

**Heterogeneity, Representation and Justice: Borders and Communities in
Angelopoulos's Balkan Trilogy**

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This paper discusses questions of borders, communities and refugees through an examination of the work of film director Theo Angelopoulos, in particular his so-called Balkan trilogy, which includes *The Suspended Step of the Stork* (1991), *Ulysses' Gaze* (1995), and *Eternity and a Day* (1998). In these films, Angelopoulos looks at the nature of borders and communities and at what they do to people in general and refugees in particular. I argue that in these films, Angelopoulos represents the refugees as what cannot be placed in any straightforward fashion according to the logics of political sovereignty and national divisions. As such, they are a heterogeneous excess from the constitution of borders and divisions; yet, by making visible this heterogeneity, Angelopoulos shows the contingency of political and national borders. This is a powerful way of criticizing the injustices of existing borders and to think about the possibilities of their transformation. However, this does not mean that politics should aim simply at the elimination of borders and exclusion. Rather, we must accept the ineradicability of borders and exclusion while contesting any existing ones.

Keywords: Heterogeneity; Exclusion; Borders; Immigration; Europe; Angelopoulos

INTRODUCTION¹

What do three films by the Greek art film director Theo Angelopoulos have to do with questions of social justice? And why is a political theorist like myself interested in Angelopoulos's films? The short answer is that we can read Angelopoulos's films—and especially his three films from the 1990s, also referred to as the Balkan trilogy: *The Suspended Step of the Stork* (1991), *Ulysses' Gaze* (1995), and *Eternity and a Day* (1998)²—as interventions in the debate on immigration, asylum and borders in

today's Europe. In this paper, I hope to make good this claim. The aim of the paper is both theoretical and political. In theoretical terms, I wish to argue that the notion of heterogeneity will help us understand the nature of borders and communities. This notion, which I take from the most recent work of Ernesto Laclau, refers to what escapes the logic of inside/outside, thus putting into question the borders of communities whose identity rest on this logic.³ I shall explain this in more detail below. The notion of heterogeneity raises important political questions, for instance in relation to immigration, asylum, and nationalist communities in contemporary Europe. As I will argue, in his trilogy of films from the 1990s, Angelopoulos provides us with a strong critique of Fortress Europe. In his films, refugees occupy the place of the heterogeneous, of those persons which are neither simply excluded nor simply included, but who cannot find their place in a Europe divided into national communities by political borders. This is the political aim of the paper. However, as I shall also argue, Angelopoulos's humanist openness to the other—to the illegal immigrants living at the bottom of our societies—is paradoxically only possible if we remain skeptical about the possibility of eliminating exclusion altogether.

Theo Angelopoulos is at once a Greek, a European, and a Balkan film director. Although his characters and landscapes are often indistinct and without clear national features, he has been preoccupied with Greek history, tradition and mythology, and his films often ask the question of what it means to belong to the Greek community. The latter is not a question that is specifically Greek, however. Rather his films pose the question of what it means to be at home anywhere in the world. They do so, among other things, by making the protagonists travel across borders until their (ethnic and national) identities become indistinct. Angelopoulos is also a European director. The films in his Balkan trilogy, including *Eternity and a Day*, are voyages in and across Europe or, rather, at the limits of what we usually understand as Europe, namely the Balkans. Angelopoulos's films show how borders have eroded and been rebuilt in Europe during the last fifteen years. Moreover, in his films, the Balkans are not something at the outside of Europe, but rather shown to be an essential—geographical, cultural and political—part of Europe.⁴

Eternity and a Day is about borders and border crossings, and about immigrants and refugees. As such, it belongs to a trilogy of films by Angelopoulos from the 1990s, which also consists of *The Suspended Step of the Stork* (1991) and *Ulysses' Gaze* (1995). In the following, I shall primarily be occupied with these films. In the

film immediately preceding this “Balkan trilogy” (*Landscape in the Mist*, 1988), one of the protagonists asks “What is the meaning of borders?” The Balkan, or border, trilogy seeks to answer this question in relation to, among other things, geographical and political borders (Schulz 2001, p. 117). Angelopoulos’s first films were overtly political and concerned with collective problems of what is to be done. Between this early political period and the latest period of existential films about borders and communities, there was a middle period of more personal films, including *Landscape in the Mist* (Fainaru 2001c, pp. viii-xi). Although his latest films are not overtly political in a traditional sense—for instance, they provide no answers—they take place against a political backdrop, which frames the lives of the characters in the films. As such, Angelopoulos is still of political interest. Indeed, the Balkan trilogy asks important political questions about the identity and boundaries of communities in the wake of the rise of nationalist and xenophobic discourses in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall. In fact, I shall argue that the real political value of Angelopoulos’s films lies not so much in whether they provide solutions to problems or not, but in their attempt to make visible what is invisible in the present.

In the next three sections, I shall look at Angelopoulos’s treatment of the issues of refugees, borders and communities. I will then relate this more explicitly to the notion of heterogeneity. Finally, in the last section, I shall consider some of the political implications of my argument.

BORDERS

The theme of borders – including national and political borders – is central to Angelopoulos’s Balkan trilogy. It is worth noting, however, that Angelopoulos himself emphasizes that the borders in his films are not geographical, but “personal” borders. For instance, according to Angelopoulos, *Eternity and a Day* is not about a physical border – that between Greece and Albania, between the “official” Europe and its backyard – but, rather, about the border between life and death: “Borders are simply divisions, between here and there, between then and now. In this film it is a question of a division between life and death. It’s a demarcation line” (in Bachmann 2001, p. 106). Like his other films, *Eternity and a Day* is about the passing of spatial and temporal borders, in this case the literal passing of the poet Alexander, the film’s

protagonist who is dying, and who is only waiting to go into a hospice the following day. *Eternity and a Day* is not only about Alexander's passing, from life to death, though. In the film, the border between life and death is interweaved with political and national borders and the lives of refugees. For the Albanian refugees in the film, passing the physical and political border between Albania and Greece is a matter of life and death. This is so not only in the sense that it is only by crossing the border into Greece that the refugees have a chance of making a living,⁵ but also in the sense that the physical crossing through the land-mined no-man's land of the border proves fatal to some of them. As such, *Eternity and a Day* shows how physical and political borders influence the personal lives of people, that is, how their lives are literally and metaphorically framed and enclosed by these borders.

This is also the case in the two other films in Angelopoulos's Balkan trilogy, *The Suspended Step of the Stork* and *Ulysses' Gaze*. The former takes place among refugees stranded at the border between Greece and Albania. The film is, as the title suggests, suspended in this border area. The physical border is a river, separating the two countries and even separating a man and a woman as they are getting married standing on each side of the river. The physical presence of the border in the river makes visible the centrality of the border and what it does to people's minds and lives. As one of the main characters says about the refugees when he observes how they fight among themselves: "It's the border that drives them mad. The boundaries." The border is not only a physical but also a mental presence. *The Suspended Step of the Stork* is an invitation to cross borders, however. The protagonist, a journalist who has come to find a story in the region, is transformed at the end of the film; he has started to cross borders and reaching out to the refugees. This is also made evident in the use of the camera in the final scene, where the journalist is seen approaching the river while the camera moves across the river, in reverse as it were, thus inviting the viewer to cross the border. This is the first time that we see the river from the (Albanian) other side, thus gesturing towards the transformation in the protagonist. This theme of communication and reaching out to the other side is also reflected in the final image of the film of men sitting on and repairing telephone poles along the river.⁶

Ulysses' Gaze is also a film about borders and border-crossing, and here too a personal journey and border crossing is intertwined with the crossing of physical and political borders in the Balkans. As in *The Suspended Step of the Stork*, many of the borders in *Ulysses' Gaze* are rivers. The protagonist is told by a friend in Belgrade

that “Yugoslavia is full of rivers,” suggesting that what was once Yugoslavia is now divided by political and national borders. However, the rivers are not only used to separate people but also to travel along to new places and to meet people – in short, to communicate. Thus, at the point where people and communities are separated, there is also the possibility of crossing borders, of traveling to the other side. I will return to the possibility of communicating with the other when I discuss the politics of heterogeneity and borders.

REFUGEES

The refugee theme is central to Angelopoulos’s Balkan trilogy. And, as he argues: “Emigration and diaspora, refugees chased away from their homeland, crossing borders and seeking shelter, these are among the most burning social issues of our time.”⁷ The refugees in his films are a kind of heterogeneous excess created by the borders. In all three films, we witness how refugees gather around and across the border between Greece and Albania, caught in a no-man’s land. Moreover, in *Eternity and a Day*, the protagonist, Alexander, saves a young Albanian boy from being caught by the police in Thessalonica, Greece. The boy thereby eludes the policing of the political borders. Later in the film, Alexander also rescues the boy from the mafia catching Albanian children on the street in order to sell them off to rich Western couples. In the first case, Alexander tries to save the boy from the symbolic structure of political sovereignty (the law); in the second case, he tries to save the boy from the flows of capital (money). The boy refers to himself as *xenitis*, a Greek poetic expression meaning an outsider, an exile, or, more precisely, someone who is a stranger everywhere (Bachmann 2001b, p. 108). The boy is, thus, not just a foreigner – someone who can be determined as one of “them” as opposed to one of “us” – but a stranger everywhere, that is, a stranger to the division between “us” and “them” or between “home” and “foreign.” Alexander is trying to create a space for that which is foreign and heterogeneous. However, doing so, he is forced to rely on the very same symbolic structures that he is trying to create a space outside of. For instance, he uses money to buy back the Albanian boy from the mafia, and when, at the end of the film, the boy is sent off in the back of a truck on a ship (presumably going to Italy), the boy will still be caught up within the symbolic system of global capitalism. In addition,

Alexander and the boy do not speak the same language, that is, their relationship is outside language; yet, there are attempts to use language, as for instance with the term *xenitis*. In none of these cases, resistance to existing structures is possible from a beyond or outside of these structures.

The life and death of the refugees are linked to capitalism and national identity in one additional and important way in the film. In a scene in which Alexander and the Albanian boy find the boy's friend, Selim, dead in the harbor, we see a small aircraft carrying a streamer for a credit card from a Greek bank. The name of the card and the bank (*Ethnokarta, Ethniki Trapeza tis Ellados* – National Card of the National Bank of Greece) reappears in a scene later in the film. In the latter scene, Selim's friends gather together in a building under construction in order to burn Selim's clothes and bid him farewell. Alexander is there too, and when he steps out into the street, we see a poster for the same credit card and bank. Thus, in these two scenes, the life and death of refugees is intertwined with capital and with the ethnos and the national community. The solution to the refugees' problems, it would seem, is the transformation of capitalism and national communities and borders.⁸

How this can be done may become evident if we consider the scene where the Albanian children burn the dead boy's clothes. In this scene, there is a subversion of the distinction between inside and outside. The children, who are outsiders and excluded from the larger Greek community, create their own small, provisional community around the fire—their own "inside," as it were. The community of children is at once excluded from the Greek community and exists within it. This is also made visible in the structure of the building in which they have the fire. As the building is only halfway finished, it is not clear whether the children are actually outside or inside. That is, the building does not have the structure that can establish a clear inside or outside. One can then argue that, like the building site, the community of refugees is a community under construction, a floating community that does not get settled down within determined borders, rather than an already constituted community. It is my contention that this precisely shows the heterogeneous character of the refugees: they cannot be subsumed to a logic of inside/outside, that is, to a logic of clear and stable borders between the respective identities of different communities. The community of refugee children in *Eternity and a Day* is a community of those who are strangers everywhere, *xenitis*. They are neither simply Greek nor simply Albanian (or of some other nationality). They cannot be categorized according to

national distinctions. They are the neither/nor of the either/or – the neither Greek nor Albanian, neither European nor non-European. It is the discourse of national and political borders that forces a false choice on the refugees: are you foreigners or part of us? Are you Europeans or non-Europeans? And so on and so forth, thus articulating the refugees in terms of “us” and “them,” “inside” and “outside.” Of course, it is only in a discourse of borders that the refugees are articulated as opposed to us. This is linked to how we understand what it means to be home and what it means to be a stranger, to which I will now turn.

COMMUNITIES

The theme of belonging is central to Angelopoulos’s films. Angelopoulos asks the questions, What is a stranger? and, What does it mean to be home? Commenting on this, Angelopoulos has said that “the stranger is not he who comes from outside. To me, exile was always internal”.⁹ If the stranger cannot come from the outside, it is because there is no home in relation to which there can be an outside and in relation to which he can be a stranger. The distinction between home and stranger, us and them, is blurred because neither of the two poles are constituted as an entity with clear limits. The stranger is then not a stranger as opposed to home or as opposed to us. Nor is the stranger someone who is estranged from her home, but a stranger everywhere—*xenitis*. Rather, the stranger is in all of us as part of what it means to be home—a home out of joint.¹⁰

Yet, Angelopoulos also argues that, “‘Home’ for me is the place where we feel a balance in ourselves and between ourselves and the world – the feeling we’ve at last found a place where we’re at ease” (quoted in Romney 1999, p. 10; also in Horton 1997b, p. 106). And, “For me, the voyage is the only way of discovering myself [*de me découvrir moi-même*]” (quoted in Estève 1995, p. 172, my translation). Here we arrive at a hiatus in the interpretation of Angelopoulos’s Balkan trilogy and its view of communities and borders. There are two different conceptions of community and borders and of journey and home at work in Angelopoulos’s films. The protagonists in Angelopoulos’s Balkan trilogy all undertake a journey or a voyage in search of something. They may be in search of a home, and they may be crossing borders in order to arrive at a place of balance where they can feel at ease.

This is one way of reading Angelopoulos's films and his own comments about them.¹¹ Another way is to stress the never-ending character of the journey and the search. If there is no home, if we are strangers everywhere (*xenitis*), then the search is not a search for an authentic home, but rather a displacement of the category of "home." We cross borders, but not in order to eventually arrive home. You may undertake the journey in order to create a dialogue with those on the other side: with the ones beyond the border or with the strangeness in yourself. In either case, what is true of this journey is also true of Angelopoulos's films: "my films never really end. To me they are all 'works in progress.' Like building sites" (quoted in Bachmann 2001b, p. 49). And here we might add: like the community of refugees, like communities that are not self-identical (Angelopoulos in Norton 1997b, p. 109). They do not close with the words "The End," for instance (Bachmann 2001a, p. 38; Fainaru 2001a, p. 135). "For me," Angelopoulos says, "every film is a voyage, everything is voyage, search. Knowledge comes to me during the voyage."¹² The search, the journey is what creates knowledge of and dialogue with the other. Not as an end-goal, but as a process, and therefore as something that must be continued. So, when asked what he is looking for, the protagonist in *Ulysses' Gaze* answers, "Something that may not even exist," that is, not something lost to be recuperated. The same pattern of individuals searching for something, which they do not know what is, reoccurs in Angelopoulos's other films.

The endings of Angelopoulos's films are open to further interpretation and search by the viewer. For instance, the ending of *Eternity and a Day* is left open-ended: at the end of the film, we do not know what the poet Alexander will do next, and whether the film's depiction of his life is complete. In this sense, Angelopoulos's films are, with a term from Roland Barthes, writerly rather than readerly films. They force the viewer to participate in the creation of the meaning of them, rather than passively consuming them (Barthes 1972, pp. 249-60; see also Fainaru 2001, p. viii). Although his films are largely devoid of suspense, Angelopoulos uses the suspension of images and action—for instance, the extensive use of long sequence shots—in order to force the viewer to reflect, not on what will happen next, but on the situation depicted in the film and to take a stand for or against what is happening.¹³ Obviously this also creates a challenge for anyone claiming to have understood Angelopoulos's films. Like communities, Angelopoulos's films are open to continuous contestation and reinterpretation. Like communities, they remain suspended, in-between. We do

not arrive home because there is no home, and we do not arrive at a definite interpretation of the films because such an interpretation is impossible.¹⁴

One's view of the nature of journeys and of home is intrinsically linked to one's view of the nature of communities and borders. In *Ulysses' Gaze*, the protagonist's friend says, "God's first creation was the voyage. Then came doubt and nostalgia." If the journey comes first, that is, if the journey is prior to home, then the journey cannot start from a home, and any nostalgic search for a lost home would be a mistake.¹⁵

What we are witnessing in Europe today is, perhaps, too much nostalgia and too little doubt. The changes in the world and the breaking down of old borders have not been met with doubt about the nature and necessity of our traditional national communities and their borders. What we seem to need is doubt about the necessity and essentiality of identities and borders. The answer to the primacy of the journey – a journey neither from nor to a home – is not nostalgia, but doubt about the need for a home. Instead, what we have witnessed in the Balkans and what we find across Europe today – nationalism, xenophobia, racism – is the nostalgia for a lost home, an authentic anchor in a sea of doubt as an answer to the question of where the journey is from and to. Before going into a discussion of the proper response to these developments, I would like to introduce in a more systematic fashion Laclau's notion of heterogeneity in relation to borders and exclusion.

HETEROGENEITY

In this section, I want to address at a more abstract level how communities and borders are constituted. I shall argue that exclusion is constitutive of any community, and that, in addition, there is always something heterogeneous, something neither simply included nor excluded, something that cannot be thought according to an inside/outside dualism. This has implications for how we assess Angelopoulos's politics, and for how we can start thinking about justice in relation to refugees and borders.

Ernesto Laclau's theory of hegemony provides a way to approach these questions.¹⁶ For Laclau, hegemony refers to the articulation of different elements into a unity that did not exist prior to the articulation, for instance the articulation of different groups or individuals into a community. Thus, there is no essential unity, no essence and no

necessary limits of the community. The community and its limits are the result of contingent, historical articulations – in short, political and social struggles. Heterogeneity is the condition of possibility of creating stable limits of the community. This is so for the following reason. If a community consists of different elements, the question is how the community is represented as a community, as a whole. Following Saussure and post-Saussurean linguistics, Laclau argues that meaning, including the identity of the community, is constituted through relations of difference. The problem is that the community as a whole becomes simultaneously one difference among others. What represents the community as a whole is both different from the elements making up the community *and* representative of these elements taken as whole. The representative represents what is common to the different parts of the community, but, at the same time, the representative is itself one part of the community and, as such, different from the other parts. As an example, one can think of a representative who, although elected by the rest of the community to represent them, is contested because a minority is utterly opposed to her. As a consequence, the identity and the limits of the community remain unstable and indeterminate. It is possible to avoid this problem, however, if the representative of the community empties itself of differential content so that it no longer stands in relations of difference with the other elements within the community. In this way, the representative represents something which none of the elements within the community are opposed to, for instance “freedom.” The “empty” representative stands in for the community as a whole and only that, and the differential elements within the community do not compete with the “empty” representative over representing the community. The representative has ceased to represent a particular part of the community. Through its “emptiness” the representative of the community is able to represent the fullness of the community and to distinguish those who fall within from those who fall outside the borders of the community. Since the representative is able to represent the fullness of the community as, say, “freedom,” everything outside the community will appear as an antagonistic threat to it. Here one only needs to think of the way in which, after 9-11, George W. Bush was able to present himself and be seen as the representative of all of America only months after being elected by a minority of the voters.

However, a problem emerges at this point. The representative cannot in fact empty itself entirely of differential content. In Laclau’s words, it retains a “differential

remainder” (Laclau 1997, p. 262). To take the example of “freedom,” there is a point where it becomes evident that the “freedom” represented by the representative of the community is not the freedom of everyone within the community. This is the point when it becomes clear that the concrete representation of the community is, in fact, the result of a contingent hegemonic articulation. It is the point when it becomes clear that it could be *otherwise*, that someone else might just as well represent the community as a whole, and that there is only a contingent relation between the community as a whole and any particular representative of it. In order to appear empty and in order to appear as representative of the fullness of the community, the contingency of the representative relation must be suppressed. In other words, the contingency of the identity of the community must be rendered invisible. This is what heterogeneity refers to: heterogeneity is that which is suppressed in order to make possible the stable and clear identity and limits of the community. The suppression of heterogeneity is the suppression of contingency, of the non-necessity of the identity and limits of the community. The heterogeneous is not excluded in the sense of opposed to the community. For instance, it is not “evil” or “terrorism” as opposed to “freedom,” because it resists representation within oppositions such as these. Yet, it continues to exist in the social and political field. The task for the social critic is, then, to focus on these heterogeneous elements and on what they make possible, and this is precisely what Angelopoulos is doing: making visible the heterogeneous excess from capitalism and nationalism. Focusing on these elements makes us able to imagine things otherwise, that is, to see possibilities for social and political transformation. This is so because seeing what heterogeneity makes possible shows the contingent history of how things are in the present. These heterogeneous elements, which cannot be officially represented or captured in the dominant conceptual categories, are the points of departure for a transformation of existing frameworks: conceptual schemes, power structures, legal institutions, political borders, and so on. The heterogeneous elements can be the points of departure for the reading of a text or a film, because they open up the representational framework of the text or film. As such, they are points of entry for a writerly reading of a text or film.

In *Eternity and a Day*, as well as in the other films in Angelopoulos’s Balkan trilogy, the refugees signal us towards the contingency of political borders. The refugees occupy a position in-between, neither inside nor outside the community, that is, they are heterogeneous to political and national distinctions. The refugees make

visible the violence, symbolic as well as physical, that institutes the borders of political and national communities. Angelopoulos's films try to represent what the borders of communities do to people's lives. The films try to make visible – through the realistic image – that which bears witness to the contingency of the identity and the limits of the community. However, the effect of the images is not a realistic representation of the heterogeneous, which would be impossible, but rather the creation of poetic images forcing the viewer to reflect on the images. Angelopoulos's films combine realistic, almost documentary, images (for instance, the sequence shot) with the suggestive power of poetic images. The suggestive power is based on the realistic images, but exceeds them (Horton 1997a, p. 5f). Thus, the images of Angelopoulos's films, and indeed the films themselves, are not closed totalities. This forces the viewer to become active in the interpretation of the images and of the films, to fill the gap, as it were, between the realistic image and its poetic and political interpretation (p. 8). Hence, as argued above, the cinematic representation of heterogeneity forces the viewer to reflect on the historical conditions of this state of affairs and on how it could be transformed. In short, making visible the refugees as a heterogeneous excess forces the viewer to reflect on the contingency of the borders of our communities and on the violence that instituted them.

Eternity and a Day also offers an alternative however, namely the community of the refugee children. This is a community without stable or clear limits, a community that is not like an inside to an outside. It is a community without a fixed center; it is, for instance, scattered across the city, only gathering momentarily. This image of a community, I will argue, is a way to start thinking about community, borders, inclusion and justice in terms of heterogeneity.

THE POLITICS OF HETEROGENEITY

It should be clear from the argument so far that, although my aim is to criticize the immigration and asylum policies of European countries, the solution cannot be to assert a universal community. There can be no universal community because there is no community without borders and exclusion and without internal division. This much follows from Laclau's theory of hegemony and heterogeneity. Even a universal community needs to be represented, and this representation can only be contingent.

Therefore, and in order to suppress the contingency, something must be excluded, not necessarily as opposed to the (“universal”) community, but as an excess that cannot be placed as either inside or outside the community. Hence, the solution is not to be found in cosmopolitanism, at least not if we by cosmopolitanism understand the possibility of a universally inclusive world-state. This is not to say that post-national and supra-national institutions should be *prima facie* rejected. For instance, there may be good reasons for supra-national institutions to curb capitalism and rogue states.¹⁷ Cosmopolitanism may be a step away from the exclusions that follow from national borders, but we should not be led into believing that cosmopolitanism can do away with exclusion as such. There is no inclusion – of refugees, for instance – without exclusion. Inclusion and openness do not come out of nowhere, they must first be instituted and this will involve some exclusion. Therefore the task is not simply to oppose exclusion but also to question *which* exclusions are made and the *way* in which they are made. That is, the question is how we react to the fact that exclusion is constitutive.

My contention is that this requires that we think *otherwise* about inclusion and exclusion, borders and communities. With regard to this, Robert Goodin has put forward a critique of contemporary models of inclusion. According to Goodin, one of the problems with current uses of the terms inclusion and exclusion is that they work with a flawed notion of unity. “The true source of our anxieties [...],” Goodin writes, “lies not in the practice of exclusion but in that of inclusion,” because “the problem of exclusion is that there *is* an inclusive community.” Hence, “the solution is not to make our communities more inclusive but rather to change their nature” (Goodin 1996, p. 344). Since we tend to think of inclusion as emanating from a (nation-state) center, the inclusion of the otherwise excluded merely confers a marginalized status upon the latter (p. 348). As a consequence, Goodin proposes a new concept of the state (pp. 363ff), but at this point he pulls back from a more radical conclusion. He envisages “a system of multiple, overlapping ‘sovereignties,’ with lots of different levels and places one might lodge an application or an appeal” (p. 364). For the people who nonetheless fall outside the sovereignty and protection of any state, “we will need some agency [...] to take residual responsibility for those who find no one else to take care of them” (p. 366). “This would not be an overarching authority. It stands beneath, not above, the other elements of this larger network,” in order “to pick up the pieces that inevitably get left behind” (*ibid.*). For Goodin, inclusion becomes a matter

of simply adding new institutions—“with lots of different levels and places”—as well as institutions to pick up the pieces, the residue and leftover. Although Goodin acknowledges the constitutivity of exclusion for inclusion, the problem with his proposal is that it will leave those who are thus residually included still marginalized, which was what Goodin wanted to avoid in the first place. The task cannot be simply to add yet another inclusive institution; rather, the task must be to rethink the inclusion/exclusion constellation, and to rethink the way we build our institutions. Rather than relegating the residuals to residual and marginal positions within the system of inclusion or denoting them as foreign and thereby excluding them, I will argue that thinking *differently* about inclusion/exclusion involves rethinking our notions of community, limits and inclusion in light of the heterogeneous remainders from our traditional ways of thinking about these things.

It is for this reason that I have suggested that we take the status of refugees as the starting point for rethinking the way in which the boundaries of our communities are constituted.¹⁸ As I remarked earlier, there has been a certain shift away from politics in the course of Angelopoulos’s career. As he says: “I used to believe in politics. I now consider myself a non-believer” (in Romney 1999, p. 10). More specifically, there has been a shift from Marxism to a certain humanism. This is also reflected in the protagonists of his films: where they used to be collectives, they are now individuals. Nonetheless, as I have argued, the stories of individuals are set against a political context framing the lives of the individuals. However, there is an important double ambiguity in Angelopoulos’s films. His earlier films depicted collectives as, on the one hand, ultimately irrepresentable entities without clear limits and identities and, on the other hand, as representatives of History, as the “vehicles of ideology,” thus reducing the collectivities to an underlying teleology of History.¹⁹ In his later works, including the Balkan trilogy, this ambiguity disappears, but a new one emerges. In the later films, the protagonists are no longer collectives but individuals, often played by well-known actors (Marcello Mastroianni, Harvey Keitel, Bruno Ganz). While this shift from collectives to individuals can be seen as a shift to a more bourgeois individualistic ideology, the individuals also become the faces of a universal humanism. Yet, in Angelopoulos’s Balkan trilogy, there is also a displacement of space (of nation, community, and so on) reflecting the idea of a home that is not fully constituted and cannot be represented. Both the earlier and the later films are, thus, political, even if in different ways (Jameson 1997, pp. 86-94). What is

important here are the different ways of being political: it can refer to the representation of History or a universal humanity, or it can refer to the rendering visible of the heterogeneous, that which cannot be represented in the present. As I have tried to argue in this paper, it is in the latter, rather than in the former, sense that Angelopoulos's Balkan trilogy is an intervention in the debates about migration and national identity.

The humanism in Angelopoulos's later films is connected to ideas of home, language and communication. For instance, in *Ulysses' Gaze*, which is the story of a search for "a lost glance, a lost innocence," namely the less complicated world of the past (Fainaru 2001b, pp. 94f, 97). Similarly, although Angelopoulos does not want us to go back to the life in the village, he has a romantic view of life in the village: "What do I want to happen [in Greece]? I simply want our life here to become more human. As you know we have lost so much in Athens. Crime, pollution, traffic, the impersonality of the city, so much. We need to return to those places to find much of what is still important, authentic to our lives."²⁰ Although this romantic view does not entail an image of an ethnically clean Greece, it seems to me to suggest a wrong approach to community. It suggests a harmonious image of social life, an image which historically has often merely functioned to hide underlying conflicts.

This is also related to the view of language and communication. Angelopoulos sees language and communication as a means to cross borders, to reach out and touch, and be touched by, the other: "I want a new politics in the world with vision. And this will not be a simple matter of balancing an economy and the military. It must be a new form of communication between people" (in Horton 2001, p. 83; see also p. 88, and Horton 1997a, p. 208). In all three films in the Balkan trilogy, the hope of communication with the other is central: crossing the river at the end of *The Suspended Step of the Stork*, traveling along rivers in *Ulysses' Gaze*, and exchanging words across language barriers in *Eternity and a Day*. Moreover, language and communication is a means to open ourselves to the other and to decenter our selves. What I would like to insist on here is that this opening up to and inclusion of the other cannot be absolute; it is always conditional on its institutionalization, involving the simultaneous violent exclusion of the other. Thus, we should not idealize language and communication in the way that, for instance, Jürgen Habermas does.

The problem with Angelopoulos's position is that it risks overlooking the constitutivity of borders and exclusions. There can be no going back, or indeed going

forward, to a situation of non-exclusion and non-violence. What we need in this regard is a bit of doubt about the eradicability of exclusion. This argument for the constitutive necessity of borders and exclusions is not an argument for the necessity of any *particular* borders and exclusions or any particular *kinds* of borders and exclusions. From the constitutivity of borders or exclusions nothing follows about the justifiability of any particular borders or exclusions are justified. Concrete borders and exclusions are precisely the contingent results of historical political and social struggles. Likewise, we may be able to create more inclusive societies than the societies in which we live today. But this depends on concrete political interventions in concrete circumstances. What political theory can attempt to do is to provide us with a different way of approaching these questions, a different way of seeing, by showing us what cannot be seen in the present.

The notion of heterogeneity is an attempt to do just this. It forces us to reflect on the borders that we have created, and on the exclusions that we have made. And it forces us to try to imagine things otherwise, for instance to try to imagine a Europe that is no Fortress Europe, and to try to re-articulate our conceptual and legal categories of “refugees” and “economic migrants.” In this regard it is not enough to break down existing borders and divisions; one needs to break with a certain way of thinking identity, community and home.²¹ This does not mean that we can do justice to the heterogeneous, however, because exclusion and violence cannot be eliminated. In other words, since the heterogeneous is heterogeneous to institutions of justice (law), doing justice to the heterogeneous is always deferred, to come (*à venir*), to use an expression from Jacques Derrida (1992a, p. 27). We cannot represent the heterogeneous in a manner that does justice to it, representing it as it “really” is in its “essence,” because it has no essential identity. Likewise, we cannot do justice by creating a new home for the heterogeneous, because the heterogeneous is what escapes and resists the institutionalization of a home. To justice there is always a tomorrow escaping any attempt to make justice determinate and present. This futural excess over the present is also expressed in the paradoxical formulation of the title *Eternity and a Day*. “How long does tomorrow last?” the poet Alexander asks. The answer is, “An eternity and a day.” So, the most we can do is to represent the heterogeneous in a (necessarily) distorted way, whether artistically or politically. And this must mean that our representations as well as our institutions are marked by this impossibility of doing justice. As such, the possibility of their contestation, of their

subversion must be, as far as is possible, built into them. For instance, the identities of our communities must be contestable through the contestation of the immigration and asylum policies supporting, and supported by, them.

Of course, there is nothing inherently heterogeneous about refugees, and refugees “are” not heterogeneity. The term ‘heterogeneity’ is merely a non-synonymous substitute I use to refer to things that occupy a certain position in relation to conceptual and representational distinctions within a given discourse. And the figure of the refugee, as represented in Angelopoulos’s Balkan trilogy, does not enjoy an essential privilege in relation to the category of heterogeneity, even if I have used it as an example of the latter here. In this regard, one must avoid, as far as is possible, any ontologization of the refugee *qua* heterogeneity (or of the category of heterogeneity itself). There is an inescapable tension between the irrepresentability of the heterogeneous and the figure of the refugee, as represented in Angelopoulos’s films for instance, and as the privileged site of radical democratic transformation of the present. This is a productive tension, however, because it calls attention to the essential danger of any attempt to represent what cannot be represented, whether as a political strategy or merely as the attempt to grasp the irrepresentable with categories like “irrepresentable” and “heterogeneity.” This tension or paradox should not lead to passivity or defeatism, but to the celebration of the open-ended character of democracy. What is more, although I have privileged the figure of the refugee in the preceding, the refugee is only one among other sites of political transformation, none of which can be privileged *a priori*.

Finally, there is nothing inherently progressive about heterogeneity or in the rearticulation of the heterogeneous. This is evident, for example, in the ways in which refugees in today’s Europe are articulated by the Far Right as a threat to the national communities. As an expression of the contingency of the constitution of the identity of communities, refugees do, in a certain sense, pose a threat to the identity of communities. In the Far Right discourse, which has also crept into the discourse of many right wing and center parties, refugees are articulated as a foreign element whose expulsion from the community would make the community harmonious. In this sense, the politics of heterogeneity remain open-ended. There are no guarantees here.

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Biography

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Notes

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² Horton 1997a, p. 71. His most recent film, *Weeping Meadows* (2004) also takes up issues of migration.

³ Laclau 1998, pp. 154-56; Pessoa et al. 2001, pp. 9f, 15. The notion of heterogeneity can also be found in Jacques Derrida's work, see for instance Derrida (2002). However, in Laclau's work, it is explicitly brought to bear on issues of the identities and limits of communities.

⁴ On Angelopoulos in relation to 'Balkan Cinema,' see Iordanova (1996, p. 888).

⁵ Hence also why it is ultimately impossible to distinguish between (political) refugees and (economic) immigrants, as if the former were a matter of life or death and the latter merely a matter of economic comfort. As a consequence, I will use the term 'refugees' to refer to both groups in the following.

⁶ For a similar reading of *The Suspended Step of the Stork*, see Ishaghpour 1992, although he distinguishes between (1) the guards guarding and upholding the border, (2) the refugees who are looking for a home, and (3) the disappeared politician, whom the journalist has come to find, and who has rejected the ideology of borders, home and the "proper" ("idéologies du 'propre,'" p. 168). Compare Rovisco's (2004) different interpretation of this film.

⁷ Quoted in E. Fainaru 2001, p. 76. Cf. also Hannah Arendt's (1943) assertion that the refugee is the paradigm for thinking politics and the state today. Several theorists have taken up this idea, among them Giorgio Agamben and Bonnie Honig.

⁸ On the relation between global capitalism and nationalist ideology, see Žižek (1999).

⁹ In Levieux 1998, my translation. Angelopoulos says the same about himself: 'I have always felt as if I were in exile in my own [propre] pays, a kind of interior exile. I have never found my home [domicile], a place where I feel in harmony with myself and with the world. Like my characters, I feel lost' (Angelopoulos 2004, my translation).

¹⁰ For a related analysis of the use of "home" in political discourse, see Honig (1996). See also Derrida (1992b, pp. 9f) on the idea of identity as always different from itself.

¹¹ Indeed, this is how Maria Rovisco (2004) interprets *The Suspended Step of the Stork*: as home-coming, as the discovery of one's identity after a period of destabilization. Thus, while she acknowledges the transitional character of the refugee community in *The Suspended Step of the Stork*, she nonetheless believes that the refugees are able to feel at home here. While I do not want to dispute that one may be able to come to terms with the transitional and unstable character of home, what I want to resist is to think of home as something opposed to what is foreign, transitional and unstable; this is a step that Rovisco does not seem ready to take.

¹² In Bachmann (2001b, p. 52). See also Schulz (2001, p. 122). The protagonists in the three films in the Balkan trilogy are all transformed in one way or the other by the journeys they undertake.

¹³ See also Estève (1984, p. 20) on this aspect of Angelopoulos in relation to one of his earlier films.

¹⁴ The difference between the two interpretations of Angelopoulos's films could be expressed as the difference between Heidegger's and Derrida's view of language—see Angelopoulos's comments on Heidegger and language in Schulz (2001, p. 121). See also Ravetto's comments (1998, p. 55).

¹⁵ See note 11 above.

¹⁶ Cf. Laclau (1996, chapter 3). For a discussion of Laclau's theory of hegemony and the notion of heterogeneity in relation to inclusion and exclusion, see Thomassen (forthcoming 2005).

¹⁷ For instance, Angelopoulos suggests that the positive aspect of the European Union is that it leads to the abolition of national borders. The problem, he argues, is that, so far, this has only happened at an economic and not at a political level, cf. Fainaru (2001a, p. 147).

¹⁸ Cf. note 7 above.

¹⁹ Estève 1984, p. 17. Estève interprets Angelopoulos's work as humanist from the beginning.

²⁰ In Horton (1997, p. 206), cf. also p. 11. See also Horton (2001, p. 88), where Angelopoulos opposes Athens to life outside the city, and where the former is a deformed and distorted version of the true Greece represented by the latter.

²¹ See Ruggle (1991, p. 21). For an interesting argument about this in relation to apartheid discourse, see Norval (1994).