs of the region, practised by few old village women in the boy's village, are the fragments of the unfinished poem of Solomos which Alexander seeks in vain to complete. So, while Angelopoulos attributes great significance to the culture of Northern Epirus, the question begs the answer, why the border to Northern Epirus and the region itself are painted in such bleak and austere undertones? The place itself is thought of as terrifying and obscure, from which the boy seeks to flee rather than to return. In any case, both films affirm eurocentrism (and Grecocentrism) and that Albania is peripheral.

We can therefore conclude that in *From the Snow* Goritsas is preoccupied with displaying how the Greek nation marginalized its own people, pontificating further the notion that Greece has suffered from fraternal separation. In this respect, the film fails to deliver a radical language of belonging.

At the end of his journey, the boy embarks on a new journey to "all those ports, Marseilles or Naples, of this vast world". Before the new journey, we follow the pair as they get into a bus which takes them on a symbolic ride loaded with the imagery that is typical of Angelopoulos' oeuvre. During the bus ride, the port of Thessaloniki becomes visible and the boy gazes at a ferry boat arriving (fig. 6.5). He reacts with enthusiasm and great anticipation. The camera moves towards the window and a close-up reveals the ferry boat, illuminated by decorating lights, in fast motion, the moonlight reflected on the sea. Indeed, a beautiful image, this is not merely a ferry boat but a symbol of wanderlust and flight manifested in reality as though echoing the migrant imagination. The soundtrack, a recurring waltz, introduces a sensation of melancholy and longing which can be associated with the romantic image of the boat suggesting that it is time for another departure and parting of ways.

Yet, the ferry boat that the boy gazes at with anticipation will transform into a vast cargo ship that resembles a biblical beast. The boy's final departure is shown in a sequence shot. Alexander and the boy arrive in the former's car, at the docks. As the car slowly comes to a halt, the camera pans horizontally while a van enters from the right corner of

the frame. Six children jump out of the van, driven by two obscure men, possibly traffickers who are ubiquitous and present at the focal points of the journeys of migrant children. Another large male figure, obscured by the darkness, connoting a sense of dread, waits at a lorry that is parked next to the van. The children jump into the dark abyss of the lorry. They are the cargo. The last child looks towards the car and signals to the boy to join them, as the camera pans to the left corner where the car comes to a stop in a close up.

The boy says goodbye to Alexander and runs to his friends. A long static shot that lasts one and half minute, displays the slow departure of the cargo ship *Makedonia II*. The last vehicle to enter before the gate closes is the lorry carrying the human cargo. At this point we are denied of any glimpse into the vast vehicle. The image that Angelopoulos simultaneously constructs and denies us is staggering. The children are locked up in a dark lorry which is additionally locked up in the "bowels" of a vast ship (fig. 6.6). The obscurity that imbues this scene introduces a sense of dread as it is assumed that the children are consumed within this maze of confinement and ultimately in the "bowels" of globalization and its apparatus. The ship is shown from a low angle seemingly taller and bulkier than normal. Moreover, one can argue that this is a ghost ship or that it has a life of its own, devouring the human cargo, as the deck is devoid of any human presence.



Figure 6.5: The melancholic image of a luminous ship



Figure 6.6: Inserted in the mouth of the beast ship

Greek films, particularly those of the Old Greek Cinema which often depict ships are preoccupied with tourist liners full of passengers off to an island of the Aegean for holidays and a great escape. Shots of the deck and of the port from the point of view of a passenger are common, waving goodbye to friends and family on the port. Melancholy is then replaced with the anticipation of travel and with the pleasures of mobility and the scopophilic tourist gaze. In this case though, the shot de privileges us of such a sensation. Alienation and terror underline the overall dread that the scene bears, as silence prevails. The lorry drives slowly into the hull of the ship, moving downhill and disappearing as the gate rises and is sealed. It seems as though it is being literally swallowed as the gate

gradually closes, like the mouth of the whale. In the course of the shot, all we hear, instead of the cheering of people exclaiming farewell, are the sounds of metal clanging, of rusty hinges and winches turning, the sound of the water stirred by the ship's propeller and finally the sound of the whistle echoing. The multitude of sounds is overwhelming and underlines the uncanniness indicated by the mechanical sounds and the non presence of man. The sounds create the impression that the ship is a behemoth devouring everything in its presence. It slowly leaves the port. The obscurity of migrant and refugee children, trapped forever in the gears of capitalism and globalization, their vehicles and representatives (traffickers), is subtly showcased as claustrophobia prevails over wanderlust. At the end of this journey, they may very well never reach the ports of Marseilles or Naples as mobility is never theirs to define. The boy's journey thus ends in obscurity and arguably on a pessimistic note.

The clinical portrayal of trafficking is poignant and highlights an issue that this thesis aims to as well - a crisis in the heart of Greece and Europe in the turn of the century. A crisis in culture, identity and the values associated with them; a crisis of globalization, capitalism, xenophobia and nationalism. Moreover, this is a crisis of discourse, as Angelopoulos emphasizes and articulates through his plea for "new ways of speech". This in turn brings me to the issue at hand, which emerges through the problematic representation of the boy as I have discussed.

Angelopoulos' portrayal of the journey's end signifies a double edged knife. It is a fact that children are smuggled across Europe and "digested by the national and European body" in "the bowels of the European city" (Loshitzky, 2010: 31). Yet, I argue that the problem of representation here lies in this very issue since the boy does actually leave from Greece and is out of sight and thus out of mind. The immediate aim of the apparatus and discourses that Angelopoulos rebukes is that the "other" will be either assimilated or "digested" as Loshitzky discusses. The boy is gone and thus Greece is "clean" of another stranger. Additionally, Alexander is ready for his journey, thanks to the boy. He has acquired from him the pathos of the more experienced dweller. He consequently has no more use of the boy who is now free to depart, or simply to be discarded since he served his purpose.

At the end of the film it is "too late" to turn back from the fate that has been bestowed upon them. The boy says this in the car: "argadini. It means very late" to which Alexander replies "very late. Very late in the night". Alexander, having realized the futility of his efforts, refrains from taking the boy back home again. Yet he will leave him in the

hands of smugglers who are surely no different in their intentions from those from whom he earlier saved him. And even though he claims that it is "too late in the night", I argue that it is never too late to offer hospitality, especially from a celebrated (once) bourgeois poet.

Cinema and representation require a radical language, one which can challenge dominant discourses and the apparatuses that encourage them. In order to do so, the crossing of borders should be followed by hospitality and the more metaphorical crossing of borders so that the "other" is more than merely a passive border subject perpetually locked in the stiff gears of European policy which he or she are inherently unable to overcome. We need a new representation in order to establish the grounds for new discussions and discourses for, before nations and states can implement hospitality, we need to imagine and discuss this, something that cinema is capable of achieving.

In *Hostage*, Elion begins and ends his journey as a border subject and moreover dies as one. The contradiction of the enclosed space versus the open is quite apparent as mother and son, and by extension the Albanian man and nation, are permanently disconnected (fig. 6.7). Her monologue, words of love and pain, go on deaf ears as Elion is asleep. This highlights the separation between them which prevails even when they are so close. The line separating them at this point is as thin as it is strong similarly to earlier scenes where Elion stands at the open door facing the outdoors yet incapable of escaping the claustrophobic interior which is his safe haven and grave simultaneously (fig. 6.8). By bringing mother and son closer, effectively, Giannaris establishes further their separation and its heavy toll. The bus is an integral piece of the *mise en scène* and contributes to the development of the plot and becomes the vehicle of the film's plea for tolerance.



Figure 6.7: So close yet so far



Figure 6.8: No escape even at an open door

The tragic ending to Elion's trajectory can be assessed as a form of embodied protest, articulated by Giannaris and adding to Naficy's argument that, "claustrophobia and temporality [embody] the exile's protest against the hostile social conditions in which they find themselves" and to the duplicitous role of the transient space in which Elion is

trapped: "while acting as safe havens, these very critical structures of protest can become potential traps" (2001: 188). This is indeed an embodied protest, since Elion displays his visible scars (fig. 6.9) from torture to the nationalist junkie: "you do not do this to a man" says Elion with a stuttering voice. Giannaris utilizes the Albanian body (although the actor is not Albanian) as a "canvas" on which he illustrates his call for tolerance. Despite this obvious protest, Elion is outcast from Fortress Europe. He has served his purpose as a canvas and therefore can be disposed of.

At the end of the journey, it is implied that what happens in Albania, or, otherwise, beyond the Greek border, stays there. The setting is obscure, covered by mist and surrounded by a deep valley. The actual killing of Flamur Pislis happened in Elbasan, a town near Tirana. It is evident that, for the sake of epic grandeur, Giannaris chose a setting that conveys an obscure and sinister sensation which is reinforced by the equally sinister soundtrack that resonates from the moment the bus crosses to Albania. The impact of this scene is indeed a form of protest. Yet this is hindered by the location and it is thus implied that Elion's death is even more a result of the relentless attitude of the Albanian police who "first shoot and then ask questions". The latter was the description of the Albanian police chief for the Greek police forces who are notorious for their brute force against migrants. Elion is killed not as a result of his oppression in Greece but as a result of Albanian police brutality. Earlier, when he makes his intentions clear towards all his hostages, one of the older women tells him "go do this in your own country. Here we do not accept this" implying that in Albania, barbaric behaviour is acceptable. This is reinforced by the questions of the negotiating reporter on the phone with Elion: "is that what you do where you come from? [...] and where is it you come from?" "Tirana". "Where?" "Albania" answers Elion to which the reporter replies sarcastically "of course". Despite the obvious racist connotations and the ignorance and bias of Greeks regarding Albania, paradoxically, at the end of the journey, this violence is affirmed as trademark Albanian answering thus the question of the reporter "is that what you do where you come from?"

At the end of the three films, audiences experience potentially a sense of security, as the "other" has served the purpose of revealing the consequences of xenophobia. A valuable lesson is conveyed on the deficit of our humanity but, all the same, the status quo is not unsettled since we feel secure within our national identity and the defence mechanisms of Fortress Europe have served their purposes and the border subject is ultimately such per se maintaining the "us" and "them" binary and the superiority of the former. This brings me to what Ross Forman suggests, as Loshitzky quotes:

Films dealing with the concept of Fortress Europe - even when they are sympathetic to immigrants and the hardships they endure upon arrival in Europe, nearly always prefigured as a kind of Promised land - primarily come from the perspective of the European. As such they often replicate a colonizer-colonized paradigm, through which the former is empowered to represent and to speak for the latter (2010: 72).

This is the major problem of all the films discussed here and of transnational European cinema overall. This deficit is apparent even more in the film of Angelopoulos. Angelopoulos suggests indirectly that "we need new ways of speech", in other words a new master narrative. He implies that to do so we need to include difference. The problem is that, in media representations, this should not be implemented by "us" but by the "other" per se for the European eye is ultimately biased and moreover relying too often on binaries that are inherently hierarchical. It is no surprise therefore that films on migration to Fortress Europe, serve as morality tales. The "other", at the end of his journey, is *persona non grata*. The unwanted neighbour is gone and therefore Angelopoulos fails to fully establish this new language, for the sake of lamenting over its loss and the defeat of grand ideologies suggesting indirectly that the deficit of postmodernity is the impossibility of establishing inclusive ways of speech. The morality tale dictates a valuable lesson and highlights, in *Eternity and a Day* and *Hostage*, the otherness of Greeks as central while in *From the Snow*, by portraying the plight of Northern Epirotes, Goritsas establishes Greco-centrism.

Eurocentrism furthermore only manages to weaken the potential of the films to unsettle dominant discourses and binaries. The films essentially enhance the discourse of multiculturalism which is embedded in Eurocentrism and the dictum of colonialism (the diversity of nations under the title "Europe"). Accordingly, difference is showcased and affirmed and the national is thus problematized but always within the material and abstract boundaries of Europe which place Europe and European culture as central.

This is achieved in European coproductions not only via the text per se but also in terms of production. The films are European coproductions funded by the most immediate funding body of European cinephilia and the European art film subsidizer par excellence, the Eurimages foundation. One may easily assume that European coproduction places certain demands on filmmakers in the same manner that a national circuit does - filmmakers must affirm the centrality of Europe, on the expense of its various "others".

Interestingly, European coproduction policy<sup>85</sup> has the identical demands that the GFC displays in its own policy. While the restrictions are not on the content of films produced per se, they are so on the production line<sup>86</sup>. This political choice is embedded in European cinema which is why the films discussed here are celebrated by critics and European festivals; they highlight migration and multiculturalism and the most immediate problems of and in Europe linked to the latter themes, while still affirming central European values.



Figure 6.9: Embodied protest

The praise given to Giannaris for *Hostage* and the declarations of the LUX award, the most recent initiative for the support and circulation of European cinema, expose in addition the power of European ideologies to limit the potentials of an inclusive cinema. European multiculturalism is considered as a European product and a sign of the more superior European culture. In other words, par excellence European. European cinema has increasingly become associated with representations of multiculturalism and migration and of the overall shifting image of Europe as a global metropolis. After scrutinizing the policy of the LUX initiative, it becomes obvious that the overriding conceptualization of European identity is embedded in contemporary European cinema: European identity is the

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<sup>85</sup>[www.coe.int/t/dg4/eurimages/Support/SupportCoprod\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/eurimages/Support/SupportCoprod_en.asp)

<sup>86</sup>"Eurimages support aims to promote European co-productions. Therefore, all projects submitted must have at least two co-producers from different member states of the Fund. For multilateral co-productions the participation of the majority co-producer must not exceed 70% of the total co-production budget and the participation of the minority co-producers must not be lower than 10%. For bilateral co-productions the participation of the majority co-producer must not exceed 80% of the total co-production budget and the participation of the minority co-producer must not be lower than 20%. For bilateral co-productions with a budget above €5 million, a majority participation of 90% of the total co-production budget is allowed".

sum of its various diverse identities, nations and cultures. They do not challenge Eurocentrism because European cinema is concerned above all with Europe per se. Calotychos evokes this problem:

The term 'European cinema' itself refers to an ambiguous set of cinematic practices. It posits an ideal type for 'Europe' that makes all else seem otherly while vindicating for itself a universality that it can never live up to [...]. At times, too, the larger ideological goal of political convergence within the EU drives policy and funding. International coproduction influences cultural, and here cinematic production, at a moment of sensitivity to globalization and affects the transnational spaces in film (2013: 162).

To unsettle the dominant discourses, we need to shift our attention from the notion of embodied protest and the label of border subject. Labels and classifications are questionable and very often require that a film is made up entirely of the features of a given category. Let us recall Naficy and the way he classifies claustrophobia and border effect amongst border subjects according to existing diagnoses of hysteria and eating disorders in women. A medical and particularly a psychiatric diagnosis is often fraught with contradictions and with a very negative output on the patient. A diagnosis is a double edged knife: on the one hand it opens the way to treatment but very often it is the source of an individual's emotional and physical predicament, since a medical index predicts indeed the application of a certain "treatment" which often leads to numerous other complications, particularly for sufferers of eating disorders who adopt "disordered" eating behaviours fulfilling the expectations of their diagnosis. In other words, if one is diagnosed with an eating disorder, then (s)he must conform to the anticipated behaviour, fulfilling the expectations of the diagnosis. In this case, the very notion of "disordered" behaviour carries numerous implications which inevitably bring social stigma, transforming the sufferer into a marginal figure, different and "other" implying that healthy individuals are ordered.

Interestingly, Naficy and Kapllani allude to psychiatric diagnoses and language ("eating disorders", "overcompensation" and "syndrome" respectively) which brings great bias, contradicting their good intentions and favourable understanding of border subjects. Instead of allowing scholars to perceive and assess portrayals of border subjects without the social stigma of racism and xenophobia, inclusively, they only fortify the borders of the margins that transform migrants into marginal figures. Naficy predominantly creates a very exclusive and one sided understanding that is implied further by his very androcentric



description of psychiatric illness. This alone is a sign of bias. The issue underlines the argument that a more fluid and inclusive framework is necessary, which allows us to assess representations of border subjects without the social and political bias that artistic classification, medical terms, and existing bibliography implicitly contain. One must be very critical to classifications and in particular when reframing film genre in regard to the particular labels used in medicine which very often place a political roof over patients transforming them into border subjects<sup>87</sup> that require "special" treatment. This would mean that film discourse requires a more hybrid definition of cinematic migrants who occupy borders and the margins of host nations. The representation of border subjects, according to the Greek films, and the conceptualization of Naficy, merely state the obvious without unsettling the discourses to which the filmmakers protest. To understand this issue, I will examine the brief appearance of Buyar Alimani in *correction*.

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<sup>87</sup>The term here being more broad in order to capture an overall bordered and marginal life that is characteristic of how sufferers of psychiatric illness live.

## 6.1 Albanians without borders: *correction*

Alimani is an Albanian filmmaker living in Greece since 1996. His career in film began as an apprentice on the set of *See You*. By employing amateur Albanian actors, actual migrants living in the streets of Athens, the directors introduced a sense of the social and political reality of the mid 1990s, alerting the Greek audiences to the presence of the "other". The same outcome is implemented in *correction* where Alimani and his daughter Sandra have prominent roles.

The protagonist, Yorgos Simeoforides, seeks for work in the kebab tavern of Panayotis, an Albanian man played by Alimani. Panayotis used to work there as a waiter for a Greek boss. In his discussion with the newly employed Yorgos, Panayotis expresses his appreciation for him since he "does not fear the work" and does as he is told. Earlier, when asked about his qualifications, Yorgos tells his employer that he "will do whatever they tell him to do" revealing his desperation but also humility in the presence of Panayotis adhering at the same time to the stereotype of the "good" Albanian. The ball however has been thrown into Greek territory.

Panayotis used to live as a border subject, homeless and making meagre wages working for the dogsbody generation. Nevertheless, contrary to the image obtained from the films discussed earlier, Panayotis did not become submissive, either in desperation or protest nor was he forced to consider the futility of his efforts, remaining a border subject. According to Panayotis, "if the boss asked for one thing, I would ask for two. He asked then for two and I for ten. Eventually, I bought the shop. Do you know who works in this country? Albanians. And it is the Albanians who have children in this country and it is the Albanians who will save this country".

The Greek man is now the low employee, doing all the work in the restaurant, without expressing demands to his Albanian employer who seems immersed in the pleasures of leisure and servitude. Before this however, Panayotis did not remain a passive border subject. The director articulates a story that highlights the aptitude and strength of a migrant who can succeed, instead of resolving to the painless alternative - a story of (embodied) protest. Panayotis's tale of life in the margins concerns himself and not the Greek people and their ethos. His monologue to Yorgos is indicative of the tenacity and capability of Albanian migrants to be more than border subjects, regardless of their ethnicity or of Greek xenophobia. As an individual Panayotis is capable of this.

The same rhetoric is articulated by Elion in his confrontation with the nationalist junky in the bus: "I did every job there was. We do jobs you wouldn't touch. The foreigners do all the work and you treat them like animals". During the fiery exchange, Elion bears a grenade and his Kalashnikov. Yet he seems powerless when confronted with the racism and nationalism of the junky, showing to him his scars from the torture he suffered in detention and articulating the horror of being locked up and tortured. In any case, Elion is a protesting "good" Albanian and apparently not a criminal. Panayotis however, having suffered as well, is represented as an Albanian man who has shifted from the margins and has obtained his rightful position in Greece without affirming any racist stereotype (as though an Albanian migrant can only be "good" or "bad" and "do all the work"). Elion's wretchedness becomes his master narrative and, therefore, while indeed attacking nationalism and xenophobia, Giannaris affirms the racist stereotype of the "good" Albanian, in his struggle to negate the stereotype of the "bad" Albanian: Elion is not a "true" criminal but a victim of the Greek ethos. He thus is a wretched creature, whom "everybody in the village loved". While he loathes this fact and the Greek ethos, he nevertheless fulfils the qualifications of a "good" Albanian fulfilling also his part in the morality tale at the heart of *Hostage*. Of course, in *correction*, this one sided representation of reality applies as well but in reverse; Yorgos is a "good" Greek and Panayotis is the boss - although not a "bad" xenophobic Albanian. Hierarchy still persists but nevertheless with a degree of inclusiveness.

Moreover, *correction* adheres to the dictum of postcolonial cinema. Alimani left for Greece at the age of 22, in 1996. His passage to Greece is described as "novel" (Georgakopoulou, 2006). He experienced "the hell of being an [undocumented] immigrant" as Alimani mentions in an interview (ibid.). He crossed the mountains to Ioannina, near the Albanian border. From there he walked for eight days to Agrinio, making it finally to the neighbourhood of Korydallos in Athens. In Albania he was a graduate of a fine arts school but in Athens he had to live through great hardship (Theodorakis, 2011). Homeless, sleeping on a bench at the Piraeus train station, he sought for all types of work, from waiter to the notorious construction site, uninsured and in a hazardous environment (Georgakopoulou, 2006). He loathed the "Greek man's racism" (ibid.) but never allowed himself "to feel as a victim or a hero" for enduring this (ibid.). After four years of drifting as a border subject in Athens, he became the janitor in the popular theatre venue "Chora" where he still works with his wife.

After *See You*, he embarked on his own career as an independent filmmaker, creating three short films before reaching his creative climax with *Amnesty* (2011) which was awarded at the Berlin Film Festival and made it to the list of potential titles for the Academy Award for best foreign film. His short film *Ygraerio/Gas* (2006) was nominated at the Drama Film Festival for best film in the category "films about immigrants" (Georgakopoulou, 2006) a label which assumes that an immigrant expresses himself as such but not as an independent and inventive filmmaker.

The latter also reminds us of the permanence of labels that stem from binary essentialisms: indigenous/foreign, Greek/other. The latter as well exclude the possibility of former border subjects to express themselves as anything but that and even more as native Greeks. As Bergfelder argues, diasporic directors, like Alimani and Fatih Akin attract critical praise and festival honours when their films portray Europe's "others" rather than an indigenous iconography and theme, exposing thus a tendency of critics and festivals to compartmentalize diasporic/migrant/postcolonial cinema (2012: 72). Alimani is clear on this issue: "I wished to be preoccupied with matters in Greece as an equal. I wanted to escape from the margins in my profession as well and I do not seek for the title of the director of immigration in Greece" (Georgakopoulou, 2006) which is what Alimani has accomplished with *Amnesty* and his growing international appeal at European festivals.

Alimani's trajectory underscores that of Panayotis. Anastopoulos introduces a layered representation of an Albanian immigrant, albeit brief, creating a background which is close to that of the actual actor. Both actor and impersonated Albanian migrant are the same person and came to Greece as border subjects but managed to shift from the margins not thanks to the hospitality of Greece or mere chance, but their own ingenuity and tenacity. While these traits are integral elements of the migrants' personalities, in the other films they are not utilized consistently. The migrants are thus passive and incapable of using their strengths in order to dispose of the label. By remaining marginal, they are "good" Albanians.

The layered representation of Panayotis is not necessarily the single formula of a "correct" representation, nor does it prove that the aforementioned are bad or wrong for they all share certain truths and they aim at devaluing xenophobic discourses which to some degree they accomplish. Nevertheless, I argue that Alimani's presence in *correction* reinforces a holistic representation. The migrant is an elusive and competent individual, with aptitude and ingenuity. His journey of hope does not bring riches, but surely a home and a sense of gratification and achievement - a humble and contented ending. We can thus

begin to (re)imagine the migrant from Albania as multifaceted, not necessarily as a canvas of Greek xenophobia and a body of protest. He has his own story to share and very often does not give in to the label of border subject. Moreover, casting Albanian actors in the role of the migrant strengthens the statement of filmmakers since the actors can imbue their characters with their own story. This corresponds to the notion of a "cinema of duty" (Malik, 1996): "the practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write - the positions of *enunciation*" (Hall, 1990: 222). In this case, this requires that we refrain from celebrating as purely innovative a national cinema which speaks of "us" in the name of the "other".

## 6.2 Afterword

### **Crime and redemption: reconfiguring the Greek-Albanian border in *Eduart***

I began my entire discussion on border subjects by addressing border syndrome, an overall debate on borders, the actual Greek-Albanian border and its criminalization. Subsequently, I focused on three films in which the portrayal of the border and border subjects raise many questions. Concluding, it is appropriate that this discussion returns to the actual border and in particular to the Balkans.

This is where the journey of *Eduart* ends and another begins, between Greece and Albania. Only his journey is not one of migration. His is one of self discovery. Often associated with road movies, the open road and its seemingly endless horizon becomes a symbol of the infinite potentials of a life of freedom which often paves the way to the individual's transformation (Eleftheriotis, 2010: 99-119) as that of Eduart. In *Eduart*, the exterior natural and urban spaces of migration are sinister and linked to Greek and Albanian nationalisms. However, the interior spaces of the infirmary in the Albanian prison foster Eduart's redemption which is completed on the border where the film ends bringing to mind a Bresson-inspired narrative akin to his *Un condamné à mort s'est échappé ou Le vent souffle où il veut/A Man Escaped* (1956). Redemption becomes an overarching theme with numerous implications for Greek-Albanian relations, Albania's future and overall Balkan affairs. The film is based on a true story. The latter reinforces the true potentials of Greek-Albanian relations over a fictitious narrative and, by extension, the "Balkan Prospect" (Calotychos, 2013). At the end of the journey, we are given the opportunity to re imagine the border and redeem it from its loaded discourses.

Firstly, we return to the Balkans, its contemporary turbulent history and the consequences of years of social and political shifts in the region. *Eduart* is the first and till now only Greek film to depict the notorious events of 1997 which led to the descent of thousands of Albanians and of an arms trade that became the *casus belli* between the two countries. The events are represented in Albania, although filming took place in a prison in Skopje, Macedonia. Eduart is locked up while in the streets of Albania insurrection is imminent as the corrupt state of Berisha brought the economy to its knees in a short time and the people turned against him in a violent upheaval. Hundreds of armed insurgents from the northern villages, descended to the south, looting prisons, freeing convicted criminals and recruiting many of them.

This is a pivotal moment in the history of Greek cinema as Antoniou portrays a critical line of events in the history of Albania and the Balkans which Greece has been seeking to be disassociated with since it is linked with Balkan communism which has been considered a threat for Europe since the fall of the "Iron Curtain". Moreover, this is the period in which the image of the Albanian migrant as a criminal became a dominant trope according to Christina Konstantinidou (2001: 108). The Kalashnikov gun was as well associated with Albanians, an issue that is exposed in *Hostage*.

In the final scenes of *Eduart*, TV screens show footage of havoc in the streets. We move from the office of the guards to Eduart's cell and then to the prison gates where armed insurgents demand free pass implying that indeed this turmoil was at "our" front gate<sup>88</sup>, an issue that Greece was reluctant to consider as such. Eduart escapes from prison with the doctor, who, after getting shot, dies in Eduart's arms. Earlier, the dying doctor tells Eduart the story of Faust and how he "sold his soul to the devil" by killing another man. When he regrets it, he realizes it is too late. Eduart reflects on this and realizes that it is not too late for himself to save his soul. The final flashback of the film reveals how Eduart killed a man in Greece. By displaying the murder scene strategically at the end of the journey, following a chain of events that led to this moment in his journey, Antoniou redeems Eduart.

For redemption to be completed Eduart must now endure another Golgotha and cross again through the snow covered mountains to Greece and surrender. At the Greek border, armed soldiers shout to Eduart to stop as he keeps treading through the snow seemingly in a trance. Eduart collapses face down in the snow. The soldiers try to revive him by helping him drink a sip of brandy (fig. 6.2.1). The scene generates an interesting association. Upon crossing the border, the Greek soldiers try to revive the freezing Eduart and tell him that the brandy will "make [him] feel better". Eduart then tells them that he killed a man in Athens and came to surrender. This scene allows us to reestablish the Greek-Albanian binary as both sides approach each other with a kind demeanor, honesty and a sense of rapprochement. The next scene shows Natasha standing under the old almond tree which has now begun to blossom - a metaphor for Eduart's redemption and arguably for the redemption of the border (fig. 6.2.2). A rekindling of Greek-Albanian affairs is implied, based on forgiveness and rapprochement.

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<sup>88</sup>Not literally the front gate of Greece but one of the front gates of the Balkans leading to Greece.

*Eduart* allows us to imagine anew the Greek-Albanian border, redeemed from discourses of hatred, which are inextricably linked to the real events depicted earlier. Interestingly, Antoniou proceeds from a national narrative to a transnational at the meeting point of two rival nations, essentially at the border: Eduart's trajectory of redemption traces the changes in Albania at the time and the turmoil in his soul reflects the turmoil in an entire country in the course of a grand transformation. This country however is Albania, not Greece.



Figure 6.2.1: Border patrol reviving Eduart



Figure 6.2.2: Redemption and bloom

What is interesting additionally is how on the one hand Antoniou puts forth a representation of the actual Albanian criminals and weapon smugglers, but simultaneously redeems an Albanian man for his crime which does not make him a criminal per se suggesting that not all Albanians are criminals associated with the Albanian smuggling of Kalashnikovs to Greece by actual criminals. This is a significant fact since the racist stereotype is established on the premise of a sweeping statement which declares that all Albanians are criminals.

We see here the seeds of a transnational Greek cinema that adheres to any theorisation of transnational film scholarship. The film deals implicitly with nations in transition, at the very meeting point where exchange happens, where difference emerges and floats before becoming acknowledged, assimilated and dissolve. The film avoids pontificating entirely a national rhetoric and converges a European state territory with one of Europe's "others" not only establishing cultural exchange across many different, visible and invisible borders, but redeeming this exchange from totalities that, as I have discussed, transform cultural exchange between Europe, Greece, the Balkans and Turkey into an appeal to Europe's centrality. In other words, cultural exchange in Antoniou's film promotes an understanding of transnational cinema without negating the nation and at the same time without promoting the centrality of the nation.



*Eduart* thus exposes us to new territory and opens a new dialogue at the point where a stale dialogue has been ongoing for decades reinforcing entrenchment instead of inclusiveness. While Antoniou does not propose a different entity other than the nation (after all this is a film predominantly about a nation) she leaves her audience at the in-between from where new rationales of human interaction can be established as the border in *Eduart* is tabula rasa, without Greece or Albania.

## Chapter 7

### The Albanian in the room

#### Assessing representations of hospitality

##### Introduction

In this chapter we redress the sudden predicament of the Greek nation, forced to host thousands of Albanian migrants in the early 1990s and the vast insecurity of Fortress Europe in the wake of what has been perceived as a foreign invasion that requires extreme defensive measures. These measures functioned in terms of conditional hospitality, which advocates a more hostile than hospitable welcome. Hospitality, beyond its practical aspect of providing shelter, is understood in terms of citizenship and in broader terms of belonging. Up to the present, citizenship laws in Greece are governed by stringent bureaucracy that reflects the overall xenophobic outlook of a nation that denies belonging by adopting a hateful approach to migrants in the streets, the workspace, the virtual media and domestic space.

Therefore, hospitality is understood as a matter of urgency given that, up to 2013, that saw the soaring popularity of Golden Dawn, extreme violence against immigrants has been the norm, performed with tolerance by the local community and state<sup>89</sup>. The films addressed so far showcase this and address hospitality anew. They are manifestations of paths not taken in contemporary Greek history and have received a hostile public response, while domestic scholarship has generated insufficient material, suggesting thus that it is of great urgency that we address the particular representations of hospitality.

In the early 1990s, European modernization dictated that the country "repositions and reforms itself in a new international environment, 'a new world order'" (Calotychos, 2013: 2) manifest in the thousands of Albanian migrants at the Greek threshold. The wave of Albanian migration "would demonstrate whether Greek society could reform itself and accommodate the changing populace or whether it would simply dig in its heels" (ibid.: 7). While Greece has been keen on European modernization for over half a century, compliance to the "new world order" has been a painful process that was put forward with

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<sup>89</sup><http://www.enetenglish.gr/?i=news.en.article&id=1840> last accessed 1 July 2014.  
<http://www.enetenglish.gr/?i=news.en.home&id=1889> last accessed 1 July 2014.  
<http://news.in.gr/greece/article/?aid=1231308414> last accessed 1 July 2014.  
<http://news.in.gr/greece/article/?aid=1231309291> last accessed 1 July 2014.  
*International Herald Tribune*, 18/11/2002; *European Commission against Racism and Intolerance*, Greek version (2012). Available at <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/greece/GRC-IFU-IV-2012-047-ENG.pdf> last accessed 1 July 2014.

great reluctance. Arguably, hospitality is still a test on the country's potential to become inclusive.

Greek hospitality to Albanian migrants and ethnic Greeks is the topic which I seek to assess through its representation in Greek cinema with the aim of underlining the particular films as a means of reimagining the Albanian "invasion" and the option of hospitality and inclusion. Concluding, through an examination of hospitality, we can see further arguments emerging on the potential of Greek cinema to challenge endemic racism.

The title of this chapter is a paraphrase of the popular saying "the elephant in the room", which suggests the presence of a certain insurmountable and obvious truth that goes unaddressed. By the 2000s, one in ten persons living in Greece was a foreign immigrant, the majority of which came from Balkan states and, almost exclusively, Albania (Calotychos, 2013: 8). The defensive measures implemented in the wake of the Albanian "invasion" were unprecedented and exposed a nation in utter terror of its Balkan neighbour. "The Albanian in the room" suggests that accommodation of the Albanian, both literally and metaphorically, is disturbing yet urgent. The disturbing truth is that Greece is faced with the deeper implications of globalisation and reform that blur the boundaries of national identity. Therefore, the title includes the presence of the insecure and ill-prepared Greek host. The interaction between guest and host in each film is suggestive of the state of affairs between Greeks and Albanians, during the time of each film's production, and of the potential of hospitality to Albanian migrants, its value and implications.

The title of this chapter implies the physical presence of Albanians in the Greek household, which serves as a reflection of the nation. In order to address the more broad themes that implicate the Greek nation, the filmmakers look at what happens in the home. By assessing the local, one can proceed to perceive the national, European and global. In other words, to address hospitality as a public response to Albanian migration, one needs to examine the particular and individual household and representations of hospitality, which comprise the imagined community. Our goal nevertheless is to question the nation and representations of hospitality.

My analysis is object based. Through a detailed textual analysis I examine how the filmmakers convey certain suggestions regarding the Greek-Albanian confrontation. While the focus is particularly on representations of hospitality, our final aim is at every instance to assess how the Albanian migrant is overall portrayed and how racist discourse is confronted. My study is chronological, from the early 1990s and the first wave of Albanian

migration in *From the Snow* and the second wave in *See You* from 1997 that saw great insurrection in Albania, to *correction* and *Plato's Academy*, both produced in the first decade of 2000 a period during which Albanian migration ceased. In the first two, the guest is mobile, following the trajectory of the journey of hope that leads to discoveries and eventually to disillusionment. Hospitality and the Greek household are but mere stations in the journey that is generally characterized by perpetual movement and exploration. The gaze of the migrant unravels the shifting sociocultural landscapes of Greece and Albania during European reform and after the fall of communism respectively and a dialectic exchange unfolds between the stranger and his new and shifting surroundings, suggestive of the current Greek-Albanian affairs.

In *correction* and *Plato's Academy*, the migrants are situated within the margins of European multiculturalism where difference is contained. In other words, they have been "ingested into the national body [and have ceased] to exist as strangers" (Loshitzky, 2010: 3). While the unwanted stranger is "ingested", there is still great fear at the thought of miscegenation and of a domestic invasion. This fear is apparent in *Plato's Academy* since the "good" Albanian obtains a legitimate excuse to "invade" a Greek home. The confrontation is thus inevitable. While the first two films are journeys of hope and the narrative unfolds from the migrants' position, *correction* and *Plato's Academy* expose more explicitly an indigenous perspective. This makes our focus on these films even more inquisitive. Ultimately, good intentions fall short and in certain cases reinforce racist discourses which figure primarily on the supposed superiority of the Greek host over the allegedly inferior guest. Media representations would function often on this binary portraying Greeks as gracious hosts and Albanians as ungrateful guests who murder and steal, validating police brutality and expulsions.

## 7.1 First encounters, first representations: *From the Snow*

Following a violent sweep operation, the migrant trio are thrown onto the street. A shaky handheld camera observes from a distance in a point of view shot as though someone is observing and preparing to give the final blow (fig. 7.1.1). The impression is sinister. The migrants are no longer hiding, but exposed to the public eye and to CCTV cameras, replaced by the cinematic apparatus. Here is thus a paradox in the discussion on hospitality: while hospitality does not advocate that migrants remain in the margins, visibility, which is required for hospitality, is linked to surveillance and the dispossession of privacy and thus to the persecution of migrants through a technological apparatus that is the product of ideologies of oppression. As Derrida argues, "the blessing of visibility and daylight is also what the police and politics demand" (2000: 57). In order to distinguish a parasite from a guest, one needs visibility and surveillance methods. The migrants are parasites as the sweep operation suggests. Seconds later, they come into the gaze of a Greek man, observing quietly at the unsettling events.

A close-up on the man reveals his curious and precarious stare. His facial expression seems to engross a sense of embarrassment as he looks down and back up at the half naked Thomas with an emotive appeal and an inviting gaze (fig. 7.1.2). A close-up on Thomas fetishizes his masculine features - dark skin and eyes, fit body, wet hair and mysterious gaze. He stares back at the man with a look that is anything but surprised. The scene carries many connotations and questions. Is this Greek man responsible for the sweep operation? It was not uncommon in residential neighbourhoods that citizens would alert the police at the presence of Albanians in the streets, often claiming that they are distributing drugs and stealing (Psimmenos, 2001: 146-154). Police would then perform a sweep operation. It may be the case that this man lured the migrants to the street, making it thus easier for him to "capture" them. Could he be a hustler seeking handsome young strangers who, being presumably desperate and homeless, will satisfy the host? The absence of dialogue, the darkness of the street, the urgency of the moment and the sudden mysterious exchange of looks generate suspense and trepidation. What other calamities await the migrants? Interestingly, what is missing from this scene is the invitation which leads to hospitality.

Cut to an establishing shot of the cramped interior of the Greek household, in a brightly lit kitchen where the migrants share a meal provided by the middle class Greek host (fig.7.1.3). The sudden shift of scenery generates a humorous effect. We surely did

not expect to see the migrants in an Athenian house without looking behind their backs especially after an outburst of violence and an unsettling exchange of silent looks.



Figure 7.1.1: A point of view shot of the panicked migrants



Figure 7.1.2: Emotive gaze

They eat in silence. The host stands behind Thomas, appearing to be monitoring his guests with anticipation. In the claustrophobic kitchen, the camera is poised behind Nikos demonstrating Achilles and Thomas seated and the host standing over them observing from a height (fig. 7.1.4). This is the only shot that explores the interior of the kitchen. Thomas gestures with his glass and the host offers him more water. From the establishing shot of the kitchen, we turn to a close-up of Thomas and Achilles at the table. Thomas takes his glass without uttering a word. Achilles bends down to pick up a piece of bread from the floor. The host's hand appears in the frame and quickly stops Achilles and hands him another piece. He literally grabs Achilles' hand and inserts in it the fresh slice. The scene is awkward. Is this kind of approach too close and inappropriate? The impression is arguably so, especially as Achilles seems confused gazing at Thomas, spaghetti hanging from his mouth. The feeling of awkwardness reaches a nearly comic impression. The host's gesture and overall stance is paternalistic, particularly since he is standing over Achilles, implying a superior hierarchy and a sense of subordination respectively. One can see this hierarchy practiced in the various aforementioned gestures. The anonymity of the host furthermore reinforces his allegorical function as master of the house, a stereotypical Greek middle class male and aspiring patron of migrants.

The environment becomes increasingly tense and awkward within the cramped-up space. The Greek house seems already as an uncomfortable prison-like interior rather than the breathing space of hospitality, welcoming and accommodating. This small and seemingly old kitchen is one of thousands of Athenian tenement flats. The interior encapsulates the sensation of a densely populated city, situated according to an anarchic urban planning scheme.

The impression of confinement and an awkward pairing is reinforced as the host begins to reveal his true colours in his phrase "it will not hurt you to say thank you". This is the first indication of conditional hospitality, in other words of expectations articulated by the host who however does not have the nerve to exert his power entirely. Nikos thanks the host who nevertheless seems incorrigible and frustrated. This is more of an uncomfortable coexistence since both sides are reluctant and defensive; it is yet another suggestion on the coexistence of indigenous Greeks and Northern Epirotes - uncomfortable, awkward and even tragically funny, judging by the host's childish behaviour.



Figure 7.1.3: Hospitality



Figure 7.1.4: The host supervises his guests

The host is increasingly eager for reciprocation from his guests as he points at each one: "So, did I get it right, Achilles, Nikos and Thomas? And which one of you is the leader?" Achilles looks at Thomas as though hoping for an answer while the host, left with no alternative than to sulk, answers back "not very talkative are we" and exits the room. Goritsas alludes to a stereotype of a pitiful Greek man who struggles in vain to assert his power onto the migrants but eventually resembles an awkward and incapable boss who is undeserving of any gratitude. He is a symbol of the average middle class Greek male of the 1990s, insecure, petty and aspiring, struggling in vain to feel superior - a satire of his gender and class.

We need to emphasize at this point the emergence of conditional hospitality, since the host not only asks for his guest's names but seeks for a confirmation. This is domestic surveillance and an awkward attempt at asserting hierarchy, since after all he does not share his own name. The host opens his door to the migrants but needs to be sure of whom he allows into his home and thus needs to monitor his guests. Derrida argues that asking one's name and family name is what binds the guest and what makes traditional hospitality possible "because hospitality [...] is not offered to an anonymous new arrival and someone

who has neither name nor patronym, nor family, nor social status [...]" (2000: 21-23). To offer however hospitality to an 'absolute other', someone without name or family name, is the first indication of unconditional hospitality which, according to Derrida's dictum, is hospitality without reciprocity and an oppressive ideology that binds the guest and which is the foundation of hostility within hospitality. The foreigner therefore "is someone with whom, to receive him, you begin by asking his name; you enjoin him to state and guarantee his identity, as you would a witness before a court. This is someone to whom you put a question and address a demand, the first demand, the minimal demand being: 'what is your name?'" (ibid.: 21-23) The Greek host has already acquired the names of the foreigners. Apparently, he needs a double confirmation, particularly as he can see that he does not receive gratitude in return. He needs to reinforce thus his sense of superiority.

In the following scene guests and host are seated in a living room watching TV (fig. 7.1.5). The host sits on an armchair while to his left, the migrants are seated on a sofa. Nikos sits between his surrogate parents, both of whom are too tall for the short and narrow sofa and low ceiling, the confined interior making them seem comically larger. The establishing shot of this surrogate family is arguably out of place, underlining an awkward coexistence but also the taboo notion of a queer surrogate family. While this impression is indeed suggestive of an unsettling coexistence with negative implications, Goritsas implies that indigenous and migrant populations cannot eventually coexist.

For their entertainment, the host is playing a video of a Bud Spencer and Terrence Hill Western. The guests laugh at the slapstick humour on screen. In yet another attempt to please his guests, and possibly oblige them, he tracks the film backwards to repeat the scene. They look back at him annoyed and confused, with awkward silence. Apparently irritated and incorrigible, the host shouts back "okay okay, ease up. I won't do it again". Arguably, he is entirely incapable of accommodating his guests who seem more self sufficient and at ease than him. In other words, the guests are more composed and "at home" within the host's sovereign space. He sits down and sighs loudly, gets up again and leaves the room in a restless mood. In the meantime, the migrants remain unsympathetic towards his words and gestures. The awkward sensation has given way to suspense as it is apparent by now that we are observing the perverse reversal of hospitality as the host transforms to hostage. This is not to suggest that indeed the migrants are violating the Greek household or being even remotely hostile. But they do not conform to the obvious expectations of the host which include an indication of servitude. Derrida exposes the underlying meaning of this argument: "I want to be master at home [...] to be able to



receive whomever I like there. Anyone who encroaches on my 'at home' [...], I start to regard as an undesirable foreigner, and virtually as an enemy. This other becomes a hostile subject, and I risk becoming their hostage" (2000: 53-54).

The host leaves the room and calls out to Achilles to join him. Thomas stands up and stops Achilles. He pauses, looks back at his companions reassuringly and proceeds to the other room. Achilles and Nikos continue watching the film. Nikos, inquisitive and excited, grabs the remote control and rewinds the film. Achilles Partakes in the pleasure of technological discovery and rewinds the videotape in slow motion (fig. 7.1.6). They both laugh, gazing at the scene with wanderlust. Nikos grabs the device and tries out for himself to rewind in slow motion. This is a scene of wishful thinking and of the discovery of the colour television, one of the commodities that Albanians would only imagine, as kapllani elucidates:

Some of the group, mainly the younger boys, went and pressed their faces up against the window of a nearby cafe. They were gawping in astonishment at the colour television and the images it transmitted [...]. Some of our group just stood there, glued to the TV screen through the cafe window [...]. This was also part of the fantasy we carried with us (2010: 30).



Figure 7.1.5: Watching TV



Figure 7.1.6: Like a TV ad

The scene evokes the playfulness and superficial joy portrayed in television ads. Nikos and Achilles immerse themselves in the pleasures of capitalism and technology which the more inclusive and developed West would provide, according to the Eldorado model of the migrant imagination. They both seem enchanted by the wonder and fascination of a Greek middle class household commodity. Television, free from communist propaganda and censorship, was marketed as a technological wonder that brought entertainment and a source of ease into the domestic space (Spigel, 1997).

Arguably, this is one of the pleasures of the fatherland that they sought to discover and make their own and which proves to be an ephemeral and artificial source of joy, yet another stop in the trajectory of the journey. It is the utopia of a 1990s Greek middle class household, bound by conditional hospitality. This is what makes it a capitalist utopia. Triandafyllidou and Veikou elaborate on the Athenian middle class utopia: "Athens, however, is envisaged by many as the 'promised land' because it offers the potential fulfilment of economic needs and an outlet for the 'accumulated longing' - especially for Greek Albanians - to live in a 'modern, western-type society" (2002: 195).

This short lived moment of prosperity and familial delight is quickly over as Thomas and host get into a fight. The latter shouts to Thomas "get out of here, you and your friends" and pretends to be calling the police. "could you please come to my house, yes I have a serious problem. yes Albanians". Achilles and Nikos run and separate the fighting pair. Erratic camera movement generates suspense, as we switch from one person to the next, the immigrants on the left of the frame facing to the right the host. Suspense and trepidation emerge in contrast to the ease and tranquillity of watching TV on the sofa at which point the camera is static and editing conventional. This is overall suggestive of a confrontation, a notion that is enhanced by the setting of the characters on the left and right sides of the frame. We can observe how framing suggests a confrontation between Greek(s) and Northern Epirotes, the solidarity between the migrants and the discord of the Greek who is alone on his side of the "boxing ring" (fig. 7.1.7).



Figure 7.1.7: The domestic boxing ring

Indeed, the awkward environment and overall sense of ease have given way to a direct confrontation transforming the domestic interior into a claustrophobic space of

conflict within which the Greek-Albanian confrontation is summarized down to its basic components. The host calls Thomas pitiful. However, it is the host who is pitiful once again. He is a scheming man without courtesy and generosity, courage or power of domination. On the one hand he seeks to offer hospitality and on the other is too insecure and clumsy to make his guests feel at home. He imposes his conditions but is too weak to do so to the fullest extent, applying thus inadequate and awkward means in order to make his guests conform to his expectations, leading thus to an inevitable hostage situation and a struggle to dominate or break free from the constraints imposed by the host and guests conversely. The host's ambivalence and overall pettiness, suggestive of a petty and inefficient state policy, underline "the bewilderment of the local middle class before such unexpected strangers" (Karalis, 2012: 234).

Before their departure Thomas articulates the plight of Northern Epirotes. "It's alright. He wanted Albanians to do all the work without paying a dime". The host offered Thomas work (albeit of a very questionable nature) without wages, possibly with conditional hospitality in return - a new age slavery. The gaze of the migrant reveals the ideological landscapes of the Greek middle classes, of individuals seeking to obtain a managerial and superior role in the time of European reform. It exposes the pettiness and hostility of a class of people who react with ineptness before their unexpected strangers. They were invited into the home, offered a meal and leisure time in the household but treated as pariahs, revealing the state of affairs between Greeks and Northern Epirotes on a national scale. The words of Thomas echo the exploitation of Albanians. According to the field research of Lazaridis (1999: 110), Northern Epirotes had a more privileged life in Greece while Albanians were entirely excluded and exploited, forming the "helots of the new millennium" (ibid.: 111). Lazaridis concludes that racist discourses endorsed the notion that Albanians should be treated as slaves, denied any of the legal and social rights that the Greek labour force enjoy. As a result, stereotypes emerged, justifying exploitation of Albanians. "For instance, the expression 'I am not your Albanian' that is, 'I am not your slave', is often used by Greeks to refuse a job which is seen as menial and underpaid" (ibid.: 118).

Thomas apparently is familiar with the stereotype. Arguably, the host, thinking that the migrants are Albanian (after all one cannot distinguish between them based on appearance), considers it a given that Albanians will do work under any conditions and no wages. However, Thomas seems to agree with this principle, for, judging by his own conviction, it is a given that Albanians do work without receiving a dime. His final words

reveal that exactly because the migrants are Greek, only Albanians can do the kind of work that the host proposed.

"In Albania they called us Greeks. Here they call us Albanians" Thomas continues. This final statement summarizes the sense of disillusionment that the migrants experienced in Greece, the unfortunate realization that they are not "one of us" and reinforces the nationalist predilection that set repatriation into operation. On the contrary, they are Albanians, which, from their reaction, seems as a dreadful misunderstanding. Their frustration is not entirely irrational. It emerges in relation to a more favourable treatment that Ethnic Greeks received. The local media endorsed this approach to the "good" Ethnic Greek, the "poor" victims of Albanian criminals, in Albania and Greece. Triantafyllidou and Veikou (2002: 200) discuss how "the headlines of the newspapers were often explicit: 'Albanians kill and rob people from Northern Epirus'" [...]. Certain newspapers (*Apogevmatini*, *Eleftherotypia*, *Mesimvrini*) supported the return of Ethnic Greeks to Greece relying on a ubiquitous possessive pronoun, excluding Albanians from the offset.

Goritsas reveals indeed a rivalry between Ethnic Greeks and Albanians, affirming historical facts but reinforcing the notion that unpaid work is exclusively for Albanians and that to be misled for an Albanian is *casus belli*, articulated on the same premises that exclusion and inclusion play out, those of "ethnic descent, language, common historical memories, and/or links with historic homelands and culture" (Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002: 201). The migrants expect to be identified by the host according to their ethnicity, not their names. This is yet one more pitfall of the film - an overreliance on ethnicity that affirms its essentialist appeal. Goritsas criticizes the Greek state and the Greek middle class host, but does not question Greek ethnicity since the "punch line" of this scene is the very notion of belonging in the Greek nation. While Goritsas articulates a polemical statement against the mechanisms of national identity and identification he reinforces them since the film highlights that Northern Epirotes were not strangers but "one of us" a notion that once again affirms the implications of the possessive pronoun. Before assuming any notion of belonging, we need to consider that any such notion is imagined as much as is the location of such belonging, as Anderson has so forcefully argued. This is yet another essentialism that Goritsas overlooks. While he articulates the plight of Northern Epirotes, he does so on the expense of Albanians, highlighting belonging and ethnicity, instead of greater inclusion.

This scene of hospitality summarizes the entire trajectory of migration and anticipates the return to Albania. It recapitulates the plight of Northern Epirotes who were

very often distinguished as Albanians. This is not far from the truth. The various policies that were implemented in the late 1980s were such that they would allow local and state authorities to distinguish Ethnic Greeks from Albanians, all of whom descended together from Albania. The reason why ultimately the authorities and people could not do so is due to the very abstract foundations of state policy. In order to be considered a co-ethnic ("homogenis"), in other words, "one of us" as the prefix implies, one needs "to belong to the Greek Ethnos" according to the 1983 decree of the state council. "That is 'to have Greek national consciousness' which is 'deduced from characteristics of personality which refer to common descent, language, religion, national traditions and extensive knowledge of the historical events of the nation'" (Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002: 198).

These criteria reflect and reinforce the ethnic, cultural and religious definition of the Greek nation, a traditional imagined community vexed by the appearance of strangers who have to prove that they share the same values and line of imagined historical continuity through a claim on abstract notions of Greekness. This is an impossible feat. Ethnic Greeks were confronted with the disturbing fact that Greekness is an imagined concept, since, they did indeed share certain cultural traditions and historical memories, which, as a minority in foreign territory, they fought for (Mparkas, 2003; Mpaltsiotis, 2003). In other words, they all shared a certain consciousness that is not tangible. Surely documentation and language do not suffice. Where documentation served as proof of origin, Greek authorities could not always certify its authenticity while often enough, documents were torn, lost or were simply indecipherable. Thomas and Achilles display their Albanian residence papers which have the title "Greque". "see" they tell the soldiers in the beginning of their journey, "it says Greek" which does not suffice.

Moreover, language was a contrived issue since most co-ethnics spoke poor Greek while Albanians, during their clandestine time in Greece, quickly picked up the language. This is suggestive of the obvious fact that Ethnic Greeks were indeed strangers to the host society and culture, in the sense that they have not belonged to it from the beginning and that they import conflicting values and behaviours that suggest a break with the imagined community. Sweep operations and massive deportations made it also impossible to distinguish the co-ethnic from the Albanian "other". Simultaneously, we can see how hospitality, in its more broad appeal, is negated by state policy and its language since Ethnic Greeks were considered co-ethnics instead of Greek citizens. This is what Thomas expresses since in Albania they were considered as Greek citizens-surely not Albanians. Derrida exposes this form of reluctance in the citizenship policy governing Algeria after

World War II, highlighting a pan European resort to conditional hospitality: "[...] Algerian Muslims were what was called 'French Nationals' but not 'French citizens', a subtle but decisive distinction. Basically they did not have citizenship in the strict sense, without being absolute foreigners" (2000: 143).

The result is awkward since integration remains in transit. This is suggestive of the attitude of the Greek host, Alkis Katsaris, who finally shares his name only with the (fake) police. The police earlier failed to distinguish the Greeks from the Albanians in the sweep operation. Later on, the host commits the same mistake due to a misguided notion that all migrants from Albania are Albanian, as the soldiers at the Albanian border did as well. At the hotel, the receptionist is indifferent towards Achilles when he mentions that the Greeks of Albania have formed "Omonoia", a political party representing the minority in Albania. The entire trajectory of migration exposes a profound inability on a national scale to distinguish Ethnic Greeks from Albanians. The final downside is not xenophobia and racism, nor the inadequacy of Greek state policy, but the misconstrued impression that Ethnic Greeks from Albania are Albanian. They are not Albanian, and therefore should be accepted as "one of us". Albanians however are not and therefore deserve unpaid work.

The host slowly closes the door and bows his head with remorse. In the background, the videotape fills the empty house with erratic sounds. Cut to the interior of the empty lounge, as the host enters the frame. An extreme close-up on his stern looking face exposes mixed emotions. He turns off the television and looks to the ground, genuinely remorseful and alone. He sighs ironically almost as a prelude to tears.

This short interlude of hospitality allows us to make numerous assumptions on the film's short outlook on the psyche of the Greek middle class host. Earlier, he shouted to Thomas "get out of here, you and your friends. Get off of my bed". When he "picked up" the migrants, seeming to be patiently waiting for them to emerge in the night, the expression on his face was one of anticipation and curiosity. Could this man be looking for more than "Albanian slaves"? Goritsas hints towards a queer male middle class, suffering from loneliness in the alienating landscape of Athens and who see in the "other" a redeemer, an available body for exploitation but also for an appease of loneliness. The host is not merely a malintended individual, but a closeted man, bound by insecurity and the straitjacket of a culture riddled with taboos and, allegedly, as alienated and lonely as the migrants in a country that made its way quickly to postmodern alienation. The (presumed) Albanian will liberate the host since he will offer his body for ease and pleasure. "The master of the house 'waits anxiously on the threshold of his home' for the stranger he will

see arising on the horizon as a liberator". "it's as if the stranger could save the master and liberate the power of his host; it's as if the master, *qua* master, were prisoner of his place and his power, of his ipseity, of his subjectivity" (Derrida, 2000: 122). Alkis Katsaris has thus always been a hostage hoping for liberation in the advent of the stranger and thus fulfil his petit bourgeois ambitions and his deeper social and emotional needs. However, a mutual hostage situation is inevitable. The only way to avoid this is to facilitate, and, by extension, portray in film, inclusion without hierarchy and essentialisms.

## 7.2 From xenophobia to xenophilia: exploring a new representation in *See You*

*See You* charts the way towards a new representation of the dreaded stranger. It deals directly with the "Albanian in the room" and articulates an approach between host and foreigner that is suggestive of xenophilia, the exact opposite of xenophobia. Korras and Voupouras began to devise the script in 1993, at the peak of the first wave of Albanian migration (Maragkoudakis, 1998). Interestingly, they followed suit from Goritsas, suggesting a gradual shift towards a new position of enunciation and to the arena of contemporary representations of otherness. Hall (1996) foresaw this kind of shift from "relations of representation" to a "politics of representation" that is emancipating since the Albanian migrant is the subject of representation, situated within a social and political struggle. The film's release in 1997 is suggestive of this struggle; This was the year of the second wave that ignited after insurrection in Albania and the descent of insurgents and their arsenal of Kalashnikov guns from Northern Albania, a region associated with the local mafia, vendettas and lawlessness. The directors articulate Albanian identities beyond the constraints of national identity during this turbulent time and, through depictions of hospitality, confront endemic racism while displaying a Greek household that allegorizes an inclusive Greek nation and multiculturalism without borders. Following however the overall pattern of the group, good intentions fall short.

*See You* is founded on the very notion of the receiving country encountering the "other" as the directors suggest:

Our first incentive was the appearance of Albanians in Greece and our first contact. We started hanging out and they truly won us over [...] and we took note of every experience and of their adventures en route to Greece. In September 1991 we travelled for the first time to Avlona (Maragkoudakis, 1998).

*See You* is loosely based on the directors' experience, on the stories they heard and encounters they had with Albanian migrants, in Greece and Albania and naturally their experience of Albanian hospitality. Simultaneously, national cinema is confronted with the challenge of inclusion as Korras elucidates:

National cinema expands, because it is crafted by us who belong to this nation. Our films reflect what we see and what happens around us. There was no way we would be indifferent to the Albanians, how can we? This is the reality of everyone, rich or



poor. We are in contact with the Albanians and today with Afghans and many others<sup>90</sup>.

In few words, the directors emphasize the major strength of their film which is simultaneously its major weakness. While national cinema expands through a more inclusive framework, reaching out to new forms of representation, it is implicitly about "us" and the directors of this different current of Greek national cinema function within the very limitations of a national cinema that can only speak in our own name, regardless of how new and original this experience may be. Moreover, the vestige of this national cinema that slips through the cracks of a traditional national cinema, is steeped within the elusive yet so persistent notion of Europe and European art cinema. *See You*, despite its critique of these very values and inclinations, retreats to a secure European rhetoric. To claim therefore to entirely negate these discourses is a tall order that the directors are far from validating despite obvious deviations from the norm. For this reason they inevitably seek to speak in our own name facilitating nevertheless greater inclusion.

The film begins in a municipal bus, where the protagonist, Christos, becomes acquainted with Fuad, Victor and Omer. At the same time he encounters a Greek passenger who forces out the Albanians by shouting a racist slur. From the offset, Greek racism is a public affair. As though objecting to this display, Christos joins the Albanians and asks them if this is how the Greeks usually treat them. Here one may observe a Greek gaze that is inclusive and inquisitive, quite the opposite of the first Greek words heard in the film, which indicate the defensive attitude of Greeks. This direct confrontation is a dominant feature in the film.

Three minutes into the film, the migrants are in Christos' home and discuss the history of Greece and Albania and their arduous journey to Greece. The house is adorned with the apparatus of a cultivated man: next to a map on the wall is a poster of the literary journal "Byzance", amongst books and encyclopaedias, an archive of newspapers and a collection of foreign currencies, while Christos watches on television films by Abbas Kiarostami, a filmmaker of an art-house and politically vibrant cinema. Christos is a school teacher of strong leftist inclinations and who believes in the values of European Enlightenment and humanism, namely equality and liberty (Maragkoudakis, 1998). The directors insert their own set of beliefs and values into the figure of Christos. In their own words:

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<sup>90</sup>Personal interview with Yorgos Korras, 2011.

It was our leftist past that motivated us to meet the Albanians and discover their values. Christos used to fight on the side of foreign minorities in Florina where he used to live and therefore the Albanians attract him for reasons that are ideological, aesthetic and humanistic (Maragkoudakis, 1998).

We met a teacher in Florina who spent time with minorities, and especially with the so called 'Macedonian' that was seriously contested [...]. We met the various Albanians through him, heard his stories and gradually we formed the character of Christos (Prosehos, 1998).

Christos used to admire Enver Hoxha and was a member of the Greek communist party, till he experienced a sense of disillusionment suggestive of the overall failure of the Left in the second half of the twentieth century to respond to the rising hegemony of the New Right (Mercer, 1994: 259). Christos is disillusioned as well by the essentialisms that underlie national identity, the racism and xenophobia of a country in which he feels more of a stranger. It is no wonder therefore that he declares "I have only Albanian friends". Beyond national identity, Christos functions in terms of identification, siding with the most wanted pariahs in Greece. Amongst them, he discovers himself and a concrete sense of belonging and makes a social and political statement towards his social surroundings.

In the aforementioned scene, Christos is sitting amongst his new friends, seeming surrounded by Victor and Omer in front and Fuad, who takes off his shoes seeming very much "at home", taking a seat in the rear and exploring the interior of the apartment. What chain of events and underlying intentions led to hospitality? All of a sudden, the Albanians are in the Greek home. The abrupt editing, shifting from the opening scene directly to the "Albanian in the room", produces the impression of an unexpected "invasion". From the offset though we can see how, by dismissing the notion of a linear action-based narrative, Korras and Voupouras articulate an "invasion" without defensive measures and, as it seems, without asking for names or intentions since the spectator is still unaware of the migrants' names who are in the house of a Greek man - a taboo. The directors dismiss even the scene of entry, the moment when the question of the foreigner is articulated or the actual acquaintance is made. They avoid dramatic proclamation and imply that when one meets a foreigner, the ordinary response is to offer hospitality. The editing implies that Christos does not need a reason to allow the migrants into his home, to actually offer hospitality without conditions. It is an automatic response to the presence of the Albanians as Korras reveals:

He meets the Albanians and in the second scene, they are in his home. Do we need to wonder if there is a reason for this? is it not enough that these people force him to reconsider his relationship to himself and his people? We also wanted to highlight that there is a strong tendency of comprehending cinema according to the notion of action and reaction, meaning that we need to always seek for a rational psychological explanation behind a certain reaction. Here, the reaction comes first and then numerous explanations for this that underline the deeper emotions of the protagonist (Maragkoudakis, 1998).

The shift from the public to the domestic space here is unexpected, similarly to the respective scene in *From the Snow*. In both cases, we cut from the broad public space, to the domestic interior. In the latter, the shift provokes a comic sensation. Silence accompanied by the sounds of chewing and the inquisitive look of the host emphasize the unsettling comic pairing of the foreigner and the Greek in the same claustrophobic space. In *See You* however, this scene essentially opens the film and sets off the loose narrative which comprises of similar scenes where the introduction to the migrants unfolds further instead of a line of events comprising a plot. Moreover, the scene is neither awkward nor comic. The initial response to such a taboo question as hospitality to Albanians, which is addressed so early into the film, is suggestive of an open welcome. Christos' apartment, whose name as well is still unknown to us, is inclusive, the space, as it is disclosed later on, of leisure for both Greek and Albanians where they seem to actually fit, without silence and discomfort.

At the same time, Christos does not supervise or question his guests, quite the opposite, since Victor bears an entire monologue about his journey to Greece and his innate wanderlust and drive for flight and discovery that Christos listens to with pleasure. His monologue incites a sense of excitement and wonder, which forces out any unsettling sensation. "I do not have a passport, so I will walk. An Albanian knows no limit, he can walk for days. Is Africa far away? I had work in Ioannina, but I left, I am like a bird. I want to see the world, I want to be Magellan. Do you know Magellan?" Victor's monologue suggests that to be a migrant is to be a traveller who embarks on a perpetual exploration, satisfying his innate restlessness. This is the major feature of Victor, a layered understanding of migration and of the term "Albanian" which so early into the film obtains the signifier of traveller without boundaries. This impression of Albanian ethnicity is articulated by Armando Dauti, the Albanian actor who portrays Victor. Moreover, this

articulation is performed within the interior of the Greek household revealing the directors' broad understanding of inclusion.

Twelve minutes into the film, Victor recounts his experience in Naxos where he stayed for a month and half working, earning good wages enjoying good company, food and drink every night. "So why did you leave" Christos asks. "I got bored. I wanted to leave, a month and half is too long". Victor's constant desire for flight is suggestive of a nomad who never compromises - an indication of an existential void and unquenchable pursuit for answers to the big questions of life. Arguably, the journeys, discoveries and wanderlust of Victor is the material from which "travel films" are made, in which internal emotional landscapes transform as a result of their interaction with visual landscapes - the "world" (Eleftheriotis, 2010: 99). In travel films, the protagonist very often is searching for answers to profound and elusive questions and in his search very often suffers for his uncompromising attitude. Eventually, he clashes with reality. Throughout the film, Victor gets into trouble as he seeks for a purpose in his nomadic life. He drinks and very often receives a beating, gets sick and injured crossing back and forth the borders, severs his ties with his companions and family over pride and seeks for an escape route from Greece risking his life.

In the end, Victor departs for another journey to an unknown destination seeming weary and desperate for a change that never seems to come. To suggest that Victor is an elusive character, as much as the undisclosed reasons for his constant flight and dissatisfaction, is a significant departure for Greek cinema. The introduction to Victor is performed through hospitality and, most importantly, before any names are articulated, the directors manage to escape the downside of portraying the migrant as merely "Albanian", dismissing thus racist stereotypes, focusing on layered aspects of Victor without suppressing difference. Drawing from the meditations of Laclau and Moufe on identity (1989, cited in Rutherford, 1990b: 19), we can argue that this is the moment when a "third term" emerges in relation to the representation of Albanian migrants, since the meaning of "Albanian" is not reduced to ethnicity, but is open to a sum of "different elements of experience and subjective position" (ibid.). This third term is "traveller", an Albanian Magellan. Christos articulates the elusive nature of Victor while they take a walk: "Victoris [the Greek rendition of his name] used to be a great acrobat, I was a horse rider in a film about Hoxha" says Victor. "Not Victoris... Victoras ["Βίκτωρας" the correct Greek rendition], like the wind ["victoras, opos ageras"]. Till the very end, Victor is indeed like the wind, we touch the surface of his essence but never penetrate it since he escapes from

our attention as a layered and elusive subject for, as a journeyman, he is constantly on the move and escaping our focus.

Nevertheless, one needs to consider the implications of how cultural difference is portrayed in respect to hospitality. In Christos' apartment, the Albanians are automatically on display. This, according to Bhabha is "the sign of the 'cultured' and 'civilised' attitude, the ability to appreciate cultures in a kind of *musée imaginaire*; as though one should be able to collect and appreciate them" (Rutherford, 1990: 208). The greater implication of this attitude is that it leads to a containment of cultural difference in favour of diversity. The latter figures prominently in an understanding of Europe as the sum of diverse units that form one cohesive unit that is Europe. Diversity facilitates unity but difference can unsettle it. This is the essence of multiculturalism that often advocates an enlightened and democratic society which nevertheless functions on obvious hierarchical models that suppress difference, cultivating otherness, in favour of the dominant Western model of democracy and secularity that informs eurocentrism.

Christos is eager to discover the cultural, linguistic and historic "luggage" of the Albanians because of his ideological inclinations, since, for a leftist like him, to admire and display difference, within his own home, is the appropriate "cultured" and "civilised" approach to the Albanians, particularly since they have experienced communism. Fuad was imprisoned for participating in the democratic resistance. Christos identifies with Fuad, who is his closest companion up to the journey to Albania, since they share a political affiliation that stems from resistance to oppression. The Albanian friends are an outlet for Christos' need to express his ideology and sense of belonging in terms that the migrants are familiar with. There is in a certain way a validation of his outlook on life in the "other". Christos lives in isolation, divorced and with hardly any friends and struggles to accept living in a country where xenophobia and capitalism are the norm, even for his family. Christos discovers in the "other" not only a friend, but a liberator. In the words of Derrida, "strange logic, but so enlightening for us, that of an impatient master awaiting his guest as liberator, his emancipator. It is *as if* the stranger or foreigner held the keys" (2000: 123).

The directors portray hospitality in direct reaction to racism. We see this in the racist slur of the Greek passenger in the opening scene: "dirty Albanians who only steal and murder. We give you work and food and you can't even give a dime in return, go back home". The passenger articulates the superiority of a gracious host who is more than hospitable to an ungrateful guest. This kind of attitude exists in Christos' family as well. Eleven minutes into the film, his sister, Doksa, utters a phrase that has become a trademark

of Greek ambivalence: "What do you find in them? Their dirtiness or their killing and stealing? You know I am not a racist... but these people, I just can't tolerate them. C'mon now, one day we will find you slaughtered ('sfagmeno')". According to Doksa, Christos will suffer a brutal death at the hands of the Albanians. She displays moreover a duplicitous attitude; she is not a racist by any means, but, nevertheless, it is acceptable that she does not tolerate Albanians since they are murderers. Cut then directly to Christos' lounge where his new friends enjoy more leisure time. Apparently, contrary to the norm, Christos can tolerate them.

Doksa is one of the figures that Christos is forced to confront repeatedly for his xenophilia. Twenty minutes into the film, while Christos spends leisure time with Fuad, Doksa arrives carrying groceries. She stares at Fuad who stares back in silence, both visibly awkward and frightened. The scene echoes similar emotions to those felt in *From the Snow*. The encounter is nearly comic, the fears of Doksa almost exaggerated to highlight the absurdity of her expression while Fuad is equally scared as well. Humour however turns sinister when racist monologues prevail. She storms into the kitchen where she confronts Christos: "You have them in the house. If your [ex] wife finds out, she will never let me have Anna again (his daughter)". She displays the dominant Greek taboo, a notion that is conflicting with the film's narrative and central gaze which imply the exact opposite. Through this conflict, the film challenges the obvious racist attitude.

Earlier, after the phrase "we will find you slaughtered", we cut to the interior of the apartment where the three migrants are chatting with Christos, waiting in line to shower and make phone calls to their families in Albania. Not only do they not slaughter Christos but moreover they shower and are friendly to the host. Doksa observes what by now (twenty minutes into the film) is a standard phenomenon - that Christos invites Albanians into his home. After she complains about Fuad, we return to the conversation between the two men where Fuad displays genuine empathy towards Christos. It is not coincidental that after each racist statement, a scene of hospitality follows. The editing does not serve diegetic or expressive purposes but is a means of articulating a new discourse that emerges through the juxtaposition between xenophobia and xenophilia. The directors essentially prove that the Greek attitude towards Albanians is misguided and even ludicrous as the taxi scene on the twenty sixth minute suggests; a taxi driver, taking Christos and his friends to town, tells Christos that he does not take Albanians and blacks because they do not pay and in the night especially they might even kill. He moreover adds that he distinguishes Muslim Albanians, from their terrible odour because they have not been baptized.

At the same time, we observe how Christos' ideology and his drive to put it into effect clashes with reality which is more elusive than ideology. The taxi driver, suspicious of his passengers, asks if they are Albanians, provoking Christos who immediately delves into a heated discussion, while the migrants lie that they are from the Czech Republic. Outside, Fuad asks Christos why he engaged in this contrived conversation and pressed his friends to reveal their true nationality. "so that you learn to not feel ashamed for what you are". Apart from assuming that his friends are, first and foremost, Albanian, he also puts them at risk since, as they tell him in an angry tone, *they* will be sent back to Albania if they get caught by the authorities. A close-up on Christos then accompanied by the thud of a percussive instrument on the soundtrack highlights the urgency of the moment and Christos' trepidation.

A confrontation between host and guests is looming since it is obvious that Christos has only Albanian friends because he loathes Greeks, an issue that will change when he discovers that in Albania racism is even more piercing. Christos confuses the fear of clandestine migrants for a sense of embarrassment and, as he loathes the racism of the common Greek folk, he relies on the Albanians to combat racism on his own terms. His approach to the Albanians is analogous to that of Alexander, assuming that he has to supervise them and convey to them his ideology as an approach to life ("not being embarrassed for what you are"). One cannot overlook the strong distinction between Alexander and Christos and the approach of the migrants respectively. Alexander's attitude is justified and acceptable while that of Christos is met with resistance. The directors thus highlight the deficit of humanitarian, educated and leftist attitudes.

Christos and Victor are taking a walk afterwards. When the time comes to part, Christos, with a note of concern, asks Victor how he plans to go back to Perissos where he lives. "It is a twenty minute walk" Victor replies. "Should I maybe get you a taxi?" "why, can I not get a taxi myself?". The paternalistic disposition of Christos, although not entirely devoid of kindness and concern, is met with resistance by the uncompromising Victor. Moreover, Christos' attitude stems not only from his strong ideological input but also from his professional profile as a school teacher. His concern however is not entirely unjustified since Victor has displayed a tendency to get easily into trouble. At the same time, Victor always has something to prove, as we saw earlier, which is also noticeable when he tells Christos that he cannot join him in Albania because he has not yet managed to buy a car like other Albanians. Like Elion, he would be a failure in Albania for not delivering the (capitalist) goods and is thus always confronted with failure. Christos seems then to have

every reason to be worried when he tells Doksa that "he trembles when he listens to claims about theft on the news, what if Victor gets arrested". This comes to show the layered nature of the friendship between Victor and Christos which is not predicated on ethnicity but as friendship between two men.

Eleven minutes into the film, Christos discusses with Doksa. He mentions Fuad as "my Albanian friend" and automatically incites her scorn. Once again, we cut to the interior of the apartment as though her racism has no merit. Victor sits on the couch commenting on the faces on the television screen, Fuad waits at Christos' desk for a phone call while Omer showers. Victor talks of his encounters on the Greek border and the time he spent at Naxos. This is yet another scene taken from the personal encounters of Korras with his Albanian friends. "There is nothing in the film that is not reality, everything is based on personal accounts of Albanians that they discussed with us"<sup>91</sup>. "In 1991 there were 14-15 Albanians who would come to my house, waiting in line to shower and receive or make phone calls" (Maragkoudakis, 1998). Christos' apartment, as a reflection of the apartment of Korras in Athens, is a safe haven of Albanians.

In the apartment, we can perceive the cultural, political and subjective affiliations of the migrants. They discuss the scarcity of work and the exploitation of the Greek boss who pays Omer 4,000 drachmas for intensive labour at the construction site, while the Greek builder earns 12,000. Fuad declines Christos' suggestion of queuing in Omonoia Square for hard, humiliating work and meagre wages and expresses his woe for being still unemployed. "There is no work for Albanians" Fuad declares. To be an Albanian in Greece is to be a pariah, but not in Christos' apartment.

This is additionally the space in which they can express their own prejudice. Omer is confident that he will find work since "even the Chams and gypsies find work". "Why, what is wrong with Chams?" Christos replies. "do you not know what Chams are? they have no honour, they stab you in the back, all of them. Chams, Czechs, Jews, gypsies and blacks. Once a black man asked Victor to work" "and did he go?" "Of course not, Christos, not for a black man!". This is one more significant departure that the film performs, since, to facilitate greater inclusion means to accept difference, no matter how unsettling. The racist inclinations of the Albanians disturb Christos. Twenty five minutes into the film, he takes Fuad to the hospital who looks utterly terrified of the black doctor. At their basement apartment, Fuad complains: "my foot hurts from the shot. a black doctor cannot be good.

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<sup>91</sup>Personal interview with Yorgos Korras, 2011.



In Albania we have only one black man and he works as a garbage collector". This inclusive representation may at first seem disturbing. To allow the migrants the freedom to express their original beliefs, which are often racist, misogynist and very conservative, is to structure a more inclusive system of representation. We are thus in a position to perceive and judge the Albanians for their more subjective features.

It is apparent by this scene that Christos has nothing to benefit from hospitality. Arguably, he does not offer hospitality "out of duty" or "in conforming with duty" "for to be what it 'must' be, hospitality must not pay a debt or be governed by a duty [...]. This unconditional law of hospitality [...] would then be a law without imperative, without order and without duty. A law without law in short" (Derrida, 2000: 83). Christos offers hospitality "beyond debt and economy, offered to the other, a hospitality invented for the singularity of the new arrival, of the unexpected visitor" (ibid.). This is evident through the editing and directness of the dialogue that evades the pretence of invitation and plea, transferring us directly into the household where the foreigner is already ipse before we can perceive the apartment as the exclusive space of Christos' personal hospitality. At no point do the migrants cross the threshold of the apartment - they are a natural feature of the apartment.

Earlier, Fuad had priority over the telephone, the apparatus that facilitates and simultaneously destroys hospitality for it provides the opportunity for a foreigner, in this case, to "invade" the private space, but also to the police, rendering it open to surveillance (ibid.: 63-64). At no point almost is the telephone under Christos' control. The telephone underlines the function of hospitality and its innate paradox as inherently susceptible to its negation. Interestingly however, it is not the state or its apparatus of surveillance that is at the receiving end but "strangers" who are given access to the domestic space - a form of hospitality of its own. In this respect, we can see how the major window to the world, ascribed to Christos' right to choose and distinguish between who is allowed, in the flesh or virtually, to enter, gets under the control of the foreigners who gradually claim the house and telephone as their own, always with the blessings of Christos.

The migrants depend on Christos, not for his hospitality per se, but for the telephone and for the visas that only he can obtain at the Greek embassy in Albania. While it is "good" for Christos to have Albanian friends, for them it is so for more practical implications which is the angle of the friendship. As one of the Albanian hosts confides in Christos, "in Albania, we want the Greeks. You see, it is good to have a Greek friend" essentially for material benefits. One hour into the film, Christos tries to resolve a feud that

has broken out between Fuad and Victor over who accompanies Christos to Albania. All this happens in his apartment which hosts a confrontation. Christos forces Omer and Victor to shake hands, another indication of his drive to intervene in the dealings and lives of his friends always with good intentions. In the dark and narrow hallway, Christos hugs Fuad, the friend who is closest to his heart, while Victor stares back at Christos. The sense of peace and solidarity between Christos and Fuad, embracing in a close up, is interrupted abruptly by the unsettling gaze of Victor that makes Christos lose his smile and automatically separate from Fuad. Victor, obstinate and unforgiving, declines the offer of spending the night at the apartment and leaves in a temper. Hospitality has become a hostage situation since the host is transformed into the apple of discord and the site of confrontation between the Albanians. The Derridian hostage situation is inevitably present and inescapable - indeed, the "elephant in the room", as unconditional hospitality presents itself as constantly under erasure, due to the inherent expectations and desires of ordinary individuals this time of the foreigners primarily and not the host - an inversion of "traditional hospitality".

The struggle is performed over the telephone as well. Before Arian migrated to Athens, Omer provided him with the phone number of Christos. He leaves three messages on the answering machine claiming to be Petriti, Fuad's brother. Christos brings Arian to Fuad's apartment who welcomes the newcomer with immense joy. Omer reveals to Christos that Petriti is actually Arian, a close friend of Fuad. Christos, at once pleased with himself, suddenly loses his smile. "And why did he tell me that he is his brother then?" "He lied because Arian is a stranger". Arguably, one can observe a confrontation that is looming between Christos and Fuad. The confrontation however is not performed according to ethnicity and the essentialisms of the Greek-Albanian confrontation, but on the expectations of ordinary people, on the intricacies of friendship and on the different values that distinguish individuals and even more clandestine immigrants who cannot comply to one of Christos' requirements which is a recourse to veracity. The latter signifies emotional validation and reciprocity, essential conditions of friendships which he expects from the Albanians. Christos however expects too much from clandestine migrants who can never be careful enough in a foreign country. Friendship additionally is expressed differently cross culturally. Here is thus one of the strengths of *See You* which reminds us of the deficit of *Eternity and a Day*; Christos, as a patron and friend of Albanians, is portrayed as naive and flawed in his approach to the foreigners while Alexander seems entirely justified and benevolent. The host's inability to overcome his weaknesses and of

the guests to look past their ego hinder the symbiosis of Greeks and Albanians under a common roof. In both films, the migrant finally departs since difference is too unsettling.

The struggle over Christos is simultaneously performed by the foreigner and the indigenous friend. Christos' only Greek friend puts great effort into discouraging him from getting too close to the Albanians and travelling to Albania. "Do you ever see any of our tourists trying to learn Greek? Why don't they [the Albanians] learn Greek? your ideology is entirely misguided. These people [the Albanians] are hillbillies, what will you do up there?" As Korras himself elucidates<sup>92</sup>, the struggle over Christos is not in the least predicated on the Greek-Albanian confrontation, but on the supposed nature of eros. "This is what love is inherently for everyone - exclusivity. This is what Christos' friend articulates, he desires Christos exclusively for himself and tries to stop him from going to Albania. Love is the expression of our most innate interests over someone else". Ultimately, love tears everyone apart, as the Greek friend gets killed in a motorcycle accident and Fuad and Omer stay in Albania without visas. Victor departs for another journey of hope.

That Korras and Voupouras portray Albanian migrants in broad terms and without presenting ethnicity and national identity as the only driving force of the film, raising questions on the nature of friendship and love, is a significant achievement for Greek cinema and charts the way towards an inclusive cinema.

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<sup>92</sup>Personal interview with Yorgos Korras, 2011.

### 7.3 Reverse hierarchy: Albanian hospitality in *correction* and *See You*

To this point, we have given limited attention to *correction*. This is for the same reason why the film stands out from the group. *Correction* deals more implicitly with us, articulating a plea to "correct" the consequences of nationalism and xenophobia, which are portrayed as the main features of a collective memory that prefigures the elusive concept of Greekness (Leontaris, 2010) and which became inflamed during the events on which the film is based - the killing of an Albanian fan after the notorious 2004 match between the national football teams that exposed a profound hatred for Albanians and the dwellings of clandestine militia fan clubs (Golfinopoulos, 2007).

In *correction*, an incendiary reevaluation of the nation emerges through the limited knowledge we obtain on Yorgos Simeoforidess ("flag bearer") a silent and stern faced flâneur of postmodern Athens, born in July 1974, the year which "marks the beginning of the *metapolitefsi*, or Greek return to democracy after the seven-year military junta" (Calotychos, 2013: 190). Thirty years later, Greece seeks to correct itself, in regard to the foreigners who have suffered in the name of values that became even more entrenched after the return to democracy.

Atoning for murdering the alleged Albanian fan, Yorgos wonders the city as a pariah after his release from prison. Anastopoulos portrays his persistent and seemingly pointless drifting while we often identify with his gaze, stumble in his path or stare into mirrors, as in the opening scene where he washes his face, a first indication of the need to wash himself of his sins and a gesture obsessively repeated. This is surely a process of atonement that the viewer often identifies with. His wondering and introspective gazing transforms Yorgos into persona non grata in a hostile and alienating city and with no other alternative than to retreat to silence. The process of atonement seems as though performed, as Yorgos remains silent and stern faced throughout the entire film, his expression and silence his modus operandi from the moment of his release. Silence becomes a gesture and obtains great significance, as it becomes a dominant feature of Yorgos. The silence of atonement and forgiveness are major features in *correction* that are performed, alluding to a plea for penitence and, indeed, silence.

Interestingly, while Yorgos departs from one correction facility, he ventures on the same mission within a prison like city lined with fencing, railings and bared gates. Athens is the real prison, a multicultural ghetto where margins are transparent and fully functioning. Fragmentation is a dominant feature, in and out of the frame as, on the one

hand, the city is found on grotesque and alienating architecture, and, on the other, editing is abrupt and without a sense of continuity, camera angles are often unsettling to the eye and the film is repeatedly shot through distorting lenses. Dialogue is sparse and often cut rapidly. The frame itself is tightly knit and vexed by an architecture of aggression within which the potential of rapprochement and atonement is unattainable. Indeed, as the reasons for stalking the Albanian mother and daughter, Ornella and Savvina (the names of the actors), are undisclosed till the cathartic finale, there is a strong impression of an unsettling and escalating Greek-Albanian confrontation that seems imminent as the settings become increasingly darker and claustrophobic suggesting hostile hospitality in Athens.

At the same time, not only do material borders figure the state of multiculturalism, but also ideological barriers, fundamental expressions of Greekness, create obvious separatist alliances: Yorgos is summoned to rejoin his former "family" of nationalists who finally beat and exclude him, reminding Yorgos of his former self by inserting in his mouth a mobile phone that plays the murder video, the digital memory of the murder he committed - an allusion to a fragmented and twisted collective memory of Greekness. In the streets, Yorgos is unable to approach Ornella since a parade of national commemoration, a treasured ritual manifestation of Greekness, takes place that sees them on opposite sidewalks, separated by the ideology displayed in front of them. Yorgos wonders in the night, during the funeral procession of Good Friday in Syntagma square where the notorious Archbishop Christodoulos, who fought tooth and nail against secularism, gives a speech on the treasure of Christian faith that "constitutes our identity". On one side of the sombre parade, Yorgos stands stern faced staring across the street where his "family" looks back. While atonement reverberates through the procession, the deep roots of nationalism figure as integral features of Greekness that separate Yorgos from his former identity and his present pursuit of forgiveness. The constitutive elements of Greekness are present and bare signifiers but they are simultaneously showcased as constitutive of hatred.

Within the alienating urban landscape Yorgos is yet another stranger. Athens is quite apparently not a homogeneous Greek capital, in which Yorgos is a stranger to himself and others. He is now the excluded pariah. This type of representation functions as a means towards "othering" the former nationalist, in order to reverse the hierarchy within the Greek-Albanian binary, especially since at present, as Panayotis claims, "Albanians work, have children and drive the economy". Nevertheless, the first setback of the film is that it reinforces a major claim for purity and homogeneity in Greece and Europe; amongst

such a multitude of strangers that have invaded the continent, the indigenous are strangers to their surroundings and even themselves and, as the alienating architecture of Athens figures strongly, it is not possible to coexist with the strangers. While this is not far from the truth, it is another indication of the film's limited imagination.

The question thus persists; while it is possible to reassign hierarchies, how do we shatter the material and ideological barriers that establish power structures and thus reimagine Greek - Albanian affairs in terms of unconditional hospitality? This challenge remains unresolved since national essentialisms and their pathological expressions apparently run deeper than skin deep.

*Correction* functions on a reversal of the dominant discourses. As a result, we very often perceive Yorgos through an Albanian viewpoint which is suggestive of an anti hegemonic representation. In reverse hierarchy, Yorgos is the subservient pariah and the Albanian is the boss and host. Entirely excluded and homeless, Yorgos frequents a halfway house, bread queues, seeks for work at immigration centres and is targeted by ultra nationalists. Now, he is their victim. At the same time, he performs the tasks that are traditionally assigned to Albanian "slaves": domestic cleaning and manual labour in the Albanian household and kebab restaurant respectively. By allocating to a Greek man roles that are so easily assigned to Albanian migrants, Anastopoulos forces his viewers to imagine the humiliation and deprivation that Albanians have suffered under Greek supervision and their exclusion from the social strata. The physical abuse that George suffers in the hands of the nationalists is another indication of the former. A setback of this representation is its indirectness - the fact that we are asked to imagine the plight of Albanian migrants through that of a Greek man which is an indication of a transnational cinema that can only speak in our own name. Moreover, the film advocates the notion that this kind of labour is indeed exclusive practice of Albanians, which is not entirely false, but still limiting and essentialist.

Concurrently, the Greek flag is taken out of its national and symbolical context and portrayed as a commodity, decorative, consumerist and a vessel of hatred. It adorns the headquarters of the nationalists and is literally a murder weapon. In the meantime, on the video that haunts Yorgos, the flag is painted on his face, "a carnivalesque mask of horror that George carries as a caricature of Greekness" (Leontaris, 2010: 64) (fig. 7.3.1). Miniatures flags are placed over kebabs and hot dogs at the stadium cantinas as the national anthem plays in the background and plastic flags are sold in the streets (fig. 7.3.2). The flag is finally incorporated in Yorgos's surname. It is a flag broken and tarnished by

the same token through which it was solidified as a signifier of Greekness. Yorgos's tenacious struggle to approach the Albanian household and "invade" the domestic interior suggest a strong will to reject his Greekness and to "become" Albanian. This however, ironically, is wishful thinking, as the popular racist slogan "you will never become a Greek, you bloody Albanian", that resonates from the video, is reversed as Yorgos is doomed to remain Greek for life.



Figure 7.3.1 The flag painted on Yorgos' face



Figure 7.3.2: The Greek flag adorns fast food

Several major sequences of Albanian hospitality are suggestive of a need to reject Greekness. Ornella's apartment, in the derelict neighbourhood of Alexandras Boulevard, facing the Apostolos Nikolaidis Stadium - a haven of nationalists, hooligans and grotesque architecture, is first invaded by the relatives of her dead partner. They maintain that she transfers his remains to Albania, while she insists that they remain in Greece. At the same time, Yorgos makes his way to her front door, lurking in the dark corridor. His gradual advance reaches a threatening and unsettling climax. We are unaware of his intentions while silence and the slow pace of Yorgos, creeping up the stairs, are suggestive of a Greek invasion. Ornella in the meantime is quarrelling on the telephone when all of a sudden the power is cut. She opens the door where Yorgos is now waiting, still and silent (fig. 7.3.3). A dreadful climax seems to lie ahead the mysterious stalking of Ornella as Yorgos walks with a steady pace, shuts the door and closes in, both of them now dark figures. He is not asking for hospitality but is obtaining it by force, engrossing the fears of Greeks who would foresee an Albanian invasion that would violently reach into "our homes". Only here, the tables have turned. Earlier, we followed the entire trajectory of the "invasion". Yorgos walks through a migrant neighbourhood carrying over his shoulder a tattered mattress. Stern faced he carries the mattress like a cross, treading his Golgotha. He walks through another neighbourhood in a close-up, visibly worn out. Cut to the dark alley that leads to the stadium, a dark corridor adorned in black graffiti. This is moreover, as we shall discover in the finale, the site of his killing revisited. He treads every step on the stairs

slowly, as though performing a ritual of atonement. He finally reaches his destination, a barred quarter where he has lined a couple of cardboard boxes next to which he places the mattress. His new "home" is nothing more than a prison cell, reduced to its bare signifiers - a mattress and row of iron bars. Through the bars, we see Ornella on her balcony, the site of the Albanian home seeming so close yet so far (fig. 7.3.4) since the barred view implies that the home is excluded - an allusion to a new superstructure. Observing the apartment, far from reaching it, is a taboo. This is the first indication of the prohibitions forced on Albanians and the conditions they would live in, observing the Greek household through the cracks of the city's margins.



Figure 7.3.3: "Albanian" Yorgos at the front door

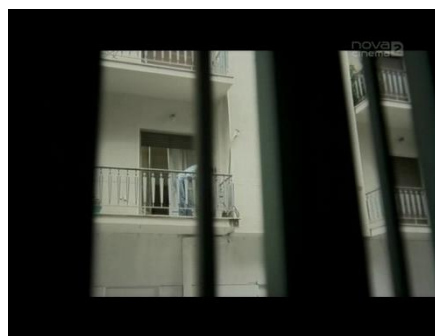


Figure 7.3.4: A new superstructure

Ornella gets sight of Yorgos and in utter terror of the encroaching invader, she performs a number of gestures that are typical of the defensive attitude of the Greek state, that saw a fortification of the home and borders: While Yorgos is staring through the bars at the balcony, on his knees, like a begging animal performing his plea for hospitality, Ornella with a loud thud draws the shutters and urges Savvina to close her bedroom window. Ornella stands by the balcony door looking out, visibly nervous, fidgeting and breathing heavily. She clutches the door knob with both hands and sits down. Montage implies a long repetition of the same gesture as in the next frame she is clutching the knob even tighter (possibly for hours?) pushing with her entire body against the balcony door, as though trying to secure the entrance (fig. 7.3.5).

One should highlight the implications of this "performance". Yorgos is the Albanian intruder, the stereotype of a threatening stranger lurking on the threshold of Ornella who is now the Greek, superior as the obvious settings of their dwellings suggest. Moreover, as Calotychos suitably observes, "the scene's stalker aspect is purposefully excessive, magnifying [Yorgos's] surrogate Albanian pariah status in Greek society" (2013: 191). The performance aspect of the scene is enhanced by the prevailing silence, and



alludes to a performed reversal of hierarchies. The excess of this stalker aspect highlights the excess of xenophobia and its absurdity since Yorgos is harmless. The stalker aspect is performed through silent gestures reducing him to a mere signifier. Ornella's gestures of defence reduce the character also to a nervous host. This type of reduction facilitates a form of presentation rather than representation, since the real and vexed signifiers of representation ("Albanian", "Greek", Yorgos, Ornella) are absent for the sake of prevailing silence. Presentation constitutes immediacy and urgency, allowing us to perceive on a secondary level the plight of Albanians without these signifiers and essentialisms that are linked to them.

The sinister atmosphere is quickly reduced and interestingly reversed into a darkly comic scene where Yorgos now performs the tasks most often assigned to female domestic cleaners, most commonly Albanian migrants (Psimmenos, 2001: 71). He turns on the lights and then cut to a bathroom where he repairs a broken washing machine, Ornella watching from the corner (fig. 7.3.6). "The scene is comic and parodic in a number of ways [...]. The mood turns quite literally - with the flick of a switch, as Yorgos provides technical assistance and transforms the scene from the thriller genre to domestic everydayness" (Calotychos, 2013: 191). The dreaded intruder apparently has good intentions and is offered hospitality, seemingly without conditions, since he offers his services voluntarily. Hierarchy is still apparent and an issue that separates the pair but, at the same time, we can imagine that Ornella was once employed in such tasks but now is the host and employer and moreover a mother and hard working individual, without the burden of the ubiquitous ethnic label. Despite the permanence of hierarchy, an issue so apparent in *correction*, we get a glimpse into inclusive affiliations. Moreover, we finally get a more encompassing view into the life of an Albanian mother and daughter contesting the androcentric approach of the other films.



Figure 7.3.5: Ornella performs a defensive gesture



Figure 7.3.6: Yorgos repairs the washing machine

On the rooftop, Yorgos hangs the laundry while Ornella exposes his "dirty laundry": "They are asking for his bones, but I do not want to give them, I want to leave them here where he chose to live, for as long as you allowed him to". This is the first instance in which hospitality is vexed by the intrusive memory of the trauma inflicted by Greekness and in which a new collective memory is shaped, established on grievance for the death of the "other", highlighted as well by the following funeral procession. Similarly to the monologue of Elion's mother on the tall and misty mountaintop, Ornella's short monologue is performed with a crime scene in the background, the Nikolaidis stadium. The weight of this trauma is unbearable. Yorgos looks back at Ornella and then cut to a remote left corner on the roof where Ornella now stands far away. An over the shoulder point of view shot of Yorgos in the distance asserts a fragmented approach to the pair who are obviously and almost bizarrely separated despite the strong attempts for reconciliation (fig. 7.3.7).



Figure 7.3.7: The distance of separation

After the funeral procession, Yorgos retreats to his shack which is attacked by the nationalists. Hospitality is entirely inevitable in this exclusive environment where the household is violated. It is not however the Albanian who violates, but the indigenous Greek. "Albanian" Yorgos on the contrary does not pose any threat.

It is this "Albanian" status that forces us to reconsider the director's good intentions. Yorgos is subservient, he "will do anything they tell him to do", willingly bends on his knees to clean the house of the host and accepts without resistance an aggressive behaviour from the nationalists and Ornella. He is a "good" Albanian and moreover, Naficy's (2001: 188-191) border subject who, in order to be accepted and, in this case, atone,

overcompensates by voluntarily becoming deterritorialized, as though embodying a form of protest towards the host nation. The fact that Ornella and Panayotis are no longer pariahs suggests that to be a pariah is to be a "good" Albanian. This is not entirely true though as Panayotis tells us, an issue that is forgotten by the end of the film. The problem here therefore is that Anastopoulos assumes that in order to convey atonement, the Greek protagonist should adopt an identity that is a given for Albanian migrants in the first stages of integration. Anastopoulos' iconography is irrevocably weighed by the dominant and penetrating bias surrounding Albanians in Greece which moreover comes across through the binary logic of hierarchy. This brings us to one of Hall's major arguments, namely that "you can no longer conduct black politics through the strategy of a simple set of reversals, putting in the place of the bad old essential white subject, the new essentially good black subject" (1996: 166).

Ornella finds the beaten Yorgos who in the next shot is lying on her bed next to her. The implications on miscegenation are increasingly suggestive as Savvina enters the room, the image of a surrogate family seeming complete, yet unattainable as silence pervades. The scene is not awkward but on the contrary governed by a sense of gravitas that silence generates. Ornella then discovers the video of her partner's murder. The pervading silence is broken by the resounding slogan: "you will never become Greek, you bloody Albanian". Once again, hospitality is vexed by the trauma inflicted by nationalism and hatred transforming the space of hospitality and atonement into a site of struggle where the traumatizing display of Greekness is replayed, reminding us that the past is stored in the memory of both victim and assailant.

We are thus transferred to the crime scene. In the dark alleyway leading to the stadium, Yorgos prepares for battle with his "family" opposing the Albanian fans. We follow the flâneur perched on his shoulder, our point of view becoming that of the killer, unsettling the gaze of indigenous viewers who are forced to partake in the killing as a means of atoning beyond the artifice of the screen. The Albanian mob runs away but one man trips on the stairs. The scene echoes the grandiosity and terror of the massacre on the Odessa steps in Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Yorgos, covered in the colours of the flag, beats his Albanian opponent with the flag post. At once we gaze at the killing, helpless, and then identify with Yorgos' viewpoint gazing at our opponent through a layered and digital medium, unreachable and unsettling in its uncanny artifice. His comrades shout "enough, let's go" but Yorgos continues his violent rampage. Cut to the face of the dead anonymous Albanian father and partner - an allusion to a fragmented

Albanian nation whose bones rest in Greece. Cut to Ornella. Cut to the video in which Yorgos stares at the camera as though gazing at Ornella, his face covered in the colours of nationalism. Atonement and rapprochement may be ultimately unattainable but, through the flashback, similarly to what we saw in *Eduart* and *Hostage*, Yorgos is forgiven as his "true colours" are not those of the flag. From the performance of (Greek) nationalism, we observe that of forgiveness. In the permeating silence, Ornella lifts her scissors to kill Yorgos who lies in bed his eyes wide open, solemnly accepting his punishment. Instead, she cleans his wounds with a cloth while he seems genuinely surprised (fig. 7.3.8). Cut to the interior of a bus driving past a cemetery while, on her lap, Ornella holds an urn with her partner's remains, performing the healing of the Albanian nation. Fragmentation indeed pervades in the last minutes of the film. The next scene takes us back to the apartment where Yorgos sits on the bed, his back faced to that of Savvina who turns to look at him a gesture which he cannot return (fig. 7.3.9).

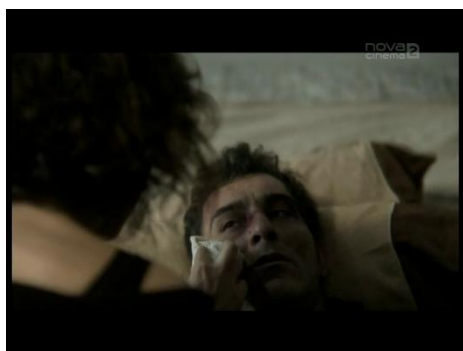


Figure 7.3.8: Ornella cleans Yorgos' wounds



Figure 7.3.9: Facing back to back

The next sequence is reminiscent of the final sequence of *L'Eclisse* (Antonioni, 1962), known for the permeating dead pan silence, fleeting sounds and empty streets, interiors and grotesque architecture. A handheld camera closes up to the barred gate of the school that resembles a prison, devoid of life. We descend an empty staircase while in the distance fleeting sounds pass by. Five different still shots display the grotesque scenery of rooftops, railings, gates and an empty class room. Through a narrow crack in the wall, Savvina stares at the camera. Cut then to the balcony where Ornella gazes through the window. Each member of the trio seems detached from the unit and the alienating surroundings. The camera pans away from Ornella in what develops as a monumental sequence shot which leads from a crane shot to the bustling street at dawn, exposing the empty roads and grotesque graffiti. At the corner of the sidewalk, Yorgos walks into the street and disappears from our view.

We are left unsure of the conclusion of the flâneur's wondering which continues perpetually while, ultimately, it is more than apparent that, in an environment plagued by Greekness, indigenous and foreigners stand back to back. *Correction* has achieved a haunting display of Greek nationalism pleading for a radically new imagination, which the film manages to put into operation not without obvious setbacks as silence paradoxically becomes a "language" of reconciliation. Silence however reinforces the purpose of margins as the final sequence reveals. In order for a new representation to materialize, silence is firstly required but, until this happens, the dictum of Bhabha remains: it is impossible to live with difference. This is a concern that Christos will have to come to terms with after his journey to Albania.

In the city of Vlorë, Christos discovers unresolved antagonisms that divide him from his Albanian companions. During his stay with the family of Fuad, Christos observes in the family and in the neighbourhood the persistence of patriarchy and national identity as indications of the dominance of conservative tradition over modernization after communism. Moreover, Christos experiences Albanian hospitality which is governed by stringent conditions that once again contest his position as he becomes the apple of discord in a family feud between Fuad and Victor in which an escalating vendetta unsettles the core of Christos' leftist ideology and awakens his dormant sense of nationhood.

He first fulfils his promise to visit Victor's Orthodox mother who lives secluded from the local community. After this, Christos is confronted with the conditions of hospitality. He apparently left the house without his hosts' permission who immediately confront him. Fuad's mother, a domineering matron, arrives at the doorstep in a fury with Afroditi behind, her Orthodox daughter in law, as though preparing for battle. "Why did you do that? Where did you head off to? What if you got lost in these streets? What if someone mugged you? You should not have left without saying something". For reasons that remain undisclosed, Afroditi also emphasizes that "it's not good for you to leave alone from this house" "Why, what could happen" asks Christos who receives only a confirmation that he is apriori a hostage of the family. As though this patronizing lecture were not enough, the father spells out the conditions of hospitality: "you are my guest and I have to guarantee for you so that if someone kills you I have to die then as well. At this time there are many criminals on the street". "Who will kill me in broad daylight? I think you are exaggerating." Christos displays once again ignorance towards the entirely dissimilar attitude of the Albanians and which he too easily objects to. The family's concern exposes great prejudice that surprisingly is similar to a Greek prejudice. Indeed, as

Afroditi's husband Sokol tells Christos, infuriating him even more as he is forced to listen to another racist slur, "here in Albania, never alone, Chams are stealing everywhere".

The words of the father display, apart from endemic racism, the deep roots of male and familial honour that figure in the ethical code of "Besa" which literally translates as "keeping the promise" (Papailias, 2003: 1067). In the folklore traditions of Albania, that are inextricably linked to centuries of movement across the Balkan peninsula, as much as to a treasured belief in the hospitality of the familial hearth, Besa is the promise that a host offers to a stranger in need of protection (ibid.). The notion of protection, rather than plain hospitality, besides from revealing the paternalistic aspect of hospitality, underlines the lasting prejudice that the Balkans are riddled with bandits and lawlessness that threaten the wondering stranger who seeks for a loyal patron to offer a promise of hospitality as protection from the lurking threat. An indication however of the certain truth underlying this prejudice is the equally lasting phenomenon of vendetta in Albania, according to which the code of honour replays: if the guest, often persecuted by a rival family, is hurt, then the host must wage war or even die for not protecting his guest. This guest becomes then the apple of discord. Fuad's father articulates this very custom which for him, as an Albanian, is a cherished token of his very own exclusive understanding of hospitality and generosity towards a stranger.

Besa, however, as a contract of hospitality, means that Christos is a guest of only one family. In the same respect, a code of honour and ethics requires that Christos has only one friend and gets a visa only for his family. Christos tells Fuad that he will do his best to get visas for both friends and their families an issue which incites Fuad's scorn: "Here we have one friend, not two." Acquiring visas for the family, means moreover that Christos is in return treated "like their own child" a phrase which both Fuad and Victor's mother express often in an attempt to claim possession of Christos. Afroditi as well tells Christos, once he promises her mother in law to get a visa, "now she will look at you like her own child" seemingly announcing his sentence as the camera closes in on Thomas' concerned expression.

Fuad's family displays great generosity, courtesy and provide hospitality which are however of a very different kind of the standard western displays of such affectionate gestures. This pact of hospitality is not merely binding the guest and host but an entire family and genealogy. It indicates "relations of the same type between men linked by a pact which implies precise obligations also extending to their descendants" (Derrida, 2000:

21). "[...] From the outset, the right to hospitality commits a household, a line of descent, a family, a familial or ethnic group receiving a familial or ethnic group" (Ibid.: 22).

In the few days spent in Vlorë, the tension between the two families escalates transforming hospitality into an uncomfortable and coerced coexistence. After the first visit to Victor's mother, the complaint of Fuad's family seems more as an expression of their desire to have exclusive ownership of Christos an issue that Christos encountered in Greece. Later on Fuad suggests visiting Victor's mother who has been trying to penetrate the fortress of Fuad's family who always tell her that Christos is missing every time she tries to get hold of him. At the rival home Victor's mother chats with Christos while Fuad and his brother watch from the back with an inquisitive and aggressive expression. Obviously Christos is not allowed to leave the home without supervision. Christos clarifies that Fuad's family has priority for visas but she insists that she cherishes Christos like her own child. In the street, Fuad spells out once again the conditions of hospitality: "Neither I nor the family like what you are doing. You choose Victor over me". The function of Albanian custom and hospitality is a given for Fuad that cannot be overlooked. Christos however is entirely alien to such customs, essentially hospitality as a contract. Reciprocity refers to the exchange of material goods - visas and telephones for hospitality while Christos relies on friendship and veracity. Friendship however is very different in Albania. This difference is the foundation on which the friends will clash. Ultimately, neither Christos nor Fuad can live with difference.

Albanian hospitality figures according to the agricultural and pre industrial economy founded on the notion of exchange and, as Papailias emphasizes in her discussion on Besa, "arranged on a 'word of mouth' basis and done 'off the books'" (2003: 1067). This expression of hospitality, governed by male honour and a sacred contract that binds a man's honour, is a profound expression of "Albanianess" as well and is part of the cultural baggage that the Albanian migrant carries into Greece where employment is also done "off the books" according to a shared belief on a man's word. In Greece however, this contract is broken and twisted as the Albanian is a slave. Seeing this function in reverse, the Albanian hosts maintain their vow and offer what figures to them as the ultimate and most sacred demonstration of hospitality. Despite this, a confrontation between the hosts and the more "enlightened" and "European" Christos is inevitable judging by his aversion towards Albanian custom.

Yet, the film offers no reason to consider Albanian hospitality as a threat to Greek modernity. It is simply a different approach from the more universal understanding of

hospitality in the western world. It is this very exclusive form of hospitality that Derrida questions without considering the spectrum of difference and alterity that often is very suggestive of cultural difference in relation to displays of hospitality particularly in parts of the world that have not experienced western modernity, its reliance on reason and neo liberalism. This means that, in simple terms, Derrida's model of unconditional hospitality is not the universal solution to the coexistence of the host and foreigner since difference dictates a more varied approach to hospitality per se, its value and practical implications according to national and cultural specificity that one cannot overlook and which evidently reveal that hospitality cannot always be unconditional. In any case, one should always aim for greater inclusion.

Difference functions also as similarity since it reflects to Christos the overreliance of Greece on similar values and moreover exposes tradition and patriarchy as a yoke that in Greece binds himself and in Albania Chams and Ethnic Greeks both of whom are excluded on the same premises that Greeks exclude Albanians. Christos confronts the enclosure of Afroditi in the Albanian household which becomes a site of struggle. "in Greece too women work more than men". At the dinner table Christos eats with Sokol while the women sit at a separate table weaving. Christos, too keen to express his western perceptions, explains how in Greece men eat together with women which Sokol snidely comments on. The women themselves seem to be accepting of this hierarchy as Afroditi ads that "a woman is supposed to endure and wait for her husband". "But for the past three days only the men eat here. Where do you eat?" This comment provokes a sarcastic remark by one of the women. In his journey of discovery, Christos carries his own outlook into the world which is highly dissimilar from that of his hosts. Outside Greece and as a guest, his set of values has little meaning particularly in a household and nation governed by a different yet sacred custom.

When we consider that *See You* is the only film to portray Albanian hospitality in Albania per se, Albanian hospitality figures as hospitable despite its conditions. Fuad's family offers Christos shelter, food, gifts and a very privileged position in the family, where he ranks higher than the women of the household, eating and sitting overall in the company of men. He is welcomed in the Albanian household as "one of us". This group may be exclusive but still what the film reveals is indeed a very hospitable host, even though our impression is filtered through that of Christos. While there is of course an obvious angle to the treatment he receives, it is not devoid of kindness which moreover is displayed according to a collective trust in conservative custom. Conditional hospitality is



considered as a natural function and an appropriate response, according to the shared beliefs of the Albanian hosts. It is the Albanian way. When Fuad clarifies that "here we have only one friend" he confides a treasured and collective understanding of friendship which is honoured but different from that of a western European like Christos. Difference thus serves its ultimate purpose - to unsettle totalities and fixed positions. This is one of the great challenges of the film since it suggests a more holistic discourse thanks to an unfavourable portrayal of both Greeks and Albanians, shifting us from binary representations that rely on the "good" and "bad" iconographies that stem from western perceptions of the "Other Europe". In a time when the war on terror and the march of globalization produce new iconographies that marginalize these parts of the world, we need to consider how effortless it often is to judge respective cultures and values as backwards, marginal and threatening.

Towards the end of his stay, Christos and his "supervisors" travel to the countryside. They visit a Byzantine church where a Greek community resides. Two Greek men approach Christos. One of them has a house in Ioannina where his ailing son lives. He asks Christos if he can help him get a visa. One of them insults Fuad, in order to, as Fuad clarifies, claim Christos. Immediately knives are drawn revealing another implication of hospitality: the host will even kill for the exclusive possession of the guest. Such is the custom of Besa and the sanctity of hospitality. Afterwards, Afroditë discloses that there is a lasting vendetta between the two respectively Orthodox and Muslim households because of her forced marriage to Sokol.

By this point Christos is overwhelmed and comes to terms with the fact that the Albanians are not the benevolent people that he over idealized. The confrontation happens in a fatalistic manner highlighting that, inevitably, difference can be tolerated but not reconciled with. According to Korras and Voupouras,

Christos hopes to discover something in Albania. An authenticity and romantic view. Yet, a conflict is inevitable. When you travel carrying in your luggage a European humanism, it is not easy to survive in Albania. It is a hard place with strict rules. Christos believes in freedom of choice. This does not exist in Albania. So he therefore clashes with the traditional values of Albanians and realizes that conforming to these values is the moral fibre that keeps this society unified. But he cannot do so. He manages however to come to terms with his own society (*Prosehos*, 1998).

The directors' statements, apart from a Eurocentric approach, demonstrates how difference constitutes further indigenous national identities through identification (the "other" as mirror). Christos thus returns to Greece with only one visa. The final shot of Fuad's mother gazing through a narrow barred window is reminiscent of separation and enclosure in *correction*. Eventually traditional values of faith, family, and nation are defensively reasserted in the space of hospitality and so is difference which undermines any cherished connection between Christos and his hosts. Calotychos sums this up: "the friendship begins with the best of intentions but sours when socioeconomic inequalities and cultural differences undermine precarious intimacies" (2013: 169). From this point, it is only normal that Christos returns home.

Home is where the hearth is. Christos performs a symbolic visit to his estranged father and ailing mother. He listens to his father's advice and holds his mother's hand. He accepts the weight of Orthodoxy and tolerates his sister in a grand monologue in which he comes to terms with the essentialisms that have been "burnt on his skin" as he claims. "In short, the wayward leftist is brought back into the fold of [Greek] family, patriarchy and religion" (ibid.: 169). Difference figures so unsettling that it either needs to be contained or simply kept at a safe distance. This is indeed the "civilized" attitude that is characteristic of a Eurocentric cinema that reinforces diversity and the central positioning of Europe - enlightened, multicultural, rational and modern - over that of non European Albania - conservative, patriarchal, stringent and divided. This is the greater implication of Christos' journey to Albania which figures as a double edged knife. The journey opens our view to the world of the dreaded Albanian where ordinary people live who are appealing to Christos, "people with values, neighbourhoods, dreams and talents" (Mpramos, 2004: 65). This unsettles the dominant view and generates new inclusive meaning.

Yet, remaining close to the notion of a struggle between inclusive and exclusive forces in the films, that reveal the unsure intentions of the filmmakers, the gaze of the European leftist can only generate conflict and additional antagonisms between Europe and the ghost of the "Iron Curtain" that is alien to European humanism. This seems to be the problem with Christos' journey. His is not a virgin gaze but loaded with all the essentialisms of Europe. It is the gaze of Korras and Voupouras, both of whom believe in the superiority of European art cinema and inevitably so in the centrality of Europe. The gaze of the traveller arguably is a product of "white ethnicity", a discursive term that, beyond black/white binaries, functions as a representational construct that is synonymous with the hegemony of the West. This particular gaze is ethnically situated and facilitates

representation which "is possible only because enunciation is always produced within codes that have a history, a position within the discursive formations of a particular space and time" (Hall, 1996: 168).

According to Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer "the cultural specificity of white ethnicity has been rendered 'invisible' by the epistemic violence that has, historically, disavowed difference in Western discourses" (1996: 200-201). It is this "invisibility" of white ethnicity that makes it simultaneously elusive and yet so central, establishing its universality. This invisible force accompanies Christos to Albania linking the journey to "the so called 'journeys of discovery' that led to the colonization of the rest of the world, as well as the crucial military role that cultural achievements such as cartography played in the process" (Eleftheriotis, 2001: 5). While the filmmakers use all their ingenuity to question and re imagine Greek hospitality they make little effort to question more broad Eurocentric values regarding culture and cinema. Voupouras gives this away in an interview:

The Greek man learns something through his trajectory, he interacts with his surroundings, and clashes since he carries his own culture which is different. From there he becomes European, he sides with the oppressed woman in Albania and with the ethnic Greek Orthodox (*Prosehos*, 1998).

In their interviews, the directors maintain a strong connection to the films and formalism of European art cinema mavericks such as Antonioni and at the same time condemn Greek critics for praising *Titanic* (Cameron, 1998) which at the time of *See You's* release was revealing the capacity of Hollywood to "colonise" smaller national cinemas. This view is traditionally Eurocentric and a totality that scholars have sought to overcome by understanding cultural imperialism as an indication of inclusion and the importance of popular culture in discourse (Higson, 2000: 70; Perkins, 1992: 194-195; Dyer and Vincendeau, 1992: 1-13). One can argue therefore that Korras and Voupouras rely heavily on traditional totalities and that *See You* suffers from very obvious limitations. Its limitations arguably derive from the directors' confidence in "high art" which inherently contains centrifugal tendencies and as a result relies on hierarchical systems of representation.

#### **7.4 You will never become a Greek: reinforcing stereotypes in *Plato's Academy***

In *Plato's Academy*, hospitality sequences serve as the backdrop of a comedic display of a Greek ethos that underlies the bewilderment of Stavros towards the "Albanian in the room". Bewilderment functions here as the fabric of satire and occurs when difference unsettles hierarchy. Considering this, we can see how the film portrays an understanding of the Albanian migrant as "matter out of place" (Hall, 1997: 236) which serves as the foundation of the film's satirical appeal. Matter out of place functions in regard to Thomas' display of xenophobia which consequently suggests his own being out of place: he is forced to host an Albanian migrant, Marenglen, who moves into his house since Thomas' demented mother, who out of a sudden speaks Albanian, sees in Marenglen her alleged long lost son. Marginal subjects become central and encroach on Thomas' sovereign household and generate an absurd - and what figures as a comic - reaction by the confused host. Subversion generates unease, masqueraded as comedy - an allusion to the absurdity and comedy of xenophobia. Stavros epitomises the characteristics of an awkward host, articulating formulaic xenophobic idioms and performing defensive gestures which fall short exposing him as pitiful and a familiar racist Greek subject.

Bewilderment explains the manifold hospitality sequences as Marenglen circulates in and out of the Greek household as an indication of Thomas' unresolved struggle to come to terms with the new world order, manifest in the "invasion" of Marenglen and the public signs of an emerging multiculturalism: the construction of a Chinese store next to his convenience store and the erection of a cross-cultural solidarity monument in the municipal square. All this takes place in the residential neighbourhood of Colonus, a small working class and neglected quarter of Athens which Stavros and his company of misfits have claimed as their "tiny football field" where indeed they play an improvised football game after demolishing the foundations of the monument which are however reinstalled underlining the overall struggle of Stavros to offer unconditional hospitality.

Hospitality is a vexed concept that is debated in the public and private space. It becomes thus a dominant device, permeating the film's narrative particularly as Stavros sways between inclusion and exclusion of the migrant leading to a compromise and conclusion. On the one hand, transnationalism, and its underlying links to capitalism, illustrated in the cross-cultural monument and the Chinese shop owners buying local bankrupt corner shops, puts forth various suggestions on hospitality in the public sphere developing a narrative around the painful acceptance of the new world order according to which foreign capital transcends and penetrates national borders and policy, and foreign

bodies are the vehicles of capitalism - those who circulate it and who are circulated by capitalism. On the other hand, the plot develops as tension escalates when hospitality is a central issue in the domestic sphere exposing this painful resolution on a personal level. The sense of unease that pervades in scenes of hospitality is suggestive of the capacity of satire to undermine hierarchies which is what the film sets out to achieve. Eventually though, it reinforces hierarchy as Stavros "becomes" Albanian and comes to terms with the new world order and, Marenglen, from solely "Albanian" (with all the exaggerated features of a "good" Albanian), becomes the absolute "other", entirely excluded from the household on the premise of his imagined shared bloodline. Consequently Marenglen is discarded, having served his purpose as a mirror of Thomas' otherness who, as a vessel of Greekness in the months before the financial crisis, suffers from an "orphan complex" (Kapllani, 2010: 38) amongst so many foreigners. More than any other film, *Plato's Academy* addresses the otherness of Greece, a so called "brotherless" ("anadelfon") nation, and in particular "the bedraggled 'natives' of Athens" (Calotychos, 2013: 195). The film's national appeal is thus frontal and rests upon a problematic portrayal of otherness which underlines the deficit of transnationalism.

The first encounter with Marenglen exposes the absurdity and comedy of xenophobia. Stavros, mother and his friends waste away their days sitting outside the former's shop, drinking frappe and making off-colour remarks on the Chinese workers. "Patriot", the dog of one of the friends - trained to bark only at Albanians - barks at Marenglen. This form of absurdity is reminiscent of the xenophobic remarks of the taxi driver in *See You*. Immediately the group jump up and proceed to bully Marenglen, as though he is captured prey. Thomas' mother startles him as she suddenly shouts "Remzi" towards an equally astonished Marenglen.

Familiar themes of invading Albanians and awkward Greek hosts are reproduced twenty minutes into the film. Stavros comes home and with great joy (possibly the only moment in the film when he smiles) discovers that mother is cooking. With great anticipation he says that he will "set the table for two" only to discover that a third person is seated in the dining room. Stavros stands still, his smile now a confused piercing gaze looking at a smiling Marenglen. This is a foreign invasion apparent with all its stereotypically racist connotations, highlighted as a satirical portrayal of Thomas' xenophobia, his bewilderment figuring strongly. Stavros then discovers the unsettling news: mother speaks Albanian and Marenglen is his lost brother. Thomas' actual name is Salih and Marenglen's name is Remzi, also common names in the daily Turkish soaps that

mother follows. This means that Stavros is Albanian, the mere thought of which fills him with dread provoking a series of awkward and pitiful reactions. Marenglen claims to have discovered his lost mother who resembles the woman with two children on the photograph he carries with him. He refers to her as "mom" inciting further Thomas' rage who gets no answer to his questions: "who is this mom? didn't I tell you to not open the door to strangers?" Marenglen stands up as though to oppose Stavros but actually stands back and adopts a cautious and scared expression. The scene closes as Stavros literally lifts Marenglen from the table and closes the door on him without resistance.

Marenglen displays the features of a stereotypically "good" Albanian. He may have "invaded" the Greek household and claimed a familial connection but barely manages to unsettle the hierarchy of the household as he is calm and soft spoken towards Stavros even though the latter bullied him. He is then thrown out without any resistance. This particular gesture indicates the hegemony of binaries which, as Derrida has convincingly argued, are never neutral: "One pole of the binary, he argues, is usually the dominant one, the one which includes the other within its field of operations. There is always a relation of power between the poles of a binary opposition" (1974, quoted in Hall, 1997). The binary features of the film are very prominent already and serve as a vehicle of comedy. The absurdity of the "bad" Greek, a stereotypical nationalist and xenophobe and familiar trope in national iconographies and media discourses, figures as comic due to his overblown and repeated gestures and idioms which are moreover overblown exactly because Marenglen is submissive and not a "bad" Albanian. After all, he asked for permission ("I rang the bell and mother opened to me") and he is not welcomed as a stranger, since mother speaks the same language. Language according to Derrida is the first prerogative to hospitality because to be welcomed unconditionally, as a foreigner, means to acknowledge that the guest cannot ask for hospitality in a language and code of hospitality unknown to him. It thus makes sense to be welcomed as a foreigner, openly without conditions that can be articulated in only one, native language. "If he was already speaking our language, with all that that implies, if we already shared everything that is shared with a language, would the foreigner still be a foreigner and could we speak of asylum or hospitality in regard to him?" (2000: 15-17). This is one of the numerous paradoxes of hospitality that refute its own appeal to inclusion. In this respect, the hierarchy of the household is only momentarily disturbed, since Stavros now is the "other" who needs to ask for hospitality in an unknown language, in his own home. This is the first indication of his otherness which develops increasingly towards the film's cathartic finale.

Here is then another premise of comedy - the pairing of an odd couple, a "bad" Greek and a "good" Albanian, two entirely opposite opposites. The pairing of opposite and opposing characters facilitates a misunderstanding as a vehicle of satire in which each side performs gestures that come across as comic and a result of an awkward misunderstanding. Marenglen misunderstands Stavros as his brother and the latter's mother as his and in this way comic interludes of farcical sibling rivalries over mother's attention serve the purpose of satire. Thomas' absurdity is further asserted as he is shown outside "testing" Patriot to reassure that he himself is not Albanian.

Comedy functions in relation to "matter out of place". Both Stavros and Marenglen are out of place, Marenglen's allegedly inherent otherness reflects Thomas' developing otherness. Marenglen and mother sit at the table while Stavros looks at the absurd pairing from the nearby room (fig. 7.4.1). Editing and alternating shots, exposing the distance between each side, generates alienation. The comic absurdity of the setting is highlighted by mother's eerie smile and phrase "we've lived apart for so long, now we're back together". The notion of Greeks and Albanians under a common roof appears here as unfeasible, absurd and uncanny. Moreover, the absurdity of such a claim is emphasized by the fact that mother suffers from dementia. Surely, one would have to be demented to make such a claim and to allow an Albanian into the household. This very impression is affirmed in the film's conclusion.

This is merely the beginning of Thomas' problems as mother is entirely inconsolable. The next day, while Stavros, mother and friends sit at their usual corner store bench, Patriot starts barking, heads turn and Stavros stands up pressing mother into her seat as though preparing for an imminent attack - another Albanian invasion. Invasion figures strongly as comic particularly in the following sequence. In the next frame Marenglen stands in the shop. Editing once more reinforces the notion of an invasion so sudden that it is awkward. Marenglen is stern faced, silent and motionless in a tight frame, various goods - toilet paper, toys and candy - stacked on both sides reinforcing the impression of "matter out of place" (fig. 7.4.2). Stavros looks back in silence, fidgeting, seeming obviously clumsy. The claustrophobic space makes the scene even more awkward bringing the pair closer, with all its inappropriate connotations on "matter out of place" and a pairing of opposites. "Marlboro" is the only word breaking the silence, uttered in a robotic fashion, reinforcing the awkward confrontation. Arguably, the clash of opposites can facilitate a sinister as much as a comic impression.

Following from the formal innovations of Anastopoulos, the features of the "good" Albanian are performed in this short prelude to the next hospitality sequence. The performative qualities are observed in stillness and theatricality, highlighted by narrow framing and the gestural quality of movement and stillness in addition to dead-pan facial expressions. Marenglen only utters a sufficient number of words. When mother enters the shop and says that they will go shopping and have lunch all together, Marenglen looks at Stavros in confusion and utters only the necessary words that highlight his submissive character: "can I go?". He in effect asks for permission. His stern expression, still posture and even tone reinforce the performative appeal of Marenglen's role as a "good" Albanian to which Stavros responds, with a persistently angry and morose expression. The binary system of representation has become a dominant narrative device highlighting the features of the "good" Albanian as a vehicle of comedy. Performance depends on binary representations in the film, allocating one-sided roles that can be conveyed cohesively through performance - the "good" Albanian asks for permission while the "bad" Greek responds by fidgeting and lashing back.



Figure 7.4.1: An awkward pairing



Figure 7.4.2: Matter out of place

At this moment, Marenglen, from construction worker becomes a domestic caretaker. He assists mother to the super market and Stavros explains this turn of events as the "solution to a huge problem" since his friends always insisted that mother needs a caretaker. The "huge problem" however in this case is not mother's disability, but the loose presence of Albanians who so easily invade our homes. The solution to the inevitable problem is to employ the "good" Albanian as a domestic worker, under supervision and in conditions of slavery, exploiting his alleged desperation since at no point does Stavros pay Marenglen, implying that he is an "Albanian slave". One may recall the words of Thomas: "he wanted Albanians to do the work without paying a dime". Apparently, this is the case here and, unlike Thomas, Marenglen is submissive. Nevertheless, as one of the friends tells Stavros, "you have an Albanian in your house, it is risky". Apparently it is not since



hierarchy prevents anything "risky", distributing respectively the roles of employer and employee which function perfectly.

When Stavros returns home, Marenglen reports to him how he is struggling to get mother into bed. Stavros then discharges Marenglen performing his role of an awkward, petty and unethical employer. Marenglen is his victim, either bullied, thrown out and eventually, dismissed from his "job". In the words of Thomas' youngest friend, Marenglen is a "anthropaki" translated appropriately as "poor guy".

In any case, Marenglen is represented solely as an invader, a worker and an Albanian. Contrary to the Albanians of Korras and Voupouras, Marenglen will accept any work given even when the potential employer is a bullying xenophobe and particularly his alleged host. Already in the first encounter, Marenglen is dressed in the attire of a builder, a familiar stereotype of an Albanian "slave". He responds to the bullying by saying that they are in a mood to joke and that he has work to do. Nevertheless, he immediately provides his number to one of the Greek men who claims to need help at home. As Marenglen walks past them, the former calls him and repeats the popular mantra: "you will never become a Greek you bloody Albanian". Being a "good" Albanian, Marenglen figures therefore also as a "victim" of racist bullying, particularly since he never reacts, as a "poor guy".

This very notion is showcased on a collective level during a football match between Greece and Albania. Stavros and friends sit at their familiar corner to watch the game while Marenglen and an entire cohort of Albanian men watch the game in a different venue which, as parallel editing from one interior to the other suggests, is detached and seemingly in a very distant part of the city. Fragmentation in this case reinforces a fundamental principle of multiculturalism - the continuous function of margins separating us from them. Correspondingly, when Stavros looks for Marenglen at a construction site where only Albanians work, pointing to him with the phrase "Greque" as a dog barks at him, the "Albanian" equivalent of Patriot, the film reinforces the notion that a definitive marginal location of Albanians is the construction site. Back at the football game, each group watches in anticipation and unease as both teams get closer to scoring a goal. Minutes before the Greek team scores, the familiar racist slogan resounds from the television. A long static shot illustrates the group of Albanians as motionless and seemingly vacant, the homogeneity of impassive and inexpressive faces seeming uncanny as no one reacts to the resounding slogan that echoes the sinister and terrifying consequences of nationalism and hooliganism in *correction* (fig. 7.4.3). The permeating silence highlights the silence that

follows such displays of racism from both Greeks and Albanians. The notion of Albanians as victims becomes increasingly manifest as the Greek team scores. Cut to the company of Stavros all of whom jump, scream, pound their chests, perform excessive sounds and grunts and chant the slogan while drinking beer that drips from the bottle (fig. 7.4.4). What at one point is sinister is now carnivalesque. Although arguably there is nothing comic about this, Tsitos seems to argue so while associating Albanians with pitiful victims of equally pitiful and macho Greeks. Silence may imply that Albanians are defenceless to endemic racism. The Albanian men here are illustrated as Naficy's border subjects who are silent and submissive as a result of the oppression of grotesque racists like Stavros and his gang. This nevertheless reinforces oppressive ideologies that exemplify Albanians solely as victims and inherently incapable of defending themselves.

Earlier, the awkward trio has lunch in utter silence. Mother has emptied her plate but the other two remain still with their familiar expressions etched on their faces. Ten alternating shots, cutting from mother, to Stavros, Marenglen and back generates fragmentation while tight framing, silence and the childish expression and posture of a frustrated Stavros, as though preparing a tantrum, reinforce the increasingly pitiful image of Stavros that generates tension. By this time, the Greek - Albanian confrontation is conveyed as a sibling rivalry over mother's attention. In this respect, Stavros figures as the "bossy" older brother while Marenglen is the "good" son. Marenglen streams through Thomas' rock records and with enthusiasm shares his love for the music, to which Stavros replies with snide remarks and indeed a "bossy" resentful tone. The implications of this rivalry expose the dangerous terrain that the film covers particularly when mother fails to recognise Stavros after he dismisses Marenglen. "It's me mom, Stavros. Who else can it be" answers Stavros with frustration. Stavros is the neglected son, forced to share his mother and "roof" with an unwanted stranger. Mother allegorises the primordial foundations of the nation. To assert any connection to her is to claim an ancestral link to Greece and Greeks. She has neglected her only true son implying that Greece has neglected its sons by "helping Turkey and Albania into the European Union" as one of the friends mentions. This is a common argument in populist propaganda that Golden Dawn and the Far Right overall employ that targets immigrants and the government's powerlessness to favour the nation above all, setting fertile ground for an "orphan complex".

Tsitos apparently aims at passing a strong judgement on this "orphan complex" and the perceptibly absurd xenophobia of narrow minded Greeks who opt for it. In this respect,

Thomas' appeal to Saint Peter in a municipal church is not surprising: "I don't care. After all everyone comes from somewhere. So many places, so many countries. Did he have to be from Albania?" His monologue is reminiscent of the duplicitous approach of Doksa and her benchmark phrase "I am not a racist, but these people I simply cannot tolerate". Although satire may be poignant, it de privileges the Albanian migrant, exposing the grasp of essentialisms. I have discussed this so far. It is furthermore visible that Marenglen is a stereotypical "slave" performing manual labour that Greeks would not imagine obtaining. In most scenes he is dressed in the worn out clothes of a construction worker and is performing work either as mother's caretaker or a construction worker. Halfway through the film, Marenglen is dismissed, according to Thomas' moral code: "I do not want Albanians in my house". When he explains this to his friends, one of them claims that "he was a good worker and I needed a new paint in my house". Another one discovers Marenglen's number in his mobile phone catalogue where he has phone numbers of other Albanians: "Albanian John", "Albanian Harry", "Albanian Nikos", all of them eager and available workers for this cliché Greek man who prefers to waste his days loafing and drinking coffee, leaving the hard labour for an Albanian. This is an exaggeration and satirical portrayal of a Greek ethos but nevertheless, till the very end, the film does not reinforce a different representation. And at the same time, Stavros is also a working class hero who carries the burden and pathos of the "bedraggled natives of Athens". In other words, Marenglen is solely Albanian while the Greek man is so much more prior to solely Greek.



Figure 7.4.3: The Albanian fans



Figure 7.4.4: The Greek fans

Stavros comes to terms with the "new world order" with great pain that figures in the many losses he faces towards the finale: his "tiny football field" where the cross-cultural monument is nearly complete and his friends, who find a solution to their bewilderment by selling their shops to the Chinese, exposing the function of transnational capitalism. Stavros however does not "sell out". His own identity is entirely erased and towards the ending of the film, mother dies as well, putting to rest the old Greece and, as Stavros prepares for the funeral, the Chinese shop celebrates its induction implying the very

sudden, indiscrete and painful introduction of the new globalised neighbourhood that is not our football field.

Amongst such sudden and unprecedented changes, Stavros is "other". His otherness is fully articulated at the funeral. He invites Marenglen who reveals that his relation to Stavros and mother was wishful thinking. His entire argument was founded on an old picture of his mother and himself as a child and on a similar picture that Stavros possesses. What this suggests is that it is wishful thinking that Albanians and Greeks can live under one "roof" and moreover an Albanian utopia to even receive hospitality. Additionally, especially since mother suffers a second stroke and is unable to speak or recognise Albanian, contesting the authenticity of her initial language shift, language, the only premise of hospitality, is eliminated. Already in the first encounter, Marenglen underlines mother's language shift in order to justify hospitality: "I may have only a photograph but she speaks Albanian". Therefore, mother was acting solely on her dementia. When Stavros asks her "are you nuts" after seeing Marenglen in his house for the first time, it is indeed so; one would have to be "nuts" to allow an Albanian into his house.

Marenglen's faith in the signifying power of the photographic image echoes Barthes' meditations (2000) on the ontology of the photograph. The photograph is a signifier of death and loss, a moment irrevocably past and forgotten, recorded by a mechanical apparatus. The photograph itself becomes yellow with time, its image fades and is discarded. With time, the photographed subject dies and the image represents vacuity. Arguably, Marenglen is persona non grata, without any primordial connection. His photograph depicts a moment that happened but is merely the representation of a lost mother. His only link to the past is an empty signifier that apparently figures upon wishful thinking. Marenglen is thus an "absolute other" (Derrida, 2000: 25) particularly since he does not seem to have ultimately a name nor a patronym. His first name is a popular Albanian anecdote (Kapllani, 2010: 34): Marenglen derives from the first syllables of the pioneers of communism Marx, Engels and Lenin. Remzi on the other is a fictitious name. Here is what Derrida then concludes on hospitality:

[...] Hospitality, in this situation, is not offered to an anonymous new arrival and someone who has neither name, nor patronym, nor family, nor social status, and who is therefore treated not as a foreigner [which implies a right to "traditional hospitality"], but as another barbarian. We have alluded to this: the difference, one of the subtle and sometimes ungraspable differences between the foreigner and the absolute other is that the latter cannot have a name or a family name (2000: 25).

Thus, in times of reform, Albania is persona non grata and requires the aid of its closest neighbour - quite the opposite of cross-cultural solidarity. This argument is additionally articulated for Greece, as Stavros comes to terms with his otherness and both countries seem to suffer from this complex, although Thomas' plight is central. This is another major issue that we have observed in our discussion on the other films as well (with the exception of *Eduart*): the migrant mirrors the otherness of Greeks. While in no way is otherness a signifier that so easily can be equated for any individual without considering obvious and opposing differences, this implies that Albanians indeed are primarily "other".

In this respect the film's conclusion comes forth smoothly as order is finally restored. Marenglen is out of sight after the funeral and discarded at the margins. Embracing his otherness, Stavros declares that he is Albanian, while in the final shot the cross-cultural monument is complete and the Chinese shop is in operation. While Stavros so easily can "become" Albanian, with all the term's abstract connotations, Marenglen cannot be welcomed unconditionally under a Greek roof and thus remains in the margins of Europe. He will never become a Greek which, apart from elusive notions of Greekness, implies that he cannot obtain a citizenship. The film ultimately reinforces the racist slogan as well as multiculturalism and its purpose. In this respect it is not surprising that in the recent 2014 municipal elections in Athens, Golden Dawn came first in several residential neighbourhoods including that of Colonus, "our football field"<sup>93</sup>. Nationalism reigns supreme, despite European multiculturalism.

It comes as no surprise that *Plato's Academy* was a finalist for the LUX competition which, according to its policy makers, selects film that "help to air different views on some of the main social and political issues of the day and, as such, contribute to building a stronger European identity. They help celebrate the universal reach of European values, illustrate the diversity of European traditions and shed light on the process of European integration"<sup>94</sup>. The film narrativises the Europeanisation of Greece through a background display of the country's painful process of reform. It strengthens Europe's centrality over the various strangers that have infiltrated the continent and, by subtly highlighting the aforementioned points as background material to the central plot, reinforces conditional hospitality as an expression of European policy par excellence.

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<sup>93</sup><http://news.in.gr/greece/article/?aid=1231320138> Last accessed 1 July 2014.

<sup>94</sup><http://www.luxprize.eu/why-and-what>.

In any case, the films discussed expose central functions of a national cinema; one that speaks in our name highlighting binaries in which national affiliations are displayed as central contrary to foreign that remain peripheral. We see thus the assimilating power of Greece, Europe and European cinemas which perform a visible and challenging shift towards a politics of representation only to fall short. In this respect, cultural exchange becomes a vehicle for national iconographies. The latter very easily assimilate in any framework and are conveyed in an almost deceitful manner, in other words, national cinema under transnational clothing.

## **Conclusion: Towards Difference**

In this thesis I have sought to address and interrogate the context and content of seven Greek/transnational films produced between 1993 and 2009. In the initial stages of my research I was keen on the particular features that serve as cultural interruptions in the norm of a national cinema. On the offset I was fairly excited to showcase my favoured films as unique examples of a transnational and supranational cinema that challenges a xenophobic nation at its core. Eventually, I came to realise that great change can only happen gradually and with great resistance and that the agents of change should be questioned for their intentions and offerings. This is why I use the title "towards" in order to imply that this is an ongoing process in Greek cinema and that there is still a long road ahead.

My research is situated firmly in the early 1990s, a period aptly referred to as the era of globalisation and migration in Europe, at which time the continent begins to transform with the flooding of a multitude of migrants and refugees. This phenomenon has been decisively addressed by the major media outlets of Europe, including cinema and filmmakers. I consequently focused on Southern Europe, a region known also as Fortress Europe, where xenophobia and nationalism figure strongly in everyday expressions and communication. A fortress mentality in the region relies strongly on xenophobia and nationalism which moreover prescribe stringent citizenship policy and loose management of clandestine migration. Migration and xenophobia have been since 1990 a fundamental national concern in Greece which culminated in the descent of hundreds of thousands of Albanian immigrants. The films that began to emerge on Albanian migration and the hostility of the Greek nation showcased these phenomena and challenged endemic perceptions of nationhood and national identity while obtaining a favourable approach to the migrant. This is a significant point in the production of Greek cinema since the films moreover side with the most dreaded "stranger" to ever inhabit Greece, for reasons that highlight political antagonisms and a historical struggle to assert a nation building rhetoric within the Balkan Peninsula.

In my introduction I situate the proposed films within this historical and cultural frame and proceed to underline how they figure as a discourse of the margins, for reasons that indicate a deficit in political and social awareness in Greek society and Greek film studies, in Greece. A very obvious lack of scholarly research on the specific topic is suggestive of this and of a tendency to neglect the "confusing" territory of transnational cinema that blurs the boundaries of national cinema classification. The marginality of a

discourse on representations of Albanian immigrants in Greek cinema is apparent in the box office accounts of the films as much as in the minimal distribution of the films in venues and on DVD format. I conclude here that it is important that the films are addressed as one single body and in relation to the particular national, cultural and discursive background. This thesis has thus far completed this project.

Necessarily, one requires a critically informed framework and methodology. I outline this in my first chapter where I discuss the particularities, strengths and deficit of the two major discourses applied in this thesis, national and transnational cinema. The first, a category that relies on the model of the Andersonian "imagined community" has been debated extensively as essentialist and not accountable for the inherent transnational dimensions of most given films. The second, while favouring greater inclusion and openness, in terms of European cinema, is Eurocentric, particularly through its major agents of film policy. In terms of discourse, transnational cinema allows us to unpack the features of film cultures that national cinema has thus far neglected and to address difference and popular cinemas, which cannot be prescribed by the national cinema model.

The films discussed in this thesis rest firmly on both categories. This is obvious in the cultural and creative context of *Hostage* and *correction* where on the one hand the national is to a degree present in the film's content, and on the other is present either in the form of (partial) subsidy and the various national and nationalistic interest groups that contest the films in a debate on a film's nationality. The latter was moreover an issue that seriously impeded the exhibition and circulation of *Eduart*. National film policy in Greece was also a factor that influenced the subsidy of *correction* and which exposed how deeply ingrained the national is on many levels of film production. Applying the national cinema framework made it possible to address the nationalistic tendencies in these phenomena which are domineering in the case of *Hostage's* marginalisation. Moreover, it establishes a holistic analysis since I was able to address how the national is addressed in the films but how then it is transcended in the films' content where cultural difference plays a decisive role. Utilising a critical methodology as well, informed by postcolonial theory and Gramscian opposition, allowed me to unpack the films' content through thorough textual analysis which exposes the unfortunate fact that the films simultaneously achieve greater inclusion and take a step backwards. This made it clear to me that what at first seems radical proves to be riddled with essentialisms that cannot serve a radical discourse.

In this respect, in Chapter 4 I begin to unpack the content of *From the Snow*, *Hostage* and *Eduart*. The title "the migrant imagination, motivations, expectations and



ambitions" showcases the moment of flight when the Eldorado model of the West is asserted firing the imagination of migrants who hope to find in Greece an abundance of work and overall a life that is the exact opposite of life in Albania before and after the communist regime. In *From the Snow*, the migrant imagination figures in the nationalist agenda of repatriation with the fatherland that the Ethnic Greeks of Albania seek. In *Hostage*, Elion Senia seeks to prove himself as a man and bread-winner to his extended Albanian family by migrating for a second time to Greece. Informed by the notion that Greece has riches and work for the disenfranchised migrant, Elion hopes to make it in Greece. In *Eduart*, Eduart dreams of rock stardom and respectively a life adorned in riches while he seeks to escape from Albania and its patriarchal structure. In the last two films, that are based on true stories, the directors challenge the alleged inherent criminality of Albanians and reveals the deeper reasons for migration and the implications of globalisation, capitalism and Greco-Albanian nationalisms that push the migrants to delinquency. At this stage of the particular films, the directors manage to promote an inclusive discourse that broadens the national and question endemic media discourse.

The migrants' journey continues and I therefore follow this trajectory in chapter 5, where I examine the journey of hope to Greece in *From the Snow*, *Hostage* and *Eternity and a Day*. In this discussion questions on mobility, movement and stasis inform representation and textual analysis. In each case we can see how through various formal strategies and thematic concepts that underlie representation the filmmakers establish the figure of the Albanian migrant as a border subject. The migrants essentially transform in each case from a mobile subject into someone occupying periphractic spaces and the actual Greek-Albanian border the moment that he encounters and eventually confronts the host nation. The migrant imagination eventually turns into nightmare as the migrants are left with no alternative than to depart. In *Eternity and a Day* we observed certain deviations from the other films as a result of Angelopoulos' signature art cinema that deals with a meditation on postmodern nomadism and loss, in which migration figures as a symbol of loss and disconnection. I argued that in these films marginality is affirmed in the conceptualisation of the migrants as border subjects which serves to highlight victimhood. In all three films, Albania is cast as peripheral and devoid of any prospect, casting Greece as central. This is more than apparent at the stage of the journey's end which sets the climactic and sombre finale in motion as the migrants either depart to obscure destinations in *From the Snow* and *Eternity and a Day* or die a tragic death (*Hostage*). At the journey's end the wretchedness of migrants is further asserted as much as the centrality of Greece

and Europe as major destinations of migrants, leaving Albania as entirely peripheral and no man's land.

I completed the section on the journey of hope by briefly addressing the figure of Panayotis in *correction* who comes across as an elusive character who managed, thanks to his own ingenuity, to overcome the title of border subject and to become integrated but not assimilated in the body of the host nation. An afterword on *Eduart* and the film's cathartic finale at the border tests the ground for a more fertile discussion on borders, border subjects and the chance of redeeming the Greek-Albanian border from discourses of criminality and burdened representation that rely heavily on binaries of wretchedness and criminality.

I concludingly addressed the concept of hospitality in selected scenes in *From the Snow*, *See You*, *correction* and *Plato's Academy*. The deeper foundations of Greek nationalism and xenophobia emerge here strongly as we are taken into the domestic space and witness a more direct confrontation between insecure hosts and aspiring migrants. The tensions between the subjects are suggestive of what happens on a national level, according to the popular but formulaic metaphor of the sovereign household as the nation. In the films we see how Grecocentrism and Eurocentrism become dominant narrative tropes that make hospitality impossible and troublesome for Greece and Europe. The final chapter finally throws the gauntlet at any aspiration for a radical discourse as the films at their ending fall short and reassert the limits of the nation and of a diverse Europe of discrete nations that can live with diversity but not with difference. In particular, *From the Snow* relies on the nationalist project of repatriation and the exclusive features of Greek identity. *See You* deviates from any stereotype but asserts the boundaries that separate Greece and Europe from Albanians. This counts for *Eternity and a Day* and *Plato's Academy*. In the latter, *Hostage* and *correction* we also observe the function of stereotypes that negate good intentions.

This brings me to my concluding remarks. At this point I return to a certain "chorus" that has been a significant discursive trope in this thesis. I refer to an article by Papadimitriou who addresses the possible transnational dimensions in Greek blockbusters of the 2000s. She aptly concludes that "despite some overall positive examples indicating national 'openness', there are only a few Greek films with transnational characteristics. [...] In terms of themes and representations, of those films that deal with the 'other', very few have avoided the trap of (negative) stereotyping" (2011: 508). The author concludes that her article could have been as well titled "the Persistence of the National" contrary to the

original "The National and the Transnational in Contemporary Greek Cinema". Papadimitriou addresses here the problems observed in popular Greek blockbusters, but I have decisively argued that the same applies for the more inclusive films discussed in this thesis. This is performed in a much more subtle and indeed open manner but this is what makes the films eventually fall terribly short.

In this respect, *Eduart* is a good example of a film that transcends the national and the transnational, becoming situated and, with the film's symbolical and evocative finale at the border, universal. Moreover the problem of nationality although indicative of pervading nationalism in Greek society and political spheres, and despite the problems this caused, is an indication of a radical discourse that moves film and film culture/discourse to new terrain that is with certainty transnational. More importantly, while the other films discussed here visualise the Greek-Albanian confrontation, they eventually rely on xenophobic binaries that negate any good intentions. *Eduart* redeems the dreaded "stranger" and establishes this through a consistent narrative of redemption that addresses Eduart as a spiritually impoverished individual deprived by Albanian patriarchy. His redemption is redemption for the younger generations of Albania and for Albanians from any stereotype that establishes a one-sided representation. Richard Dyer highlights this burden of representation in his seminal *White*:

Any instance of white representation is always immediately something more specific - *Brief Encounter* is not about white people, it is about English middle-class people; *The Godfather* is not about white people, it is about Italian-American people; But *The Colour Purple* is about black people, before it is about poor, southern US people (1999: 459).

In other words, the film showcases difference.

At this point I anticipate greater engagement with Greek cinema in the present which has been increasingly moving towards the transnational since the success of *Dogtooth* which opened up many possibilities for Greek cinema to transcend borders and to appeal to international audiences, to receive transnational funding and to become a major point of reference in critical literature abroad. Indeed, something new and exciting is developing and is suggestive of a radical departure from the norm. Nevertheless, I strongly believe that the national, particularly in times of financial crisis, is a dominant and domineering theme that continues to inform the work of contemporary filmmakers who address the nation through allegory, performance and the metaphor of the distraught and

patriarchal Greek household which alludes to a nation under deconstruction. Unfavourable representation is indeed challenging but, as this thesis has shown, an entirely new and radical thematic preoccupation is required in order to transcend the essentialisms that figure a national narrative. Such narratives can be masqueraded as transnational, but essentialisms do find a way to bleed through any inclusive discourse.

For this reason I have sought to encourage through this thesis a greater and decisively critical engagement with difference. Eleftheriotis has firmly articulated this necessity:

If cultural gaps are to be bridged and cultural frontiers to be effectively crossed in the production, circulation and consumption of European films, difference must be neither negated in the name of the universality of culture nor affirmed in the fortresses of national and cultural particularity (2000: 100).

Taking the latter into account, I may conclude that the way towards inclusiveness is still long for Greek cinema and Greece, particularly as financial crisis and nationalism become increasingly felt and entrenched. The possibilities nevertheless are exciting.

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### **Primary Films**

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*Ap to Hioni/From the Snow* (Sotiris Goritsas, 1993)

*Diorthosi/correction* (Thanos Anastopoulos, 2008)

*Eduart* (Angeliki Antoniou, 2006)

*Mia Aioniotita kai mia Mera/Eternity and a Day* (Theodoros Angelopoulos, 1998)

*Mirupafshim/See You* (Yorgos Korras & Hristos Voupouras, 1997)

*Omiros/Hostage* (Constantinos Giannaris, 2005)

### **Secondary Films**

*Adikos Kosmos/Unfair World* (Filippos Tsitos, 2012)

*Alpeis/Alps* (Yorgos Lanthimos, 2011)

*Amnistia/Amnesty* (Bujar Alimani, 2011)

*Ap tin Akri tis Polis/From the Edge of the City* (Constantinos Giannaris, 1998)

*Attenberg* (Athina - Rachel Tsangari, 2010)

*Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006)

*Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1925)

*Brief Encounter* (David Lean, 1945)

*Dekapentavgoustos/One Day in August* (Constantinos Giannaris, 2001)

*El Greco* (Yannis Smaragdis, 2007)

*I Skoni Tou Hronou/The Dust of Time* (Theodoros Angelopoulos, 2008)

*It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, 1946)

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*Kynodontas/Dogtooth* (Yorgos Lanthimos, 2009)

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*Reminiscences of a Return to Lithuania* (Jonas Mekas, 1972)

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*Strella/A Woman's Way* (Panos Koutras, 2009)

*Sugartown: Oi Gambri/Sugartown: the Bridegrooms* (Kimon Tsakiris, 2006)

*Takhté Siah/Blackboards* (Samira Makhmalbaf, 2000)

*The Colour Purple* (Steven Spielberg, 1985)

*The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972)

*The Matrix* (Andy & Larry Wachowski, 1999)

*Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997)

*To Vlemma tou Odyssea/Ulysses' Gaze* (Theodoros Angelopoulos, 1995)

*To Meteoro Vima tou Pelargou/The Suspended Step of the Stork* (Theodoros Angelopoulos, 1991)

*Un condamné à mort s'est échappé ou Le vent souffle où il veut/A Man Escaped* (Robert Bresson, 1956)

*Uranya* (Kostas Kapakas, 2006)

*Ygraerio/Gas* (Bujar Alimani, 2006)

*3 Steps to Heaven* (Constantinos Giannaris, 1995)

*300* (Zack Snyder, 2006)

*300: Rise of an Empire* (Noam Murro, 2014)