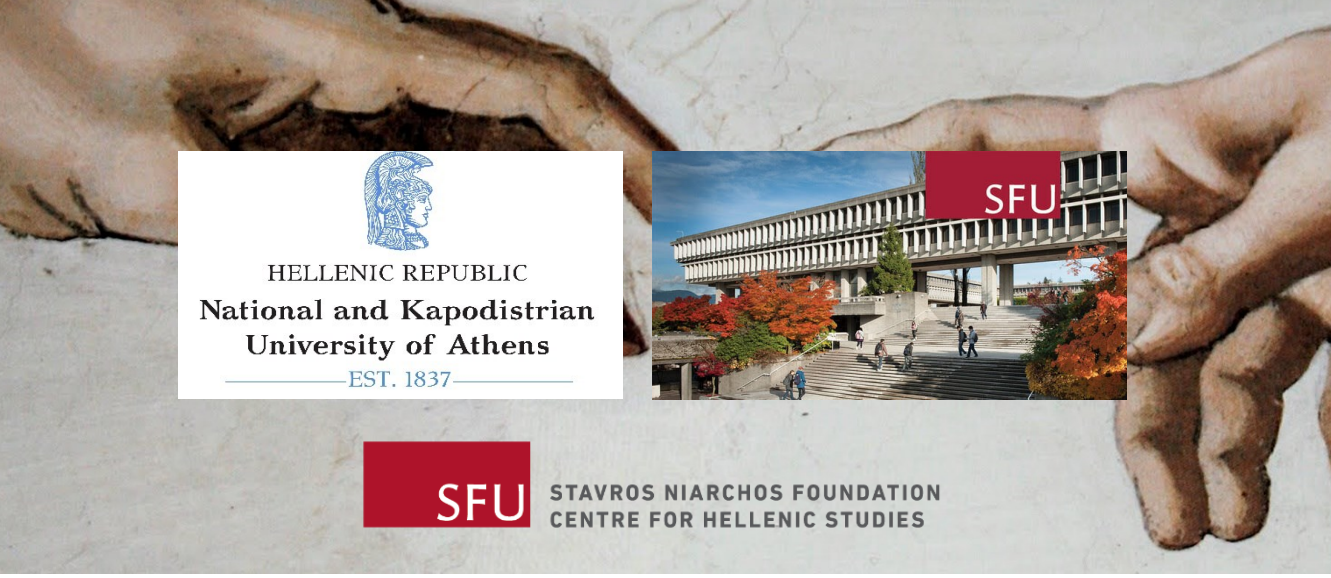


XENOΣ

THE STRANGER, THE FOREIGNER, THE REFUGEE.

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

Edited by

Kirki Kefalea (NKUA)

Eirini Kotsovili (SFU)

ATHENS 2024

Page intentionally left blank.

ΧΕΝΟΣ

THE STRANGER
THE FOREIGNER, THE REFUGEE.

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
PROCEEDINGS

Edited by

Kirki Kefalea (NKUA) | *Eirini Kotsovili (SFU)*

ISBN: 978-618-87365-7-3

εκδόσεις
Εθνικού και Καποδιστριακού
Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών

Page intentionally left blank.

Preface

It is a great pleasure for me to offer this introductory note for the papers presented at the International Workshop on "Xenos" at the School of Theology, which our Department of Social Theology and the Study of Religion organized together with the Department of Global Humanities and the Stavros Niarchos Centre for Hellenic Studies of Simon Frazer University (Vancouver, Canada).

The topic of the Workshop was titled "Xenos"; as in the "Stranger", the "Other", the "Foreigner", the "Refugee"; a thematic interdisciplinary issue with multiple meanings. It is a word which comes from ancient times and has a diachronic continuity.

This word is as old as the world; it appears in ancient Greek mythology, in the Homeric epics; it has a significant meaning and relates to "hospitality" and with Zeus (Ξένιος Δίας), the God of Guests. The word "Xenia" in Greek, translates to the custom of offering protection and hospitality to strangers and it is seen mostly through Homer's *Odyssey*.

But it is not only in Homer, but also in the Bible that the word "Stranger" appears and affirms strongly the obligation to treat Strangers with dignity and hospitality. The Israelites were "Strangers" during their enslavement in Egypt and captivity in Babylon. The Bible recognizes that every one of us can be a Stranger and, for that very reason, we need to overcome our fear of those who live among us whom we do not know.

In the *New Testament* the value of welcome and generosity to the "Stranger" and to the "Foreigner", are reflected in the Book of Mathew (25:31-40): "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me"; a grudging or discriminatory approach for the "Stranger" is completely unacceptable.

In modern times we encounter the term and its meanings in relation to contemporary historical events, such as the 1922 Asia Minor disaster, explored further in many literary texts, with novelists – including Ilias Venezis, Yorgos Ioannou and Dido

Sotiriou – reflecting in their prose pieces about the experiences of refugees.

The concept “Foreigner”, “Stranger” - which concerns every society – moves beyond the categories of national identity, race or religion; it does not present a challenge for the Other, it is not a rival nor an enemy but the opposite: it is connected with acceptance and solidarity. This was the main theme of our diverse Workshop, incorporating various interpretations and different aspects, with participants joining us to present on the topic from multiple disciplines, including Theology, History, Literature and Bioethics.

The Workshop was intellectually stimulating, even if time was limited for subject matter of this complexity. It gave us the opportunity to start reflecting together on research findings, questions and contemplating ways to approach the topic. Our objectives were to create a forum for emerging scholars to present their research as well as connect participants and academic institutions. These have been successfully accomplished and have generated the hope that this will be the beginning for further academic activities, within the broader academic community. I would like to thank all participants and those who worked hard for organizing this Workshop - especially PhD Candidate Mr. Dimitrios Alexopoulos, and the Organizing Committee; namely, colleagues Pr. Sotirios Despotis, Dr. Apostolos Michailidis, as well as Dr. Eirini Kotsovili and Dr. James Horncastle - for this very productive collaboration.

Kirki Kefalea, Professor

Department of Social Theology and the Study of Religion
School of Theology
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Introduction

As mentioned by Dr. Kefalea, the workshop's topic allowed for broader reflections and dialogue between disciplines, and among established and up-and-coming academics. It also brought together members of different academic communities at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, including students from the Burnaby Campus of Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada, located on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh), kʷikʷəƛ̓əm (Kwikwetlem), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations.

Papers were organized in chronological order and themes, taking us from the pre-modern to world to contemporary times. They traced textual references to the concept of who -and what- is considered foreign/other. They addressed what constitutes hospitality, acceptance and estrangement in Homeric epics, and how it could serve as a descriptor that can connote a form of political resistance in warring states of China. They also illustrated how one's difference can be embraced via costumes in a multicultural setting in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Further, our presenters explored attitudes towards the 'Strangers', the 'foreigners', in religious texts -- such as in the gospel of Matthew -- and also in non-verbal gestures, and acts of recognition or supplication of individuals; in doing so, they offered us the opportunity to immerse ourselves deeper into symbolic interactions within a given belief system, with powerful connotations on the formations of identities - new and old.

The focus of the presentations also shifted to music and literature. It ranged from reflections on the socio-political structure of Greek culture and understandings of belonging, to the literary works of important Greek and American writers in which individual, anonymous figures – 'strangers' -- are the ones who can observe the failings of societies.

Presentations also made references to the critical and topical issues relating to migration and refugees. They explored policies on migration, as well as narratives of healing in the aftermath of traumatic

historical events, such as the Asia Minor catastrophe; they also addressed mid 20th c philosophical reflections on exiles and members of various diasporas. The final session of this workshop, focused on 21st century perspectives on past and future selves. These spanned from postcolonial retellings of otherness and the power of writing with socio-political significance, to identifying key challenges we are faced with in this day and age; to connecting new knowledges with existing frameworks and beliefs; and, finally, to contemplating ethical engagement and exploration of new opportunities and sense of belonging in an expanding cosmos.

All in all, the presentations offered a rich and diverse exploration of the concept and manifestations of 'Xenos' across time, geographic location, traditions, and texts—and provided a fascinating glimpse into how one can approach related notions from a variety of perspectives and connections, as well as an invitation for future contemplations, conversations and collaborations on the topic. Papers from the Workshop that are not included in this edited volume, have become parts of other projects, thus amplifying our efforts for connecting and engaging with members of the broader academic community as we examine important debates and their significance in various contexts.

I am very grateful to the presenters, for their thought-provoking presentations, and to the fellow organizing committee members - namely, Dr. Kefalea, Dr. Despotis, Dr. Michailides and PhD Candidate Dimitrios Alexopoulos from the Department of Social Theology and the Study of Religion and Dr. Horncastle, from the Department of Global Humanities and SNF Centre for Hellenic Studies at Simon Fraser University - for their enthusiasm, their dedication and hard work as we prepared this workshop and for the ideas it generated for ensuing projects.

Eirini D. Kotsovili

Lecturer, Simon Fraser University

Opening remarks

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the Administration and the whole academic community of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, I am delighted to welcome you all to Greece, to Athens, and to our university. As you probably know, NKUA is the biggest and, certainly, the oldest university not only in Greece but also in the eastern Mediterranean area. With a student body of about 68.500 undergraduate and postgraduate students, over 2.100 members of academic staff and approximately 1.000 administrative and secretarial staff and specialised personnel, our university aims at excellence in both teaching and research in a significantly varied range of disciplines.

This is why I am truly pleased that our institution through the Department of Social Theology and the Study of Religion, and the Simon Fraser University of Canada with its Stavros Niarchos Centre for Hellenic Studies and the Global Humanities Department have joint forces to launch a brilliant interdisciplinary initiative for senior and young researchers to meet and explore subjects on the top of world's agenda.

The Workshop on "Ξένος", on the estranged Other, is an international academic event. You have gained a special place in the inspirational opportunities the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens makes every effort to provide its staff and students with, including our ERASMUS+ and CIVIS programs, and so much more via our international bilateral agreements of scientific cooperation.

In its millennia-long history, Hellenic culture has always kept alive as sacred the flame of hospitality. Respecting and catering for the unknown other, be it traveler, refugee, or even the outcast, has been a way of peaceful interaction between converging or diverging traditions and ideas. The same applies for Canada and

the Canadian people constantly ranking at the top of international community in terms of multiculturality, human and civil rights, and democracy.

Confronted today with a variety of challenges on Earth as well as in Outer Space, there is urgent need to reimagine our understandings of affinity and alterity, of good will and of xenophobia, and to progressively articulate new goals, so all citizens may access the required knowledge and skills to lead their lives as creative individuals and competent professionals in a rapidly changing society.

I therefore extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the esteemed faculty members from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Simon Fraser University for organizing today's event, and especially to all our promising researchers from both Greece and Canada for opting in co-exploring this outstanding theme. I would also like to extend my special thanks and congratulations to my dear colleague, Prof. Kirki Kefalea, for all the efforts she exerted for the workshop to succeed and for the unceasing enthusiasm she has invested in this project!

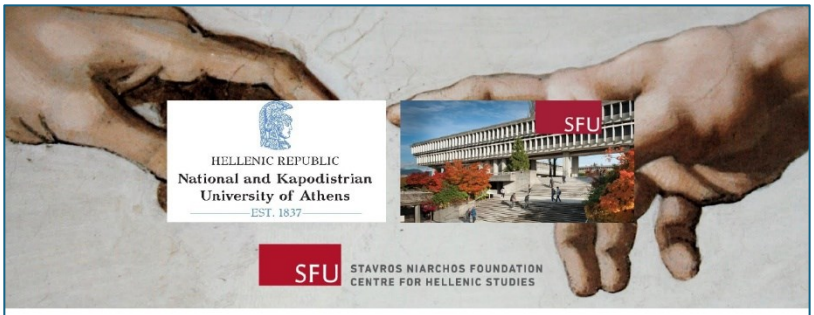
I sincerely wish you every success in the proceedings of Xenos Workshop!

Professor Dimitrios Karadimas

Vice Rector for Academic and Student affairs

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

TABLE OF CONTENTS



XENOΣ

[The Stranger, the Foreigner, the Refugee]

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
ATHENS, GREECE | 28.05.2023

Organised by the Departments of
SOCIAL THEOLOGY & THE STUDY OF RELIGION [NKUA], GREECE
GLOBAL HUMANITIES [SFU], CANADA

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

- Professor Dr. Sotirios Despotis [NKUA]
- Professor Dr. Kirki Kefalea [NKUA]
- Dr. James Horncastle [SFU]
- Dr. Eirini Kotsovili [SFU]
- Dr. Apostolos Michailidis [NKUA]
- PhD Cand. Mr. Dimitrios Alexopoulos [NKUA]

PROGRAMME

PART I

10:00-10:50 | School of Theology Guided Tour

PART II: SHORT PRESENTATIONS

- **Place:** Multimedia Events Venue, School of Theology Building, University Campus (Panepistimiopolis), Ano Ilisia, 15772, Athens Greece.
- **Online Participation:**
  https://zoom.us/j/8199745806?pwd=V1FicExVZkJoK3Q3THB2c0MvemVMQT09
  Meeting ID: 819 974 5806
  Passcode: 3KgNeY
- **YouTube Livestreaming:** https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQ_cJ0q8u4VsNgHmeSswk-Q

IN THE BEGINNING

10:50-11:00 | Opening address and welcome messages on behalf of the Organising Committee

- Welcome Message by Professor Dr. Dimitrios Karadimas,
  Vice Rector for Academic and Student Affairs [NKUA]
- Opening address by Professor Dr. Kirki Kefalea [NKUA] and Dr. Eirini Kotsovili [SFU]

MYTILENE SESSION [A]

11:00-11:24 | Reflections on otherness in pre-modern material culture; from textual references to epic poetry and proto-daoist texts, to costumes and design.

- **The "foreigner"; in the Homeric epics**
  By Miltiades Vasilopoulos, M.A. Candidate [NKUA]

Abstract: The mention of the "foreigner"; in the Homeric epics, on a global level, almost automatically creates an association, that of the well-known ancient Greek hospitality. The purpose of this paper is to give a different perspective on the concept of "foreigner" in the Iliad and the Odyssey. It aims to go beyond the ancient Greek institution and to show that in the Homeric epics the "foreigner" in several cases is treated with the sole criterion of the personal culture of the heroes or the personal needs of each one or even the willingness to point out the "class" differences that may exist between those involved. More specifically, at the beginning of the Iliad, the priest Chryses visits the king of the Greeks, Agamemnon, in the most formal way, so as to offer rich rewards and ask to take his daughter back. However, his treatment by Agamemnon has nothing to do with the typical hospitality of the ancient Greeks. Much further down in the Iliad, just before his conflict with Achilles, the Trojan prince Hector, in a very tender scene with his wife and child, gives a different dimension to the concept of the "stranger"; and the fate that awaits him. At the very beginning of the Odyssey, the fairy Calypso presents us with her own perspective on the "stranger"; Odysseus, who is on her island as well as herself as a "stranger"; in the ranks of the Olympian gods. It is a different look at the subject of the "foreigner", a different perspective, far from ancient hospitality, a consideration of this concept that is closer to modern times than to Homeric.

- **Zhuangzi and the Estranged Body as Political Resistance in Warring States China (475-221)**
  By Dr. Paul Crowe, Associate Professor [SFU]

- **The foreigner in 1st c. Palestine through the lens of garments**
  By Evelina-Stefania Denbek [NKUA]

Abstract: This presentation aims to present some key findings on the identification of the foreigner through the different types of clothing worn in Palestine and specifically in Jerusalem during the first century. Located historically and geographically at the crossroads of ancient trade routes that connected the regions of the so-called "Fertile Crescent" (Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Mesopotamia), the Jerusalem of the 1st century was a multicultural composition with a distinct costume palette. The clothing choices, which dominated the city, naturally, came primarily from the Jewish culture. They were also associated with the Romans, the Greek and Hellenistic presence from Cyprus, Crete, both the islands and the mainland of Greece, as well as the Decapolis. Additional influences from eastern climates of Mesopotamia, Persia and Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) are observed in a significant number of costume elements. Therefore, the kind and type of clothing constituted one of the first, if not the first, element of how a 'foreigner' was recognized and identified, as well as his rights and obligations in the glorious city of David and Solomon.

11:24-11:30 | SESSION A - Q & A

ERESSOS SESSION [B]

11:30-11:48 | Pre-modern references to being a foreigner in the Mediterranean region

- **The "Stranger" in the Gospel of Matthew in the light of the Greek Tradition of the Mediterranean region.**
  By Dr. Sotirios Despotis, Professor and
  Argyro Marinopoulou, PhD Candidate [NKUA]

Abstract: The foreigner plays an important role in Matthew's Gospel (the ecclesiastical Gospel par excellence), as the Messiah Jesus himself is identified with him. We compare this role with the corresponding projection of *xenos* in ancient Greek tragedy but also modern texts of the 1st century. A.D. like those of Dion Cassius. We

attempt to draw conclusions regarding the contribution of Christianity to the treatment of the foreigner in the Mediterranean region.

- **Non-verbal communication as a way of approaching the Stranger**
  By Dimitra Tounta, PhD Candidate [NKUA]

Abstract: Communication is a basic and fundamental element of human existence and life, acting as a survival mechanism; between people. Carrying out the communication process comes from the need to connect and interact with each other, within and outside their socio-cultural group. A percentage of our communication with others is verbal while the rest is done non-verbally. Communication elements as non-verbal messages are the nods, the smile, the look, the grimaces, the handshake, the gestures, the gait, as well as the distance from the one we are communicating with. The elements of non-verbal communication are a basic way of approaching the stranger, the person lacking in verbal communication. However nowadays these act as a kind of substitute or supplement for the "real"; message. In the ancient world gestures were not relegated to such a secondary role, but served as means of conveying information that was often either partially or completely different from that conveyed orally. The handshake, the similar arm-to-arm gesture and other gestures were symbolic acts in the ancient world, with varying meanings depending on the occasion. Gestures of recognition or supplication were a vital function of initiating contact between people who until then might have been strangers and the supplicant was usually accepted and enjoyed immunity as a "foreigner", a guest. The form of non-verbal communication in the Jewish world depended on the relationship between persons. For example, the greeting could express interest and sympathy, love and affection, or reverence and honor. Jesus Christ living in the Jewish environment and in the context of the Greco-Roman world used non-verbal elements and approached people in an extraordinary way.

11:48 – 11:55 | SESSION B - Q & A.

11:55-12:00 | SHORT BREAK

MANTAMADOS SESSION [C]

12:00-12:16 | On identity and politics in 19th c. - 20th c. music and literature

- **Wagner's Greek and the Estranged German Volk**
  By Caedyn Lennox, M.A. Candidate [SFU]

Abstract: My presentation will argue that the 19 th C operatic composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883) uses Ancient Greek society as an idealized other to develop an argument that the German people (Volk) have become estranged from their national essence or Germanness. To make this argument, I will briefly situate Wagner's position within its historical, social, and intellectual context before exploring Wagner's writings from 1848-52. I will draw upon Wagner's use of Greek mythic figures such as Antigone and Apollo and Wagner's idealization of Greek festivals such as the Dionysia to show that Wagner uses Greek culture as a foil through which he crafts his critique of German aesthetic society. My presentation will show that Wagner idealizes Greek society by claiming that the external socio-political structure of Greek culture is a reflection of the people's (Volk) inner desires and self-identity, which he juxtaposes against an image of German Volk who have become estranged from their authentic self due to the inauthenticity of the culture's aesthetic production. This argument is important for two reasons. Firstly, Wagner believes that cultural growth within a society is actualized through the artist

and the artist's aesthetic production. Secondly, Wagner's obsession with an authentic national art form is central to his anti-Semitic philosophy, which would ripple throughout Germany in the 19 th century.

- **Strangers in a Stagnant World: A Parallel Reading of Angelos Sikelianos and Mark Twain**
  By Angeliki Korre, PhD Candidate [NKUA]

Abstract: Angelos Sikelianos' poem "The Stranger" and Mark Twain's novel "The Mysterious Stranger" both center on the figure of an anonymous stranger who interacts with the people of a closed society that seems to be stagnant. Although the two texts are completely different in terms of style and subject-matter, influences, and aims, the two strangers that are presented (as well as the two societies) have a lot in common, such as their motives, their opposition to religious systems, and their probable impact on the society they penetrated. We will outline the physiognomy of these figures and take a view of them in comparison with one another, in order to examine the very concept of the "stranger" in its relation to a society.

12:16-12:20 | SESSION C - Q & A

MITHYMNA SESSION [D]

12:20-12:36 | Becoming the foreigner; exploring the legacies of the Asia Minor Catastrophe

- **From Gateway to Shield: Greece in the EU's perception on Migration**
  By James Horncastle, Assistant Professor [SFU]

Abstract: In 2015, European officials, in the middle of one of the largest migration crises to face the continent since the Second World War, frequently blamed Greek officials for not doing enough to stop the migrant flows. European officials cited the Dublin Agreement, and Greece not meeting its obligations, as one of the causes of the crisis. Five years later, in 2020, when the EU once again faced the threat of a migration crisis, however, EU officials' perspective changed. Instead of Greece being the source of the problem, European officials instead argued that Greece was 'Europe's Shield'.This paper argues that the fundamental difference in European officials' perspectives was due not so much to actions within Greece, but rather re-evaluations within the EU. In 2015, Greece was seen as the problem child of the union, with some officials openly floating the idea of removing them from the Eurozone. Between 2015 and 2020, however, circumstances changed within the EU. Specifically, Brexit demonstrated the vulnerability of the organization. As a result, EU officials reassessed Greece's role, and contributions to the organization, and saw Greece not as a potential other, but valuable member.

- **A Hundred Year Friendship: A Greek refugee family meets a Turkish one after the Asia Minor Catastrophe (1922)**
  By Dr. Apostolos Michailidis, Laboratory Teaching Staff [NKUA]

Abstract: The Greek army landed in Smyrna (the present-day Izmir) on May 15 th 1919. In October 1920, it advanced further east into Anatolia, coming into conflict with the armed forces of the National Turkish Movement lead by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) was - like all wars- disastrous for both sides, mainly for the defeated Greeks, who called its outcome "Asia Minor Disaster". It resulted also to the exchange of Christian and Muslim populations, according to the Convention on Exchange of Greek and Turkish populations, singed in Lausanne on January 30, 1923. But what happened when a Greek Christian family

and a Turkish Muslim one were forced to live for some time together? The presentation aims to demonstrate the conceptual content of the term "refugee", narrating the adventures of a Greek refugee family.

12:36 - 12:40 | SESSION D - Q & A

PLOMARI SESSION [E]

12:40-12:56 | On identities, as explored in contemporary literature.

- **The (g)hostliness of Strangers: On Albert Camus's Exiles and Guests"**
  By Dr. Alessandra Capperdoni, Lecturer [SFU]

- **Nikos Kachtitsis; a prominent writer of the Greek Diaspora**
  By Eleni Kyriakou, Lecturer, University of Lisbon

Abstract: This paper draws on my ongoing research into the relationship between gender, history, memory, translation and trauma in twentieth-century European and Canadian Holocaust literature. In particular, I discuss my translation-in-progress of Kachtitsis' work titled "Works" published in 1976 by his long-time friend and poet, Takis Sinopoulos. The translation that has already been concluded that of the main novella of the three included, Hē omorphaschēmē (The Ugly Beauty; 1960) by Greek-Canadian writer, Nikos Kachtitsis (1926-1970)—considered by some to be Greece's answer to Pessoa or Kafka. In addition to this, I further attempt to examine the Here, Kachtitsis' biographical subject blends in with his own persona, thereby problematizing memory and its un/reliability. To what extent can the author's ventriloquized merging of history and fiction be considered a kind of 'authorship', as suggested in feminist theories of translation? Additionally, I attempt to bring to the surface the concept of inception in the Kachtitsis work titled "In the dream" ("To Enypnion"). Both these novels are bridged under the title "Works" ("Erga"), including the first novel "Which friends".

12:56-13:00 | SESSION E - Q&A

AGIASOS SESSION [F]

13:00-13:16 | 21st c. perspectives and new directions on understanding self and other.

- **Decolonizing Self and Other in Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête***
  By Alexandra-Katerina Bacopoulos-Viau
  Clinical Instructor of History in Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College (NYC)

Abstract: How can a reading of Kamel Daoud's 2014 novel *Meursault, contre-enquête* confront us with imagined pasts and imagined selves? In this talk, we will explore Daoud's text – a postcolonial retelling of Camus's *L'Étranger* – as a lens through which to approach questions of trauma, writing, and otherness.

- **Strangest Beings: Bioethical reflections on religions and mankind in outer space**
  By Demetrios Alexopoulos
  MSc. Social Anthropology, LSE, PhD Candidate [NKUA]

Abstract: This presentation aspires to briefly showcase in terms of astroethics and astrobioethics the nature and level of strangeness encountered by religions and human beings in Outer Space. On the face of planet Earth,

humans have evolved to become the ruling species. Likewise, religions of the world have risen through the millennia to become a recognised and respectable, when not decisive, element of human cultures and civilisations. The Space Age, however, had apparently quite different tags in store for both these two earthly power-players. In the cosmic web of vastness and alterity untold that constitutes the observable universe, humans and religions seem to fall among the rarest and strangest occurrences. They seem to demonstrate every sign of not belonging, of not fitting in well with the larger cosmos, not in the long-term the very least. Biological origins as well as essential bioethical issues attached to this unexpected turnout are discussed, and roadmaps are offered that may work towards meaningful human and religious growth in celestial new abodes. Possible options deflecting cosmic strangeness and alterity, is argued, should draw upon interdisciplinary and comparative frameworks informing astroethics and astrobioethics of religions, two emerging and interconnected disciplines of the space sciences family with an ear for the humanities, planetary ethics, religious sciences, and the actual voices and interests of religious actors and institutions themselves, when it comes to their future in the starlight.

13:16 - 13:20 | SESSION – Q&A

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

PART III

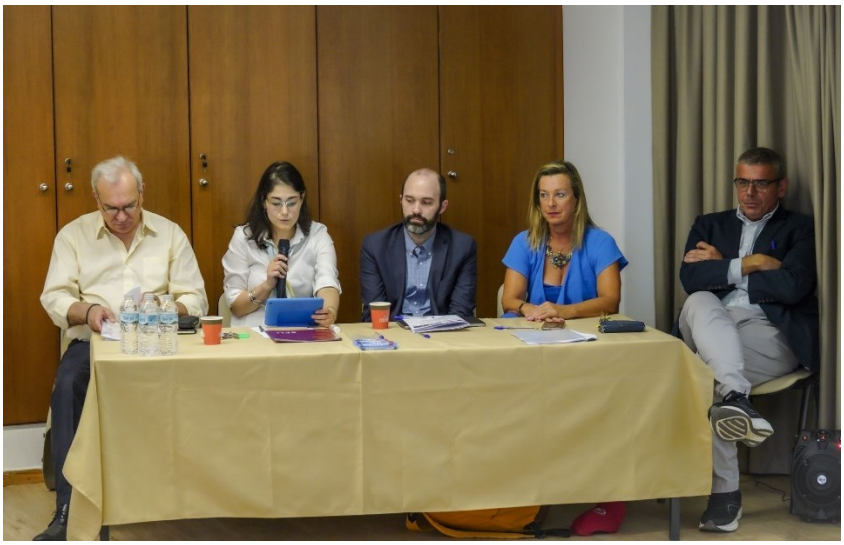
16:00 | In the Footsteps of St. Paul: Exploring and Experiencing Athens of Greco-Roman Antiquity and Beyond.

Fieldwork Team Leader: *Professor Dr. Sotirios Despotis [NKUA]*

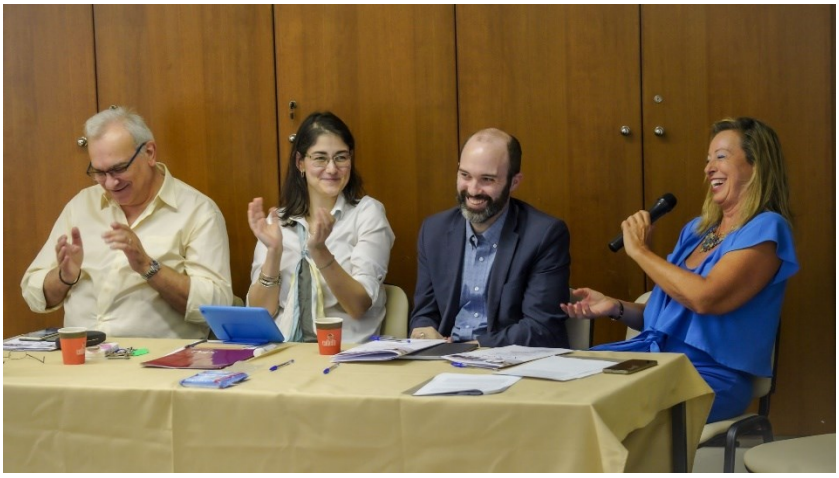
18:00 | [Optional] Visit to shelters of the "Synyparxis" Ecumenical Refugee Programme, a Non-profit Organization of the Church of Greece.

Guided by: Archimandrite Fr. Panteleimon Papasynefakis, General Director of the Programme.

SYNYPARXIS
ECUMENICAL REFUGEE PROGRAMME
Non-profit organization of the Church of Greece



Panel with members of the Organising Committee of the XENOS Workshop.



The Foreigner, clothing and religious identity; the case of the Narration of Alexander the Great's entry into Jerusalem.

Evelina-Stefania Denbek, PhD Candidate,
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

Looking back on the history of the centuries, one can see how clothing held a prominent role in everyday life, which is still felt today. Clothing is a pervasive human need that symbolizes and depicts a person's condition or position. From ancient Greece it was observed that clothing was not something that left citizens indifferent it was certainly a part of everyday life that did not go unnoticed. The function of clothing had two sides: on the one hand, the clothing that someone wears affects the environment in which they are, constituting a form of communication and a highlight of each person's personality. On the other hand, it affects, defines and shapes the person who wears it[1]. Clothing, therefore, automatically highlights the dynamic form of a culture as well as the historical and socio-economic dimension of the people who created it.

The evolution of clothing has always been closely dependent on the form of work one performs, the religious choice and the social status of the individual, while climatic conditions play an equally important role. If we go back to earlier times, we can draw the following conclusion: That the clothes of the Mediterranean people - due to the warmer climate - were plain, comfortable and almost without seams (himation, tunic, togas).[2]

Focusing historically and geographically on the location of Palestine and especially of Jerusalem we observe that the city acts as a crossroad between the ancient trade routes connecting the areas

[1] Anne Hollander, *Fabric of Vision, Dress and Drapery in Painting*, (New York: Bloomsbury publishing, 2022), p. 13
[2] βλ. «*Ενδυμασία*», Encyclopaedia Papyrus Larousse Britannica, Vol 23, (Athens: Papyros, 1996), p. 168

of the so-called "Fertile Crescent" (Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Mesopotamia). Being a multicultural place that often, among other things, brought to the surface the clothing choices of the citizens but also the influence they received upon arrival many times in the process of comparing with each other. The influence from the Romans and the Greeks but also the additional influence of the eastern currents of Mesopotamia, Persia and Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) which originated through trade and the relationships that developed turning clothing to elements of recognition and identification of the "foreigner", while at the same time being a factor to his rights and his obligations.

One of the most characteristic examples of recognition and identification of the "foreigner" is the narration of the entrance of Great Alexander in Jerusalem, which the great historian Flavius Josephus outlines in his book *Jewish Archeology*[3]. The prophecy already exists in the Old Testament, in the book of Daniel (Ch. 8), in which a vision is quoted. With the help of the analysis of the vision by the Archangel Gabriel, it is proven that the prophecy refers to the king of the Greeks, Alexander the Great.

> *[20]The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. [21]The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes is the first king. (Dan. 8:20-21)*

Alexander the Great, with his intelligence and bravery, managed to bring about many victories, while in 332 B.C. he managed to achieve the conquest of Egypt and made his entry as a "foreigner" into Jerusalem.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the frequent references to clothing or decorative elements identifies the social and symbolic

[3] Flavius Josephus, *Ιουδαϊκή Αρχαιολογία*, *Απαντα,* (Βιβλία ΙΑ΄, ΙΒ), Vol.11, (Athens: Kaktos, 1997), p.121-129

importance of clothing for the ancient Israelite society[4]. The more common Jewish term for clothing was the *robe*, which makes an appearance more than 200 times and is used indiscriminately for men (Gen. 39:12), for women (Gen. 38:14), for the torn clothes of a leper (Lev. 13:45), the garments of the high priest (Lev. 8:30), the covering of the poor and the garment of rich (Ezek. 26:16, 27:20). For external coverage, they were using the *cloak,* and could place fringes or tassels on the four conrners, which according to ancient Near Eastern parallels, were threads of embroidery and could be decorated with flowers or bells. They served as hem extensions which had to contain a blue thread as a reminder of the covenant between God and the Israelites (Num. 15:37-41). The more elaborate the hem, the greater one's social status and wealth.

In the priestly tradition, outer garments conveyed power, prestige and identity, which meant that clothing was consequently for high priests an expression of the mediating role for Israel (Ex. 28:29,38). The clothing of high priests was peculiar and elaborate[5]. It consisted of four white vestments which all the priests wore, the *miter*, the *tunic*, the *belt* and the *salwar* above which they wore the linen *ephod* which was a kind of apron - the same as the one worn by king David – made of fine linen cloth and leaves of gold, blue, purple, and red threads (probably wool). Up came the *mail*, a long woolen mantle of blue color with embroidered pomegranate designs of linen and alternating threads blue, purple and scarlet wool - with golden bells (Ex. 28:31-35). They would also wear the hoshen across their chests, on which twelve precious stones were engraved with each of the names of the tribes of Israel (Ex. 28:6-12, 39:2-7), there they believed that the U*rim* and *Thummim* were found (Ex. 28:15-30, 39:8-21). Finally, the high priest would wear on his forehead the golden *tzitz*, a frontispiece

[4] David Noel Freedman, "*DRESS AND ORNAMENTATION*", The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Volume 2 (D-G), (New York: published by Doubleday, 1992), p.232-238

[5] Konstantinos Th. Zarras, «*Ιστορία της Εποχής της Καινής Διαθήκης» (History of New Testament Era)*, Vol. a΄, (Athens: ENNOIA, 2011), p.217-218

inscribed: "Άγιος τω Κυρίω" (Holiness to the Lord). The Levites wore outer garments of fine linen. The priests entering the tabernacle of martyrdom or a holy place (tent of meeting and altar) wore special clothing (Ex. 28:39) while, they wore other clothes when they did not perform temple duties (Ezek. 42:14, 44:19) emphasizing, however, the sanctuary and special character of the priestly garment.

In 525 B.C. the son of Cyrus, Cambyses conquers Egypt[6]. The administration of the region of Syria and Palestine is attributed to the satrapy with a center of administration Damascus. Internally it was divided into provinces, one of which was the area of Jerusalem called Judea, which had a sanctuary. Zerubbabel is designated as the first responsible "local governor" in power, however, at the head is the high priest, flanked by a council of elders (senate/parliament) faithfully following God's written legacy, the Law. This is the situation Alexander faces when he arrives in Jerusalem.

In the spring of 334 B.C. Alexander the Great with an escort of 30,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry and 150 ships enters Asia Minor[7]. Following the victory against the Persian Army (333 B.C.) and heading south showed his strength against the Tire which was destroyed (332 B.C.). He had the cities of Judea and Samaria taken over by Alexander's friend and general, Parmenion. From their side, there was no resistance – perhaps little from Samaria – with Jerusalem sending an offer of peaceful surrender. In the fall of 332 B.C., he conquered Egypt and Alexander entered the city of Jerusalem as a liberator from the Persian yoke.

As mentioned above, the most important source mentioning the visit of Alexander the Great in Jerusalem, is attributed to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (1st century A.C.) in his work

---

[6] Timoleon Galanis, «*Ο Μέγας Αλέξανδρος στην Ιερουσαλήμ» (Alexander the Great in Jerusalem),* (Thessaloniki: Ostracon, 2018), p.25-39

[7] Zarras, «*Ιστορία της Εποχής της Καινής Διαθήκης» (History of New Testament Era),* p.101-102

Jewish Archeology[8]. According to Josephus, Alexander the Great arrives at the Propylaia of the city and after meeting with the high priest, enters its interior.

According to the historian, there had been a written communication from Alexander with the Jews, when the former was in a long-month siege of Tyre (332 B.C.) asking for their support[9]. They refused, citing various reasons as an excuse. As a result, they angered Alexander who wanted to turn against the high priest. Therefore, during Alexander's march towards Jerusalem, there was initially a negative attitude and suspicion. The high priest of the city, Iaddus, out of fear and in order to save the city, he offered a sacrifice in the Temple. As a result, God appeared in his sleep, advising him to prepare a brilliant reception for Alexander.

Indeed, a splendid reception was arranged, with the multitude of Jews dressed up in white to welcome Alexander. The priests, dressed in their vestments from fine linen cloth stood beside the high priest who wore the whole attire in purple and red tones while his forehead was adorned with a gold foil "kidaris" that covered the entire head. Above it was engraved the four letter name of God "Αγίασμα Κυρίου"[10] (Holy Lord). Alexander approached alone, without the army, and greeted the high priest, worshiping God's name. To a question by general Parmenion concerning his pilgrimage priest, Alexander replied that he did not worship the high priest, but God in whom he believes and honors. This attitude of his caused intense reflection in his entourage, mainly to the kings of Syria who for a moment thought he had gone mad. On the

---

[8] Josephus, *Ιουδαϊκή Αρχαιολογία,* p.123-129
[9] Josephus, *Ιουδαϊκή Αρχαιολογία,* ό.π., p.119-123
[10] «[36]*καὶ τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἀαρὼν ποιήσεις χιτῶνας καὶ ζώνας καὶ κιδάρεις ποιήσεις αὐτοῖς εἰς τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν* [37]*καὶ ἐνδύσεις αὐτὰ Ἀαρὼν τὸν ἀδελφόν σου, καὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς αὐτοῦ μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ· καὶ χρίσεις αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐμπλήσεις αὐτῶν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ ἁγιάσεις αὐτούς, ἵνα ἱερατεύωσί μοι.*» (Εξ. 28:36-37)
"[36]*You shall also make a plate of pure gold and shall engrave on it, like the engravings of a seal, 'Holy to the LORD.'* [37]*And you shall fasten it on a blue cord, and it shall be on the turban; it shall be at the front of the turban*." (Ex. 28:36-37)

contrary, the Jews gladly and enthusiastically accepted his friendly attitude.

> *When [Jaddus] learned that Alexander was not far from the city, he went out with the priests and the body of citizens, and . . . met him at a certain place called Saphein. This name, translated into the Greek tongue, means "Lookout." For, as it happened, Jerusalem and the temple could be seen from there. Now the Phoenicians and the Chaldaeans who followed along thought to themselves that the king in his anger would naturally permit them to plunder the city and put the high priest to a shameful death, but the reverse of this happened. For when Alexander while still far off saw the multitude in white garments the priests at their head clothed in linen, and the high priest in a robe of hyacinth-blue and gold, wearing on his head the mitre with the golden plate on it on which was inscribed the name of God, he approached alone and prostrated himself before . . . the high priest*[11].

It is strange for a king, who receives the respect and worship of all religious and political leaders, to kneel before a Jewish high priest. As mentioned above, the high priest of the city had a dream with God advising him to welcome Alexander[12] brilliantly. But something similar also happened to Alexander, to whom the high priest had appeared in his sleep a short time before giving him support and courage in his campaign against the Persians (334 B.C.). Daniel accepts the obeisance of the king of Babylon after explaining to him a dream that he saw and the Jewish high priest

---

[11] Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.329-331. The Greek verb used in 11.331 and translated "*saluted*" describes an act of obeisance traditionally performed by subjects of the Great King of Persia when in his presence. It can also refer to an act of submission and humility towards God.

[12] Tae Hun Kim, *"The dream of Alexander in Josephus: 'ANT.' 11.325-39"* (Brill, Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period, 2003), p.425-426

accepts the prostration of Alexander, who only in his appearance perceived the divine revelation.

There is no doubt that the Greeks, among other things, were also an inspiration for other people in terms of clothing too. The clothing of the Greeks consisted mainly of the *tunic*, the *veil,* the *robe* and the *toga*[13]. The *tunic* was a garment made of fine linen or woolen fabric, which was worn by men and women with the only difference being that men's tunics hung down to the knees while women's fell to the ankles. The *veil* was worn only by women and was usually woolen with its buttons on the shoulders. The top was folded to the waist to form an "*apoptygma*" on purpose, so that the double fabric would cover of the upper body. The *robe* was usually made of woolen cloth and placed by the women over the tunic as an overcoat, while they often covered the head with it as well. The men respectively wore it in many ways, with the most common being on bare skin. Children also had similar clothing with the only difference being that the length of the clothes did not exceed the knees, giving them freedom of movement.

For Alexander's entry into Jerusalem, we have no clear reference about his clothing. It is widely known that the authority of Alexander's the Great influenced many historical figures, politicians and military leaders, with the result that some identify with him by imitating him (From Julius Caesar and Octavian to Napoleon Bonaparte) "Imitatio Alexandri"[14] while others believed that they are the reincarnation of him (Caracalla, also known as Antoninus).[15] Through these sources but also from iconography and the reports about Alexander's royal attire we can suppose he

---

[13] Marina Plati – Eleni Markou, *"Clothing in Ancient Greece"*, (Athens: Museum of Cycladic Art, 2015), p.18-26

[14] "Imitation Alexandri": to wit imitation of Alexander. The imitation concerned either the external appearance and characteristics of the Greek soldier or his strategy.

[15] Demetrios K. Kougioumtzoglou, «*Ο Μέγας Αλέξανδρος του Ελληνισμού: Αρχαιότητα, Βυζάντιο, Νεότερη και Σύγχρονη Ελλάδα*». (*Alexander the Great of Hellenism: Antiquity–Byzantium –New and Modern Greece*), (Kavala: Saita, 2016), p.151-163

was clothed coming to Jerusalem. The usual depiction of the king of the Hellenistic times is the roofless one with the diadem as sign of royal authority. In various accounts the depiction of Alexander with caussia[16] and with a consciously constructed royal suit in which he chose elements of Macedonian and Achaemenid dress suggest a composite style whose meaning and underlying purpose needs further clarification[17]. We have strong evidence in the Ehippus of Olynthus, Diodorus, that Alexander mixed Persian and Macedonian costume while rejecting the costume of the Median empire (which included the crown, full-length cloak (kandys), and pants (anaxyrides).[18] These were more "strange and theatrical" attires, that referred to the more exotic clothes of the Greek "theatre kings".[19]Finally, the tiara is undoubtedly a symbol of the assumption of the kingship of Asia by Alexander.

Proceeding, then, into the city accompanied by the high priest and the rest priests, offered sacrifice in the Temple. There, they brought him the book of the prophet Daniel, in content of which it is stated that a Greek will catalyze the Persian state:

> ***20*** *So he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when*

---

[16] Αρριανός, *Αλεξάνδρου Ανάβασις, VII.22* «…ώς δὲ ἔπλει Ἀλέξανδρος κατὰ τὰ ἕλη, κυβερνᾶν γὰρ αὐτὸν λόγος τὴν τριήρη, πνεύματος μεγάλου ἐμπεσόντος αὐτῷ ἐς τὴν καυσίαν καὶ τὸ διάδημα αὐτῇ συνεχόμενον, τὴν μὲν δὴ οἷα βαρυτέραν πεσεῖν ἐς τὸ ὕδωρ, τὸ διάδημα δὲ ἀπενεχθὲν πρὸς τῆς πνοῆς σχεθῆναι ἐν καλάμῳ· τὸν κάλαμον δὲ τῶν ἐπιπεφυκότων εἶναι τάφῳ τινὶ τῶν πάλαι βασιλέων.»
Arrian*, "The Anabasis Of Alexander", VII.22* "*…When Alexander was sailing through these marshes, and, as the story goes, was himself steering the trireme, a strong gust of wind fell upon his broad-brimmed Macedonian hat, and the fillet which encircled it. The hat, being heavy, fell into the water; but the fillet, being carried along by the wind, was caught by one of the reeds growing near the tomb of one of the ancient kings."*

[17] Andrew W. Collins, "*The Royal Costume and Insignia of Alexander the Great",* The American Journal of Philology, Vol.133, No3, (Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press)*,* p.372, 395

[18] Collins, "*The Royal Costume and Insignia of Alexander the Great*", p.372

[19] Collins, "*The Royal Costume and Insignia of Alexander the Great*", ό.π. p.395

> *I go, the prince of Greece will come; 21 but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince. (Dan. 10:20-21)*

Alexander, convinced that the text refers to him, intends to satisfy any wish asked of him. Following the promises, he proposed to the Jews to follow his army, without having to change the least of their tradition. As a result many of them followed his army and in this way he completed his visit in town.

The entry of a foreigner (Alexander the Great) into Jerusalem and the worship of the high priest is an unusual reversal of the prevailing customs[20]. This action is considered prophetic of the work of the Old Testament and specifically the book of prophet Daniel, while Josephus focuses on worshiping God's name which is engraved on the gold plate worn by the high priest on his head. It is not unlikely at all that the tradition of this version began as polemical against the worship of the Hellenistic kings, a tradition that owes its roots to Alexander the Great who aimed in this way to improve his own image.

In conclusion, throughout history it has been established that clothing has been and will continue to be a means of highlighting the power, history and personality of a person, which can be reasonably observed in the city of Jerusalem. Through the polychrome and polymorphism one met the stranger whose clothing reflected his origin, his social position, his work and his status. But the most important role of clothing is to support the religious identity of a person who honours and respects the religion in which the person believes.

---

[20] Galanis, *Ο Μέγας Αλέξανδρος στην Ιερουσαλήμ (Alexander the Great in Jerusalem)*, p.141

Bibliography

- Collins, Andrew. "*The Royal Costume and Insignia of Alexander The Great*". The American Journal of Philology. Vol.133. No3. Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Encyclopaedia Papyros Larousse Britannica. βλ. «*Ενδυμασία*». Vol 23. Athens: Papyros. 1996.
- Freedman, David Noel. "DRESS AND ORNAMENTATION", *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Volume 2 (D-G). New York: published by Doubleday. 1992.
- Galanis, Timoleon. «*Ο Μέγας Αλέξανδρος στην Ιερουσαλήμ*» (*Alexander the Great in Jerusalem*). Thessaloniki: Ostracon. 2018.
- Hollander, Anne. *Fabric of Vision, Dress and Drapery in Painting*. New York: Bloomsbury publishing. 2002.
- Josephus, Flavius. *Ιουδαϊκή Αρχαιολογία. Απαντα. (Βιβλία ΙΑ΄, ΙΒ)* Vol. 11. Athens: Kaktos. 1997.
- Kim, Tae Hun. "*The dream of Alexander in Josephus*: 'ANT.' 11.325-39". Brill. Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period. 2003.
- Kougioumtzoglou, Demetrios. «*Ο Μέγας Αλέξανδρος του Ελληνισμού: Αρχαιότητα, Βυζάντιο, Νεότερη και Σύγχρονη Ελλάδα» (Alexander the Great of Hellenism: Antiquity–Byzantium –New And Modern Greece)*. Kavala: Saita. 2016.
- Plati, Marina – Markou, Eleni.*"Clothing in Ancient Greece"*. Athens: Museum of Cycladic Art. 2015.
- Zarras, Konstantinos. «*Ιστορία της Εποχής της Καινής Διαθήκης*» (*History of New Testament Era*). Vol. a΄. Athens: ENNOIA. 2011.

The "Stranger" in the Gospel of Matthew in the light of the Greek Tradition of the Mediterranean region.

Dr. Sotirios Despotis, Professor, and
Argyro Marinopoulou, PhD Candidate,
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this paper is the contribution of the Gospel of Matthew in dealing with not just with the Stranger[1] and the Refugee but with the Barbarian. It should be noted that this Gospel is the most popular in the Christian community and played a crucial role in the formation of the identity of Christianity.

To achieve this, the paper will focus on characteristic passages of the Gospel, the treatment of the foreigner as opposed to the barbarian in the Roman Empire, and how New Rome ultimately addressed the "stranger-barbarian" dichotomy in texts of worship popular to this day.

1. Matthew as the "Gospel of the Immigrant"[2]

We have unique references to the stranger at the beginning, middle, and end of the Matthew's biography of Lord Jesus, projected as Emmanuel (1:23) and the suffering servant of Isaiah (12:18-21).

---

[1] According to G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament abridged in one Volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley*, trans. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 592, *Xénos* is translated as "foreigner, stranger, guest" and xenía as "hospitality, guestroom".

[2] Concerning the Introduction to the Gospel of Matthew and in particular its recipients and theology, see. S. Despotis, *Holy Gospels. The Message of the New Testament to Modern Man* (Athens: Ennoia 2017), 139-179. Regarding the theme of the Conference, see also IV' Paulia, Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference, Xenophobia and Philadelphia according to the Apostle Paul (Metropolis of Veroia, Naoussa and Campania, 26-28 June 2008), Veroia 2008. Also, from Hellenic Bible Society, "The Decree of Non-religion of 313 AD and the 21st century demand for reconciliation: The Role of the Bible in the Peaceful Coexistence of Diversities", ed. B. Stathokosta 2014.

a. Ruth appears in the 42 forebears of Jesus (1:5), specifically in the first fourteen, portrayed as the stranger (par excellence) in the relevant book and Judaism as a whole. The tree itself ascends to Abraham, the converts' father, and archetype of the traveling Jew. **b.** As a newborn, Jesus is presented as a refugee in Egypt (2:13-14), the most important country of asylum in the Bible.

c. A stranger who struggles with Christ for the cure of her daughter also dominates the heart of the Gospel: this refers to the Canaanite lady from what is now Lebanon (15:21-28).

d. The Messiah is uniquely connected with the stranger, as with the prisoner, in the ultimate story of the Gospel, which applies to all nations. **"For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in**". **(25:35)**

e. Using a unique form of dramatic irony,[3] the blood of Emmanuel, which, as only Matthew emphasizes, is poured for the remission of sins (26:28), becomes a means of burial for the strangers: "The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood". And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers" **(27:6-7).** «A question arises as to Mt. 27:7: Who are the strangers that are to be buried in this field? Of the various suggestions—Israelites temporarily in Jerusalem, proselytes temporarily resident there, or Gentiles—the most likely one is that the field was meant for unclean Gentiles, who are thus set apart from members of the people even in death», «Christians share the dislike of the OT and Judaism for what is foreign in religion, but love of the xenós is a special form of love of neighbor, as Jesus shows (1) in the parable of the Good Samaritan and (2) in the

[3] The arguments are drawn from the article J. P. Heil, "The Blood of Jesus in Matthew: A Narrative-Critical Perspective," *Perspectives in Religious Studies 18* (1991): 117-124.

parable of judgment in Mt. 25. That kindness to strangers has a bearing on eternal destiny is a theme in Parsee and Greek religion, and the thought occurs in Judaism too, but the new thing in Mt. 25 is that Jesus himself is the xenós, so that the deciding factor is one ‘s relation to Jesus. The stranger representing Jesus might, of course, be anyone, and not just some other Christian. Thus, all the ethical concepts of humanity regarding kindness to strangers come to fulfilment here; in the most alien of aliens Jesus himself is loved. The point is 3 Jn. 5, of course, is the different one that hospitality is to be shown to brethren from abroad».[4]

It becomes apparent that Matthew in the Gospel of the Stranger and even the Refugee and the Barbarian, addressed most likely directed towards Christian Jews, who were compelled to undergo trauma since they become refugees in the cosmopolitan city of Antioch, under dreadful conditions, following the fall of their Holy City to the Romans in 70 A.D. In their new “home”, they were also excluded from the synagogue, which served as a multi-purpose center for Diaspora Jews, because they believed in a crucified Messiah. But how did the Pax Romana feel about immigrants and barbarians?

2. The Stranger and the Barbarian in the Pax Romana

We are aware that Christianity was born and perfected when, for the first time in the history of humanity, there was Peace (at least on a political level) and Early Globalization conditions. The reader's first impression is that, following Alexander's openness to strangers, there is no longer a distinction between strangers and barbarians in the Mediterranean,[5] but all humans flow equally

[4] G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament abridged in one Volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley*, trans. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 592-595, here 593.

[5] Regarding the Mediterranean treatment of the Stranger see C. Gordon, *Homer and the Bible. The origins and character of Eastern Mediterranean literature*, trans. D.I. Jacob and Th. Polychrou (Athens: Kardamitsa, 1990), 59-60. See also

across the web of our roadways and our Sea. However, as the following reasons demonstrate, this is not the case:

a. As the tragedies about *"The Suppliants"*[6] demonstrate, this privilege of philoxenia was mainly reserved for people who could prove common descent or some kind of kinship.
b. "The greatest example of Hellenistic Greek sculpture, the colossal Altar of Zeus at Pergamon", glorifies the triumph over the barbarian. He is typically originating from the East, having unusual features and an incomprehensible non-Greek voice.

c. The gift of foreignness and hospitality is distinct from the devaluation of the barbarian element in both ancient Hellenistic novel[7] and in Philo[8].

d. Undoubtedly, the fact that Jews found themselves as strangers in Egypt is a necessary component of their identity (Dt.24:22). However, this does not imply openness to every "barbarian" person or nation. Compare the Hellenistic and Jewish prayer formulae, in which the Greek man thanks fate for *not* making him **an animal, a woman** (gunh) **or a barbarian** (cf. Diogenes Laertios 1:33) or where the Jewish man thanks God for not

---

the following work on the value of hospitality in imperial times and the difference in this respect between the "provincials" and the bourgeois: Dion Chrysostomos, *The Hunter* (Athens: Thyrathen), 98-179. At the entrance to the Ancient Agora of Athens there was the "point zero" (from which all distances were calculated). It was originally called the Altar of the Twelve Gods and provided sanctuary. In Paul's time it was called the Altar of Mercy (!). See S. Despotis, *The Apostle Paul preaches in Athens: The First Encounter of Christianity and Hellenism* (Athens: Ennoia, 2019), 138

[6] Gr: *"Hiketides"* Lat: *"Supplices"*. Regarding the contents of this particular Tragedy and the provision of asylum in the ancient world, see. A. G. Delagrammatika, "Consept and institution of Asylum in the Mediterranean, the Greekroman world, the Bible and Byzantium. Extensions to modern reality.," (Thesis, EAP: Studies in Orthodox Theology, 2020). https://apothesis.eap.gr/archive/item/95987?lang=en

[7] Heliodorus, *Ethiopics or the Peria Theagenes and Charicles*, trans. A. Sideri (Athens: Agra 2003), 148-150.

[8] See Philo of Alexandria, *Philo's Flaccus, The First Pogrom,* trans. Peter W. van der Horst (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2003), 105-106.

creating him **as a gentile** (gōj or nokri), **a woman** ('išāh) or **an ignorant man** (bōr; variant: as a slave / ʿaebaed), i.e. as a "Torah alien" (cf. tBer 7:18; pBer 9:13b,48; bMen 43b)[9].

The Christian Movement established a new treatment of the stranger by identifying the Messiah not only as a stranger and an immigrant, but also as a refugee and a prisoner and by projecting Him as the brutally killed - Crucified Messiah. Already in Matthew, the Christian community in multicultural Antioch is portrayed as a "new nation" (21:43), one that, unlike the other Pax Romana nations, is not rooted in antiquity and mythical ancestors, but shapes its identity through (1) a Crucified One, (2) the proclamation "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female" (Gal 3:28 NAU) and (3) the future participation in Christ's Kingdom. Early Christians were self-conscious about being "parochial" and transitory.

c. The Paradox in the worship of the Eastern Church

On Holy Friday, when the Epitaph enters the orthodox Church, the very beautiful poem - troparion "Give me this stranger" is sung to this day.[10]This poem is a revised version of the longer one written by Georgios Akropolitis (13 A.D.), set to music by Germanos Neon Patron, about the permission Joseph of

---

[9] See Urs Werner von Arx, "Gibt Paulus in 1Kor 7 eine Interpretation von Gal 3,28? Zugleich ein Beitrag zur relativen Chronologie der Paulusbriefe," in *Apostolos Paulos kai Korinthos / Saint Paul and Corinth. 1950 Years since the Writing of the Epistles to the Corinthians*, International Scholarly Conference Proceedings, Corinth 2007, eds. K. Belezos, Chr. Karakolis, S. Despotis (Athens: Psychogios 2009), 193-221, 218.

[10] Regarding this issue, the interested person can listen to the online lecture of George Dimakopoulos, "Save Lord Thy people" and the sanctification of violence in ecclesiastical texts. https://www.acadimia.org/nea-anakoinoseis/deltia-typou/1096-2-e-3. This researcher is developing a research project on this topic.

Arimathea asked Pilate so that he would take away the dead body of Jesus and bury it after his Crucifixion:

Original Text: «Τὸν ἥλιον κρύψαντα τὰς ἰδίας ἀκτῖνας, καὶ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ διαρραγὲν τῷ τοῦ σωτῆρος θανάτῳ ὁ Ἰωσὴφ θεασάμενος, προσῆλθε τῷ Πιλάτῳ καὶ ἱκέτευε λέγων· ‘Δός μοι τοῦτον τὸν ξένον, τὸν ἐκ βρέφους ὡς ξένον Αἰγύπτῳ ξενωθέντα· Δός μοι τοῦτον τὸν ξένον, ὃν ὁμόφυλοι μισοῦντες μαστιγοῦσιν ὡς ξένον· Δός μοι τοῦτον τὸν ξένον, οὐ ξενίζομαι βλέπειν τὸν θάνατον τοῦ ξένου· Δός μοι τοῦτον τὸν ξένον, ὃς παρῆν εἰς ξενίζειν τοὺς πτωχοὺς καὶ ξένους. Δός μοι τοῦτον τὸν ξένον, ὃν Ἰούδας δολίως ἀπεξένωσε κόσμου. Δός μοι τοῦτον τὸν ξένον, ὃν ὁ φίλος ἀρνεῖται μὴ εἰδέναι ὡς ξένον. Δός μοι τοῦτον τὸν ξένον, [ἵνα κρύψω ἐν τάφῳ,] ὅτι οὐκ ἔχει ὁ ξένος τὴν κεφαλὴν ὅπου κλίναι. Δός μοι τοῦτον τὸν ξένον, ὃν ἡ μήτηρ ὡς ζῶντα καθικετεύει βοῶσα· Εἰ καὶ τὰ σπλάγχνα σπαράττομαι καὶ τὴν καρδίαν τιτρώσκομαι νεκρὸν ἄπνουν σε βλέπουσα, ἀλλὰ τῇ σῇ ἀναστάσει μεγαλυνθῆναι θαρρῶ.’ Τούτοις δυσωπήσας τὸν Πιλᾶτον τοῖς λόγοις, ὁ εὐσχήμων λαμβάνει τὸ σῶμα τοῦ σωτῆρος, καὶ εὐσχημόνως εἰλύσας ἐν σινδόνι καὶ μύροις κατέθετο μνημείῳ, τοῖς πιστοῖς παρεχόμενος ζωὴν αἰώνιον καὶ τὸ μέγα ἔλεος».[11]

Translation: «When Joseph saw that the sun had hidden its own rays and that the veil (covering) of the temple had been torn off with the death of the Saviour, he approached Pilate and addressed him in supplication (begging) saying: "Give me this stranger, the one who from infancy was a stranger under persecution in Egypt. Give me this stranger whom those of the same descent as him (those who came from the same tribe as him), because they hate him, whip him as a stranger. Give me this stranger, I am not surprised (I am not surprised and awestruck) to see the death of

[11]A. Heisenberg, *Georgii Acropolitae opera*, vol. 2 [*Carmen in magnum sabbatum*] Leipzig: Teubner, 1903: 9-11. Retrieved from: http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/Iris/Cite?3141:008:0.

the stranger. Give me this stranger who stood by (was near) to care for (treat) the poor and the stranger. Give me this stranger whom Judas deceitfully removed (exiled) from humanity. Give me that stranger whom the friend denies knowing him as (being) a stranger. Give me this stranger [to hide him in a grave], for the stranger has no place to turn (incline) his head. Give me this stranger whose mother (his), while he is alive, implores him in supplication, crying out. And though I still tear my bowels (out) and my heart is wounded at seeing you (for I see you) dead without breath, I firmly believe that your name will be glorified by your resurrection. With these words, after making Pilate lower his eyes from persistent entreaties, the noble in character (Joseph) received the body of the savior and after (wrapping) it carefully and with dignity with fine cloth and myrrh (fragrant oils), he who provides eternal life and great mercy to the faithful was laid in a tomb».[12]

It was inspired by Saint Epiphanios, Archbishop of Cyprus (4th - 5th century), who in his discourse at the Lord's burial, begins and repeats the phrase: "Give me this stranger". He imagines Joseph at the time when he comes to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus to be buried.[13] St. Epiphanius probably discovered this from the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus.[14]

This particular troparion vividly expresses what we found to be true in the first Christians and especially in the communities that studied the Gospel according to Matthew. They saw the face of the Crucified in every "other" person, regardless of whether he was a stranger or a barbarian. And yet **in the worship of the Eastern Church the following**

---

[12] See *Carmen in magnum sabbatum* lines 5-46. ***The modern english translation is by the authors.***
[13] See Epiphanius, *Homilia in divini corporis sepulturam* 43.445.30-53 και 43.448.1-7
[14] See Evangelium Nicodemi Apocryph. et Evangel. Recensio 11.3,1d.... Πρβλ. Damascenus Studites, *Thesaurus* 7.152-176.

paradox is propagated: in the 6th century, on the occasion of the wars against the Persians, another very popular hymn it to this day **is established: "** Save, O Lord, Your people, and bless Your inheritance; **grant You unto the sovereigns [**pious emperors of Byzantium] **victory over the barbarians** [the ungodly, politically backward hordes]. And by the power of Your Cross do You preserve Your commonwealth**".**[15]**After all, as the famous 20th c. Greek poet Constantine Cavafy says, perhaps human nature, after the fall, needs barbarians to form an identity.**[16]

Bibliography

Primary

Hanhart, Robert, and Alfred Rahlfs. *Septuaginta. Id Est Vetus Testamentum Graece Iuxta LXX Interpretes Edidit Alfred Rahlfs. Editio Altera Quam Recognovit Et Emendavit Robert Hanhart. Duo Volumina in Uno*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006.

Novum Testamentum Graece. 28th. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.

Dion Chrysostomos. *The Hunter*. Athens: Thyrathen.

Epiphanius. *Homilia in divini corporis sepulturam*.

Evangelium Nicodemi Apocryph. et Evangel. Recensio.

---

[15] http://www.diakonima.gr/2010/03/07/dismissal-hymn-and-kontakion-of-the-worship-of-the-cross/ 22.06.2024.

[16] See the amazing poem "Waiting for the Barbarians", trns. E. Kelly, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/51294/waiting-for-the-barbarians

George Akropolites. *Carmen in magnum sabbatum*.

Heliodorus. *Ethiopics or the Peria Theagenes and Charicles*. Translator A. Sideri. Athens: Agra 2003.

Philo of Alexandria. *Philo's Flaccus, The First Pogrom,* trans. Peter W. van der Horst. Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2003.

Secondary

Cavafy, Constantine. "Waiting for the Barbarians." Translator E. Keeley.

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/51294/waiting-for-the-barbarians

Delagrammatika, A. G. "Consept and institution of Asylum in the Mediterranean, the Greekroman world, the Bible and Byzantium. Extensions to modern reality.". Thesis, EAP: Studies in Orthodox Theology, 2020. https://apothesis.eap.gr/archive/item/95987?lang=en

Despotis, Sotirios. *Holy Gospels. The Message of the New Testament to Modern Man*. Athens: Ennoia 2017.

Despotis, Sotirios. *The Apostle Paul preaches in Athens: The First Encounter of Christianity and Hellenism*. Athens: Ennoia, 2019.

Dimakopoulos, Georgw. "Save Lord Thy people" and the sanctification of violence in ecclesiastical texts." https://www.acadimia.org/nea-anakoinoseis/deltia-typou/1096-2-e-3

Gordon, Cyrus. *Homer and the Bible. The origins and character of Eastern Mediterranean literature*. Translators D.I. Jacob and Th. Polychrou. Athens: Kardamitsa, 1990.

Heil, John Paul. "The Blood of Jesus in Matthew: A Narrative-Critical Perspective." *Perspectives in Religious Studies 18* (1991): 117-124.

Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich (eds). "c. Graves of Foreigners," "3. The Attitude of Christians to Foreigners." In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament abridged in one Volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley*. Translator G. Bromiley, 592-595. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985.

Von Arx, Urs Werner. "Gibt Paulus in 1Kor 7 eine Interpretation von Gal 3,28 Zugleich ein Beitrag zur relativen Chronologie der Paulusbriefe." In *Apostolos Paulos kai Korinthos/ Saint Paul and Corinth. 1950 Years since the Writing of the Epistles to the Corinthians*, International Scholarly Conference Proceedings, Corinth 2007, eds. K. Belezos, Chr. Karakolis, S. Despotis, 193-221. Athens: Psychogios 2009.

Non-verbal communication as a way of approaching the Stranger

Dimitra Tounta, PhD Candidate,
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

Communication is a basic and fundamental element of human existence acting as a "survival mechanism" between people.[1] It comes from the need to connect and interact with each other, within and outside of our socio-cultural group. The behavior of each of us becomes a message to which others are called upon to respond.[2]

A percentage of our communication with others is verbal while the rest is done non-verbally. More or less obvious elements of communication as non-verbal messages are the nods, the smile, the look, the grimaces, the handshake, the gestures, the gait, as well as the distance from the one we are communicating with. Communication as gesture can, therefore, be understood as enacted in three broad, mutually dependent dimensions of 1) expression of self, 2) as indication for another or others, within 3) a space of representational relations, within a temporal dimension understood in relation to communicative purposes as socially derived motivations that lead intentions to integrated goals. Furthermore the use of gestures as a way of communication does not require the abandonment of verbal language. [3]

Some body movements and gestures have become universal, transcending cultural and geographical boundaries.[4] That is why the elements of non-verbal communication work as a basic way of approaching a stranger, the person lacking in verbal communication and who often speaks a different native language.

Today they function as a kind of substitute or supplement to the verbal message, but in the ancient world gestures served as a

means of conveying information that was often different from that conveyed orally and constituted a distinct form of communication.[5]

The handshake and the similar arm-to-arm gesture were symbolic acts in the Greco-Roman world, with varying meanings depending on the occasion. As gestures of recognition or greeting they were a vital function of initiating contact between strangers. Today the handshake is a mild-formal greeting. In contrast in the ancient world it was considered a more formal gesture, signifying a mutual perception that the other person is worthy of recognition and further relationship. Thus the handshake functioned as a set of actions consisting of offer, acceptance, and mutual recognition, and was often part of the ritual of hosting a "stranger."

“Filoxenia” in greek language – (hospitality) etymologically means the offering of love towards the "stranger" regardless of his social or economic status. In ancient times it was a basic cultural and religious institution protected by "Zeus Xenios” or “Jupiter the Hospiter” (the Patron God of Guests) and included a special ritual.[6] Since Homeric times, there was a warm welcome with an address and handshake/greeting to the stranger, a formal invitation to host him, a bath and anointing with oil, attire in clean clothes, fine food and drink in a place of honor, even a feast and games in his honor. After that, basic verbal identification communication was carried out with the guest to know his name, where he comes from and what he wants. The host promised to help him and finally bid him farewell with gifts that sealed their friendship for generations to come.[7]

Another great ancient institution with a certain ritual was the supplication as a fervent request for protection or help[8] that was protected by "Ikesios (Appellant) Zeus". The supplicant, familiar or stranger, would kneel before the one who is begged, usually a man, with one hand clasping his knees or his right hand, while with the other he might touch his chin or beard, those parts of the body considered the seat of man's life and physical strength. In fact, if the supplicant had the opportunity, he would resort to the altar in a

temple or to the hearth inside the house. In serious matters the ritual of supplication was especially important, and should never be interrupted.[9] In this way the stranger was received as a holy person enjoying immunity as a guest.[10] Supplication had a religious and legal character, possessing ritual formality and embodied principles of secular justice.

The Romans attached great importance to the visible distinctions of status, wishing to recognize the social status of any stranger they met, whether free or slave, patrician, or plebeian, and to behave accordingly. In addition to material signs of rank and position, such as a horse's gold ring, non-verbal cues, i.e. gestures, how one sat, stood or walked, even one's speed and style, conveyed important information about his social status. This was included by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu defining the concept of the Roman "habitus".[11] Notable was the great popularity of miming and pantomime in ancient Rome, linked to the ability of gestures to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries between people.[12]

Overall, the ancient Mediterranean world associated the exercise of control over one's body and life with one's social status. People of very low social standing, such as women and slaves, depended on the demands and desires of others of higher social status.

In the Old Testament, from the beginning God placed under His protection every weak creature of society, such as orphans, widows, the poor, slaves and foreigners.[13] Welcoming and caring for the stranger was a sacred duty, including the offering of "bread" and "clothing"[14] along with respect for their personality and work.[15]

According to Rabbinic tradition the *greeting of peace* to all, familiar and strangers, is *the path that leads to peace*. Literally, the Hebrew phrase שלום אליקים (SHALOM ALEICHEM) "*PEACE [BE] UPON YOU!*", is the greeting used when meeting a stranger, but not necessarily accompanied by physical contact. It depended on the relationship between the persons, and could express interest

and sympathy, love or reverence and honor, and included any of the following: verbally inquiring about health and nonverbally blessing, bowing, kneeling, pilgrimage.[16]

When meeting a great person the ritual of blessing was followed, as the priest Melchizedek blessed Abraham and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.[17] Joseph's brothers bowed to him with honor offering him gifts and Abraham and Lot hosted the Lord.[18] Hospitality included food and accommodation if needed.[19] On the other hand, someone should not greet a person at night if the speaker cannot be identified, or if someone is busy with his work, he does not need to greet or respond to greetings.[20]

In the Old Testament the supplicant wore sackcloth and put ashes on his head in supplication to God. The people and the king of Nineveh listened to the prophet Jonah, a stranger to them, and fasting from food and water, they put on sackcloth and sat in the ashes, begging God.[21]

To this day, on the holiday of "Sukkot" the Jews imitate the stranger with a certain ritual remembering their wanderings in the desert after their liberation from Egypt. They all eat together, go around holding branches of palm, willow, myrtle and citron and sing “HOSANNA” in the S*ukka*, a makeshift hut made of branches on the roof or in the yard of the house. [22]

The Jewish prayer "Taḥanun" comes from a story of public humiliation in the time of the 1st century A.D. in the Talmudic Bava Metsia.[23] The word “Taḥanun” means "supplication". The most unusual aspect of this prayer is its posture: with one arm outstretched and the head resting on it as an intense gesture of pleading for God's mercy.

In the context of the Greco-Roman world, Jesus Christ lived as a "stranger" touring the land of Israel for three years and reached out to people using verbal and non-verbal communication in a special way. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples showing them His hands and His feet.[24] This is not only seen as evidence of His resurrection but also a focus on two important parts

of the human body for His mission. With His hands and His feet, He fulfilled the Old Testament Law for the protection of all the weak members of society. However, the data of the communication of the God-man Jesus, the individual paralectical elements as well as the conditions of interaction in it cannot in all cases be compared with the data of everyday human communication because of His divine knowledge and love.[25] Therefore, the people He met on His three-year journey were not completely "unknown" to Him.

Molding clay with His hands and touching the eyes of the born blind, a socially collapsed man, He gave him light and "welcomed" him to a new life.[26] At His feet He accepted the anointing and the washing with tears of the sinful woman who was unacceptable in the Jewish environment.[27]

Jairus, the chief of synagogue, fell at his feet as a supplicant and Christ held the hand of his twelve-year-old daughter, greeting her and bringing her back to life.[28] Jesus acted as a "home" for the bleeding woman who touched His garment, providing her with asylum as a cure.[29] The Canaanite woman begged Christ and asked Him for help.[30] She showed patience and faith in the face of His refusal.[31] Jesus did not really despise her as a foreigner, but he highlighted her. According to John Chrysostom, by helping the Canaanite woman, He "*opens the door to the nations as well*".[32]

In conclusion, Jesus Christ welcomed everyone without discrimination, helping them whenever they needed Him. He did not completely follow the rules of behavior of His environment but approached the people around Him by "hosting" them. In this way, He shows us how to approach the stranger according to His example.

[1] «C*ommunication is a survival mechanism for human beings*»: Philip Emmert & William C. Donaghy, *Human Communication. Elements and contexts* (California: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1981), 322.
[2] Julia A. Spinthouraki, John A. Katsillis, & Panagiotis Moustairas, 'The Role of Language and Culture in Intercultural Communication' (1st Inter-Balkan Conference on 'Education and Intercultural Communication' Patras 3-5 May 1996, Pedagogical Department of Elementary Education, University of Patras, Athens: Gutenberg, 1996), 122–33, https://eclass.upatras.gr/modules/document/file.php/PDE1375/Language%20and%20culture%20in%20communication.pdf (5/5/2023).
[3] Michael Schandorf, *A Gesture Theory of Communication* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois at Chicago, 2016), 357.
[4] Michael Schandorf, 440.
[5] Gregory S. Aldrete, 'Gesture in the Ancient Mediterranean World', *Mercury's Wings, Exploring Modes of Communication in the Ancient World*, F.S. Naiden & Richard J.A. Talbert (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 149-163.
For more in depth on gestures in the Near East see: Anthony Corbeill, *Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome* (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 41-67. Mayer I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980). David M. Calabro, 'Understanding Ritual Hand Gestures of the Ancient World: Some Basic Tools', *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 37 (2020): 293–308.
[6] Kosmas Touloumis, 'Ομηρικοί θεσμοί ΙΙ. Η φιλοξενία και το «δώρο» (Homeric Institutions II. Hospitality and the 'gift')', *Encyclopaedic Guide, Mosaics for the Greek language*, Archaic Epic Poetry, 2012, https://www.greek-language.gr/digitalResources/ancient_greek/encyclopedia/epic/page_111.html (5/5/2023).
[7] In rhapsody Z ΄ (119-236) of the *Iliad*, Diomedes, before the start of his duel with Glaucus, asks him what his origin is. Glaucus replies that he is the son of Hippolochus, and then Diomedes assures Glaucus that the two are family friends, since Bellerephontes, Hippolochus' father, was once hosted by Oeneas, Diomedes' grandfather. In fact, this hospitality ended with the exchange of gifts according to Diomedes, which proved the sealing of their friendship. Finally Diomedes and Glaucus decided not to duel but exchanged weapons and swore to uphold the friendship of their ancestors.
[8] 'ικεσία (supplication)', *Portal for the Greek Language*, 2008, https://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/modern_greek/tools/lexica/search.html?lq=%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B5%CF%83%CE%AF%CE%B1&sin=all (8/1/2023).
[9] The case of Odysseus is typical, when he begs Aretis in Sheria, holding her knees while sitting on the ground on the ashes of the hearth of Alcinous's palace (*Odysseus* VIII 153 ff.). See Daniel Jacob, 'Η ικεσία (The Supplication)', *Encyclopaedic Guide, Mosaics for the Greek language*, Ancient Greek Tragedy, 2012, https://www.greek-

language.gr/digitalResources/ancient_greek/encyclopedia/tragedy/page_026.html (3/5/2023).

[10] For the definition of *begging-supplication* see Homer, *Ομηρικά Έπη: Οδύσσεια (Homeric Epics: Odyssey)*, translated in Greek by Dimitrios N. Maronitis, High School textbook (Athens: 'Diofantos' Institute of Computer Technology and Publications, 2014), 74.

[11] Pierre Bourdieu, 'Le sens pratique', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, L'État et les classes sociales, 2, 1 (1976): 43–86, https://www.persee.fr/issue/arss_0335-5322_1976_num_2_1 (22/9/2023). In single version Pierre Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980). For "Roman habitus" great examples include: Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995). Anthony Corbeill, *Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome*. Matthew Roller's study of the postures taken by Roman men, women, and children at formal dinners shows that these reflected stereotypes towards gender and social status, Matthew B. Roller, *Dining Posture in Ancient Rome: Bodies, Values, and Status* (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[12] Gregory S. Aldrete, 'Gesture in the Ancient Mediterranean World', 156–57.

[13] Orphans, widows, the poor and strangers were under the protection of God and the Prophets: Exodus 22:21-2 / Psalm 67:6 / Psalm 9:35 / Psalm 145:9 / Job 29:12-3 / Hosea 14:4 / Micah 2:2 / Zechariah 7:10 / Jeremiah 7:6 / Jeremiah 29:11.

[14] Deuteronomy 10: 17-19: *«ὁ γὰρ Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ὑμῶν οὗτος Θεὸς τῶν θεῶν καὶ Κύριος τῶν κυρίων, ὁ Θεὸς ὁ μέγας· καὶ ἰσχυρὸς καὶ φοβερός, ὅστις οὐ θαυμάζει πρόσωπον, οὐδ' οὐ μὴ λάβῃ δῶρον, ποιῶν κρίσιν προσηλύτῳ καὶ ὀρφανῷ καὶ χήρᾳ, καὶ ἀγαπᾷ τὸν προσήλυτον δοῦναι αὐτῷ ἄρτον καὶ ἱμάτιον. καὶ ἀγαπήσετε τὸν προσήλυτον· προσήλυτοι γὰρ ἦτε ἐν γῇ Αἰγύπτῳ.»*

[15] Exodus 23:9 / Exodus 23:12 / Leviticus 19:33-35 / Deuteronomy 5:14 / Deuteronomy 12:18 / Deuteronomy 14:29.

[16] Executive Committee of the Editorial Board και Judah David Eisenstein, 'greeting, forms of', *Jewish Encyclopedia* (The Kopelman Foundation, 1906 1901), https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6873-greeting-forms-of (3/10/2022).

[17] Genesis 14:18-20 & 47:7 .

[18] Genesis 43: 26-27.

[19] Genesis 18,1 & 19,1.

[20] Executive Committee of the Editorial Board και Judah David Eisenstein, 'greeting, forms of'.

[21] Jonah 3: 5-10.

[22] Leviticus 23:40. See also the article 'Sukkot', e-magazine, *My Jewish Learning* (blog), https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/sukkot-101/ (11/5/2023).

[23] Atar Hadari, 'The Significance of Supplication', e-magazine, *Mosaic-Advancing Jewish Thought* (blog), 27/7/2020, https://mosaicmagazine.com/observation/religion-holidays/2020/07/the-significance-of-supplication/ (16/5/2023).

[24] Luke 24:39-40.

[25] See the relevant thesis by Calliroi Akanthopoulou, 'The communication of Christ with his contemporaries: a modern Christian-pedagogical approach' (thesis, Thessaloniki, Department of Theology of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 1999), 124, http://hdl.handle.net/10442/hedi/25220 (23/9/2023).
As well, Dimitra Tounta, 'The communicative method of Jesus Christ towards women in the biblical and hymnological tradition of the Orthodox Church' (MSc thesis, Athens, Studies in Orthodox Theology at the Faculty of Humanities of the Open Hellenic University, 2019), 40–45, https://apothesis.eap.gr/archive/item/95949 (23/9/2023).
See also Erasmus Schmidt, *Ταμείον Καινής Διαθήκης (New Testament Fund)* (Athens: Αστήρ, 1968), 148.
[26] John 9:1-41.
[27] Luke 7:36-50.
[28] Luke 8:41-56.
[29] Luke 8:41-56.
[30] Matthew 15:25.
[31] John Chrysostom, 'Υπόμνημα εις τον Άγιον Ευαγγελιστήν Ματθαίον, Ομιλία ΝΒ΄ (Memoir to the Holy Evangelist Matthew, Homily ΝΒ΄)', in *Πατερικόν Κυριακοδρόμιον (Patristic Collection of sermons and interpretations of the Readings of the Sunday Liturgy)*, by Metropolitan Dionysios of Trikki Stagoi and Meteora, Β΄, 1969, 314. Theofylaktos Archbishop of Bulgaria, *Ερμηνεία εις τα τέσσαρα Ιερά Ευαγγέλια (Interpretation of the four Holy Gospels)*, Ed. Galaction P. Gamilis, Α΄ (Athens, 1973), 116. Also see Nikiforos Theotokis, 'Ομιλία εις το κατά Ματθαίον Ευαγγέλιον της ΙΖ' Κυριακής (Sermon on the Gospel according to Matthew of the 17th Sunday)', *Κυριακοδρόμιον (Collection of sermons and interpretations in the Readings of the Sunday Liturgy)*, 9th ed. (Athens: Ζωή, 1930), 318–23.
[32] John Chrysostom, 'Υπόμνημα εις τον Άγιον Ευαγγελιστήν Ματθαίον, Ομιλία ΝΒ΄ (Memoir to the Holy Evangelist Matthew, Homily ΝΒ΄)', 312–24.

Strangers in a Stagnant World: A Parallel Reading of Angelos Sikelianos and Mark Twain

Angeliki Korre, PhD Candidate,
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

Angelos Sikelianos[1] is a prominent Greek poet and playwright, although these properties would seem rather deficient to anyone having a picture of the Greek poetic tradition. Foremost, one must bear in mind that Greece doesn't actually have an all-inclusive literary tradition; there isn't a remarkable prose canon. Even the German novel of the 19th century, the failure of which seemed written in stone, managed to recover somehow. But the Greek prose—which admittedly includes a scattering of important works here and there—remained unballasted, and certainly didn't beget a *Ulysses*, a *War and Peace*, an *In Search of Lost Time*, an *As I Lay Dying*, or at least an *Invisible Cities* or an *Austerlitz*.

But this deficiency turned out to be, not much surprisingly, a sign of abundance. The literary tradition of Greece is exclusively poetic; and from this poetry emerge all other genres, even non-literary ones. The formidable Poem of Parmenides is the foundation of pre-Socratic philosophy and theology; it serves as a genuine poem and a philosophical treatise, all at once. The lyric poet Pindar's verses are not only paradigms of poetic language, but also a theological pillar. Homer's two *ἔπη* (epic poems), the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, are religious sources in a way, but, most importantly, they are the foundations of the Western novel. It is not by accident

[1]The poet was born in 1884 on the island of Lefkada, in the Ionian Sea, the west coast of Greece, and died in Athens in 1951. He published his poetic work in three volumes under the title *Lyric Life* (*Λυρικός Βίος*, 1946 volume A and B, 1947 volume C), though in 1965, the eminent Greek philologist and scholar G.P. Savvides started the publication of Sikelianos' corpus, including poems, prose, essays and other texts, and tragedies.

that Georg Lukacs, for example, descries two elements that may run through the veins of one's historical novel: the lyric, and/or the epic.[2] The key-element in this case is History. And one could say that both the lyric and the epic can be interpreted as two of the existing ways to experience, to portray, or simply to become conscious of History.

Above all that, a brief mention must be made of the impact that medieval romance had on the derivatives of this tradition. Through the Middle Ages (from Early to Late), many romances were written in Greek (that is, in various dialects that consisted the language of Hellenic world), although none of them seem to have lead directly to the formation of a prose tradition. The Medieval Greek literary production consisted of narrative poems, which embedded popular European themes of the period, such as chivalry. Two major examples are the unsigned *Digenis Akritas*, a romantic epic poem that emerged in the 12th century and appertains to the Byzantine tradition, and *Erotokritos*, a similar, chivalric poem that was written by the Cretan poet Vikentios Kornaros in the 17th century and appertains to the Cretan tradition.

These works, despite the centuries that intervened between them, are both genuine poems, which combine characteristics that, in modern terms, are attributed to the "archetypes" of literary genres: the narrative (that belongs to novel), the metrics (that belong to poetry), and the dialogue (and/or monologue) (that belongs to drama). Apart from these elements, that one can describe as elements of *form*, these works also include specific elements of *content*, such as the usage of History as source of themes, and socio-political motives. In other words, Greek poets throughout the centuries tend to use historical personalities, events etc. to create the imagery of their poems, which they enrich by expressing circumstantial socio-political thoughts, in a way that connects every part of the poem with the other (the images and symbols, the

[2]See: Georg Lukacs, *Der historische Roman*, Berlin : Aufbau, 1955.

meanings behind them, the special characteristics of style, etc.) like a puzzle.

All that is mentioned above simply comprises an attempt to show that, more or less, a Greek poem is not a poem, but a wholeness of all intellectual experiences of the poet who wrote it. This is exactly what happens with Angelos Sikelianos' case. His poems are ablaze with mystical lyricism; they are more like oracles or fragments of an arcane historiography. His plays—as if the Gentile and the Jew in T.S. Eliot's poem "Death by Water"[3] became one at last—reflect the essence of the classical Greek tragedy, but, at the same time, on a biblical structure, especially the structure of the Old Testament.

Firstly, there is the tremendous concept of Myth, which is in fact the closest to History for the gods; there are some tints of theogony and anthropogony; and there are constant prompts of Nature's almightiness, but not in a contradictorily animistic way. Secondly, there is the human being as such, the one and only "protagonist", usually in a back-and-forth transition from the *individual* to the *person* and vice versa; and there is the motif of inner life (the German Romantics and Symbolists, that have a lot in common with Sikelianos, who is very probably more than aware of them, would call this "innere Leben", as distinct from the "äußere Leben", the outer life[4]). Hence, one shouldn't call Sikelianos neither a poet nor a playwright. He is a typical example of the Greek poet: he only knows of verses meant to accompany a lyre; any other craft feels unbecoming. But these verses are enough to incorporate the moral and the sublime, the epic and the lyric, the godliness and the humanness, our histories and our History.

---

[3] Q.v. T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, New York, NY: Boni and Liveright, 1922, p.39.

[4] Apropos the meaning of the terms "inner" and "outer life", see, for example, John Locke's "An Essay concerning Human Understanding" (Part 2), in: *The Works of John Locke in Nine Volumes*, Vol. 2, London: Rivington, 1824[12]. See also Hugo von Hofmannsthal's poem "Ballade des äußeren Lebens" (i.e. "Ballad of the Outer Life") in: Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke*, München: Anaconda, 2022, p. 31.

Homer, who can be called the first who knitted together the parts of this wholeness, deeply influenced Sikelianos' poetry. Although Sikelianos' poems are mostly of extensive length, there is a shorter one with very interesting elements, that can be read as an adaptation of a Homeric motif, namely the arrival of Odysseus at the island of Scheria, also known as Phaeacia. This poem, titled "The Stranger", goes as follows:

THE STRANGER

"Stranger, what's your homeland, what what's your name?"

"Although I'm still in a dream, I am no stranger;
I see an azure coast, and slim line olive trees,
I also see a castle falling on the glass of sea".

"On which cape is the boat that brought you here anchored?"

"The island's light is whelming it. But you should better wend your way now;
Show me where your gardens are, and where your golden apples.
But don't consider warning me about godlike Alcinous' copper hounds;
You only have to divert the garden keeper so I can sneak up
And then I'll tell you what my name is and how I got here.
After that, show me, good woman, the blessed pathways
That Solomos'[5] *used to follow at nights".*[6]

As said above, in this poem Sikelianos borrows a theme from Homer, which he represents in the form of a dialogue, the traditional *stichomythia*. It only consists of questions and answers,

[5] Namely the national poet of Greece, Dionysios Solomos.
[6] Angelos Sikelianos, "The Stranger", in: *Lyric Life* (Lyrikos Vios), vol. VI, ed. G. P. Savvides, Athens: Ikaros, 1969. The translation above is ours.

there are no narratives; the reader abstracts the information needed about the story only by the help of its protagonists, which is admittedly meager hereto, because an insight of the episode in *Odyssey* is required. That is to say, the poet doesn't actually reveal anything. The characters and the land remain anonymous; only the reader who is aware of the Homeric episode can identify them. Thanks to Sikelianos' poetic quality, the poem can be interpretable regardless; it doesn't seem illogical out of the Homeric context, although its core will remain hidden.

The poem includes two characters: Odysseus, the "Stranger" who has just arrived at the land of Phaeacia; and princess Nausicaa, daughter of king Alcinous, who rules this land. At the gates of Alcinous' palace, there are indeed the statues of two hounds, that were made by God Hephaestus himself, and behind these gates there is a stunning garden with evergreen, fruitful trees. By mentioning Alcinous, the hounds, and the garden, Sikelianos succeeds in informing the reader about the exact Homeric episode he uses.

In Book Six of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus arrives at Phaeacia. In the previous Book, he had left Calypsos' Island, Ogygia, thinking that the gods would allow him at last to return to Ithaca. But Poseidon hadn't forgotten Odysseus' *hubris* (ὕβρις / insolence), and, while he's sailing, the callous god decided to give the man one last lesson. A great wave crashes Odysseus' raft, and he ends up as a desperate castaway at the coast of this unfamiliar land. This is how Book six begins; Odysseus has managed to survive, and now he sleeps, starved and naked, in the forest that crowns the coast. He wakes up from the singing and laughter of a group of maidens that wash their clothes at the seashore. Despite his shameful nudity, he approaches the young women and begs Nausicaa for help. This is the moment that draws Sikelianos' attention. But he only uses the setting. Because, unlike the Homeric narrative, Odysseus doesn't seem desperate. Sikelianos' Nausicaa is totally unaware of the stranger's identity, but Odysseus

obviously knows much more than he reveals to her. The woman persistently tries to draw some information, but the only thing that Odysseus reveals is that, in fact, he's not a stranger; he doesn't reveal his name, but he does reveal his Greek origin, when he implies that the "azure coast" and the "olive trees" he sees is things that he's familiar with, since the sea and the olive trees are the hallmark of the Helladic world.

Thereby, he manages to avoid all Nausicaa's questions. When she asks him who he is, he simply says he's Greek; when she asks him how he got to her island, he simply says that his boat has been abandoned somewhere. The most interesting thing of all is that he seems to be in a hurry. The poor woman tries her best to understand, but the "Stranger" knows exactly where he is, who he's talking with, and where he wants to go. He obliquely "manipulates" Nausicaa into leading him inside the palace, assuring her that all will be revealed to her once he's inside. Definitely, the "Stranger" seems to have some kind of plan. Based on the Homeric motif, we know that Odysseus is the fair an honest protagonist, a man devastated by his homesickness, who intends to do no harm to the people that help him survive through his journey. But Sikelianos' Odysseus seems to be more of a "gray" character, with a hidden agenda.

Now, as we know, the mythical region of Phaeaciarepresents Utopia.[7]It is a peaceful, self-contained community, the people of which have a deep connection with nature and the gods. At the peak of its social structure is the king, the monarch; the paternal figure that preserves that balanced and, at the same time, unchanged connection between his people (the

[7]See, for example: Wolfgang E. H. Rudat, "Thomas More, Hythloday, and Odysseus: An Anatomy of 'Utopia'", *American Imago*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Spring 1980, pp. 38-48· Andrew Karp, "The Need for Boundaries: Homer's Critique of the Phaeakian Utopia in the Odyssey", *Utopian Studies* 6, 1995, pp. 25-34· Alexander Shewan, *Homeric Essays*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1935· A. Shewan, "The Scheria of the Odyssey", *The Classical Quarterly* Vol. 13, No. 1 (Jan., 1919), pp. 4-11.

mortals) and the gods (the immortals). It may seem to us that Phaeacia is somewhat an ideal kind of kingdom, immune to the basic problems of a developed society, to every kind of struggle and conflict, be it social, political, financial, or ontological. But, in a rather philosophical consideration of "perfection" as a concept, one can be surely led to darker conclusions.

But as many scholars have stated, Homer actually painted the beautified picture of Phaeacian society to criticize it. We sum it up as follows: Karp presumes that the Phaeacian society is in fact too perfect to be true; the people are ruled by a mighty patriarch, whose role is to keep them in a controllable bubble, the core of which is their relationship with the gods. The relationship between the Phaeacian people and the gods is unhealthy; the people think they are close to them, as gods' favorites, but in fact they are nothing more than a group of traditionalists that neither understand nor interact with the gods. As a result, their perfect society cannot evolve; it is static, and illiberal. Let us recall a verse by the great English poet William Blake: "Expect poison from the standing water";[8] that is, everything that doesn't make some kind of progress –even because it is perfect as it is– is doomed to fall.

Odysseus arrives at Phaeacia as a stranger; but he's not only a stranger to the people, not only an unfamiliar foreigner; he's a stranger to their whole worldview, and that's why the first thing he does when he makes his appearance is to pay no mind to their fundamental laws. He doesn't care if the evergreen gardens are forbidden, he doesn't care if god Hephaestus himself created their guardians; he doesn't care about the king and his order. Odysseus knows that he has to do with an unreal utopia; and he's curious enough to explore it, but also wishes to remain a stranger to it. That's why he tells Nausicaa that he'll reveal his name and his story only after he's inside the forbidden gardens. The Homeric hero we know as Outis (namely "Nobody") won't reveal his genuine name

[8]William Blake, *A Selection of Poems and Letters*, edited with an introduction by J. Bronowsky, London: Penguin Books, 1958, "Proverbs of Hell", p. 97

as long as he remains in this distorted society that is constantly falling prey to the impenetrable metaphysics of its perfection.

The very existence of a name means the existence of an identity; if Odysseus reveals his name, he will reveal his identity; and the reveal will make the identity open to influences. One can imagine the Phaeacians think: "Odysseus is flesh and bone; he has a name, a history, and his own personality. He is just like us, after all. Why not accepting him into our society? Why not making him *exactly* as we are?" By hiding his name, Odysseus makes harder his acceptance by the Phaecians; if they keep seeing him as a nameless person, they will eventually see him as a person without identity, and, at the end, as a person who is less "human" than them. But since they view themselves as gods' closest subjects, they wouldn't accept as one of their own a "less-human" person, a person who doesn't fulfill the "bare minimum" of godly creation.

It is a reasonable assumption that, in the sphere of that criticism, the Stranger is like a virtuous "tempter", someone who doesn't wish to harm people, of course, but only to unveil an ontological deadlock, starting from completely ignoring the protection of a god. The Miltonic Satan, for example, albeit corrupt, functioned, in effect, as a symbol of altering a pre-established reality; as a symbol of *revolting* against laws that offered no leeway to *personal expression*. The Miltonic Satan is a no-hoper and he knows it. But he states: "Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven".[9] He chooses dolorous freedom over a halcyon time under someone else's authority. And this is the exact reason Miltonic Satan influenced so much the Romantics; the Romantics weren't interested in evil as such, but in revolting. The so-called Byronic hero, the protagonist-as-antagonist, is an offspring of Miltonic Satan. In reality, he fights none but himself, his instinct to submit to a paternal authority. Only then he can proceed to fight the

[9]John Milton, *Paradise Lost and Other Poems*, New York, NY: The New American Library, 1961, Book I: 263, p. 44

authority as well, but not because he despises its ways, but because he despises its very nature as an authority.

These "satanic" figures perceive the perfection of the utter good as languishing. What is perfect cannot be more perfect. And if perfection needs no additions, what is the point of evolving under its authority? And if there is no need to evolve, what is the point of having a personality?

Even Homer's Odysseus, long before Sikelianos, epitomized this urge to revolt against stagnation. He repeatedly incensed the gods, not because he was truly impious, but because he was not willing to put a lid on his cogitation, just to please a mob of envious "superior" beings. Odysseus' name is bejeweled by two epithets: "Outis" and "Polymekhanos" (*πολυμήχανος*, which means resourceful, ingenious). The Resourceful Odysseus is a man whose brain works unceasingly to conceive, to parse, and to produce. Itis not by chance that Odysseus is protected, of all Olympians, by Athena, the goddess of wisdom.

Sikelianos' Odysseus is a little darker than Homer's for two reasons: firstly, because he has a very specific and *negative* target (the disintegration of a hazardous "utopia"), and, secondly, because, in order to succeed, he doesn't present himself as "Polymekhanos", but as "Outis". In fact, "Outis" is the twin of "Polymekhanos", the *negative* twin, as we would like to call him, that is, the "corrupted", "destructive", even "evil" one, who takes action when the situation requires him to excuse the *individual* identity to embrace the identity of the *whole*, because it is the identity of the whole that needs to be changed from the inside. Thus, Sikelianos' Odysseus becomes a "Stranger" in order to banish his actual identity and embrace another. He is a man of Ithaca who plans to become a man of Phaeacia. He knows exactly what he is doing when he represents himself to Nausicaa as a tabula rasa. Nausicaa will have no option but to treat this "blank" person as one of her own at last, allowing him to enter the heart of Phaeacia. The more of a "stranger" Odysseus becomes, the nearer

he gets to Nausicaa and Phaeacia. And thus he will manage to interlink this isolated "utopia" with the outside world, and save it from its stagnation. The outside world isn't as perfect, but this is exactly Odysseus' point. It will be better for Phaeacia to become part of a "Hell" where people can at least think freely, thanto stay part of a "Paradise" where people poisoning themselves with the standing water of the unquestionable order.

One cannot help but recall another virtuous "Devil", a "Stranger" similar to Sikelianos', who intended to interlink an isolated world with a wholeness in order to save it from stagnation. In Mark Twain's unfinished novel *The Mysterious Stranger*,[10] three boys live happily in a god-fearing,medieval Austrian village. One day, a little stranger appears in the village, a handsome boy who reveals that he's an angel called Satan, although he's not our familiar fallen angel, the lord of Hell, but his nephew with the same name, and he doesn't intend to do any harm to the people. After a series of disturbing events, young Satan makes the boys witness incidents of all kinds of religious fanaticism that appear throughout the world, like bloody conflicts, executions, and mass hysteria. In other words, Satan helps the boys understand that unquestioning religious theories and practices, which grow out of the belief that we are something like gods' representatives on Earth, can only lead to a distortion of our reality, usually seriously dangerous for human life itself. Needless to remind Satan's shocking final words to the boys: "[T]here is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all a dream – a grotesque and foolish dream. Nothing exists but you. And you are but a thought – a vagrant thought, a useless thought, a homeless thought, wandering forlorn among the empty eternities!".[11] Here again we have a straightforward polemic against the people's exclusive, blind

[10]Mark Twain, *The Mysterious Stranger*, New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1922.
[11]Ibid, p. 140.

dependence on a god they probably know nothing about, regardless of what they may think they know.

The boys in Twain's novel live in a peaceful, closed society like Phaeacia. Although their village is not some kind of utopia, in like manner the people definitely express a passive attitude towards everything. They think they have a perfectly balanced relationship with God that inevitably makes them hypocritical and narrow-minded. Until the Stranger makes his appearance. Just as in Sikelianos' poem, Twain's Stranger is a symbol of rational objectivity, a symbol of questioning. The closed societies of Phaeacia and the Austrian village are characterized by a form of intellectual and moral detachment. The arrival of the Stranger signals the detachment from the detachment; the very act of one's processing, questioning, and choosing between various currents of thought that can lead to a rounded view of the world we live in.

Twain's Stranger seems to use his own method to approach the villagers. He is a stranger, but he proceeds to reveal his name after being asked. But, in reality, he does something similar to Sikelianos' Odysseus. While Odysseus becomes "Outis", Twain's Stranger becomes Satan. He is not the notorious biblical Satan, but the name itself could cause quite a discomfort to such religious people. Yet, he doesn't lie to them, nor he hides his identity. He wants to be accepted by the community as someone bearing a hateful name, in order to show that the name itself means nothing. Names are just words, like many other things are just words as well. For example, laws are just words; holy scriptures are just words; traditions and contracts are just words. Everything is "just words" if not truly and essentially understood in its context. Thus, Twain's Satan interlinks the isolated village with the outside world by helping the people understand that things have the meaning we give them—and this is how things are supposed to be: they don't have a meaning, unless we give it to them. Pre-given meanings, which we blindly accept, are not meanings; we must still get personally involved with things in order to understand them.

Sikelianos' Odysseus attempts to enter the heart of Phaeacia, through Nausicaa, in order to inject the element of foreignness into it. Twain's Satan attempts to enter the heart of the village, through the coeval boys, in order to inject the same element. Satan takes the boys to the outside world; he doesn't talk about what is happening there, but he shows them the very images ofthe events. The boys witness the events with their own eyes. Both of the strangers, Odysseus and Satan, use the tool of *language* to be trusted, enter the isolated world, and connect it with the outside world; by using the language they create an identity with the special characteristics that each world needs (a totally blank identity for Odysseus, an extremely specific identity for Satan). After having entrusted their connection with each world's people with the tool of language, they proceed to fulfill their goal by using a second tool: the *image*. Odysseus wants to enter Phaeacia in order to show the people the image of themselves, because this is what they need; Satan takes the boys to the outside world in order to show them its image, because this is what they need. The main theme of the image may differ, but the tool is the same.

Of course, unlike Twain's novel, in Sikelianos' poem the reader doesn't see Odysseus completing his plan, but what would have happened if the story told in these verses continued is obvious. Sikelianos' imagery is very intense, even in this preliminary stage of the narrative—but not only because of his lyrical tendencies. Nausicaa's questions are, in fact, about concepts: she asks about the *name* of the stranger (the "who") and the *way* of its arrival (the "how"); but Odysseus answer with images withal: the sun, the sea, the trees resemble the "who", and the soaked remains of his raft rotting somewhere on the sand resemble the "how". Even it is easier to spot the usage of imagery in Twain's novel, Sikelianos' poem doesn't suffer at all of its lack; quite the opposite. The question is why the image is so important for the fulfillment of Odysseus' and Satan's plan.

The answer is no other than *mythos*. Mythos (myth) appeared in a stage of human development where people were not ready yet to conceive the world and themselves with concepts. Myths are sums of images, they are symbols and parables where an imaginary—namely: *from imagination*—reality is created to resemble the existing one, and thus its contents are easier interpreted by the people, who can step by step be led to its inner meanings.[12] To Odysseus and Satan, the isolated world they are dealing with is, in fact, a primitive world. Its isolation, its "perfection", its stagnation has disrupted its evolution. The people of Phaeacia as well as the people of the Austrian village are simply not ready for concepts. Odysseus and Satan go back to human history and use the myth, the sum of images, to help the people face and understand this terrifying, and thus neglected, outside world.

The fundamental anonymity they both maintain at first is not only a part of their attempt to remain strangers to the people of the closed society they visit for as long they can, in order to show them that there is a distance between them and the rest of the world, in order to prove that their introversion has led them to a distorted reality. They also maintain their anonymity because the name is a concept that must be left aside, above all concepts, so people's minds can accept the image, the myth. As it was said above, the myth often consists in a parallel reality created by imagination. The parallelity of myth is a parallelity of images.

In a way, every type of "stranger" that enters a community or a society incarnates, willingly or not, the possibility of a parallel truth, while it is always hard to even think about such a possibility, let alone accept it. At first, this parallel truth is expressed through

[12]A conclusion based on the following books: Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, translated from the third edition (1744) by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch, Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961· Ernst Steinbach, *Mythos und Geschichte*, Tübingen : J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1951· Cornelius Loew, *Myth, Sacred History and Philosophy*, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967· Frank Reynolds, David Tracy (eds.), *Myth and Philosophy*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990.

the image. The stranger, the foreigner is “different”; the stranger looks different, speaks different, dresses different, acts different. The stranger carries a whole different reality, namely a whole different *image*, which is suddenly attached to the known reality. And the people of the world the stranger enters have two options: they can either observe this new image, and use it as a prism through which they can look at their own alternatively, or they can reject it and mire in the only image they recognize.

That is the crucial question: what remains after the stranger’s departure, after the image of the stranger has been imprinted on people’s consciousness. Will the society become better or worse than before, will the very idea of parallel truths liberate it or incite it to entrench itself in an even stricter closeness? The answer depends partly on the dynamics of the society and partly on the motives of the stranger. But it is safe to say that nothing is possible for the society without the stranger, the small rock that disturbs the standing water of comfort.

A Hundred Year Friendship: A Greek refugee family meets a Turkish one after the Asia Minor Catastrophe (1922)

Dr. Apostolos Michailidis,
Laboratory & Teaching Staff Member,
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

Dear Colleagues, dear Students,

As the subject of the present workshop concerns the "Foreigner", I intend to tell you a true story as I heard it from the testimonies of elders. So, my presentation it not a formal one; it is neither academic nor systematic. I could say that it resembles a narrative based mainly on oral biographical information, a few written sources, and a few secondary ones.

In general, a "foreigner" is someone who comes to our place starting from another. However, apart from being just a stranger, could be an invader, a sovereign, a fugitive, an immigrant, or a refugee. My ancestors belong to the last category; they were refugees. They were living until 1775 in an isolated village (Marathos) on the Agrafa mountain range in western Greece, under Ottoman rule.[1] However, fourteen families were forced to abandon it due to the raids and looting by Ali, a local bandit, who later was appointed ruler (pasha) of the Ioannina region (sanjak). So, they headed east, reached at Stylida, a port in eastern central Greece, and from there boarded a ship bound for Russia, but the ship was damaged in the Dardanelles. As a result, all the families landed in Constantinople (Istanbul). There, someone from their village,

[1] Φωτεινή Πέκου, *Από τη γη της Μικρασίας στη γη της Εορδαίας (Πτολεμαΐδα 2022)*, p. 196. Ελένη Χατζούδη-Τούντα, *Η Ηλιοστάλακτη από τη Βιθυνία* (Αθήνα: Βιβλιοπωλείο της «Εστίας» 1984), p. 9.

named Tsaoussis, a stationery shopkeeper, appeared at that critical situation. He made an agreement with a friend of his, a high Ottoman official, a bey, giving him several golden pounds. The bey granted them a large area, right across from the city, a Yaliciflik, which means "coastal estate" in the Turkish language, and to this day that is the name of the village they built, since his requirement was that name to be kept.[2]

It is testified that at the beginning of the 20th century the village was habited by-more or less- 1,100 people,[3] all Greeks, who built a school (1857),[4] paying four teachers to teach the Greek language and history to their children, and a church (1894) dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

Time in general did not always flow calmly. The reason is that ethnic cleansing started – first against the Armenians in 1894, later on against the Assyrians, and finally against the Greeks. Though I am not a historian, I think that the most detailed book to find out what happened then is written by two Israeli scholars, Benny Morris and Dror Ze'evi's, *The Thirty-Year Genocide, Turkey's Destruction of its Christian Minorities 1894-1924*, published by Harvard University Press in 2019[5]. It recounts that on

---

[2] Ελένη Χατζούδη-Τούντα, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

[3] Σία Αναγνωστοπούλου, *Μικρά Ασία, 19ος αιώνας-1919, Οι ελληνορθόδοξες κοινότητες-Από το μιλλέτ των Ρωμιών στο ελληνικό έθνος* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Πεδίο 2013), Παράρτημα-Πίνακας του Ρωμέικου πληθυσμού των πόλεων και των χωριών του Β. τμήματος των δυτικών παραλίων: Καζάς Μουδανιών (without page number). Φωτεινή Πέκου, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

[4] Fotini Pekou (Φωτεινή Πέκου) mentions that there was a girls only school on the ground floor with two female teachers, and a boys only school on the first floor with two male teachers. The pupils were a total of 200. Instead, the academic historian Prof. Sia Anagnostopoulou (Σία Αναγνωστοπουλου) mentions two teachers in number; one for the boys and one for the girls respectively, and 100 pupils in all. See Σία Αναγνωστοπούλου, *op. cit*., Πίνακες των εκκλησιών, σχολείων, μαθητών κ.λπ. των κοινοτήτων των μητροπόλεων της Β. Ασίας-Μητρόπολη Νικομηδείας: Τμήμα Απολλωνιάδος (without page number).

[5] Benny Morris - Dror Ze'evi. *The Thirty-Year Genocide, Turkey's Destruction of its Christian Minorities 1894-1924*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2019. Edited and translated in Greek: Benny Morris - Dror Ze'evi. *Η Τριακονταετής*

that period, three waves of violence swept through Anatolia targeting the areas inhabited by Christian minorities, which until then accounted for 20 percent of the population. By 1924 they were reduced to 2 percent.

In the village of my ancestors no mass slaughter occurred as far as I know. However, displacements from 1914 to 1918 took place.[6] Gendarmes were coming to the village, rounded up the villagers, separated them in teams and led them to remote, barren places. There, without food and clean water, deaths by cholera were common.

On the 15th of May 1919 the Greek army landed in Smyrna (present day Ismir). With its arrival, the plan of the "Great Idea" was implemented, which was the liberation of the Christian populations and the partial land detachment of the faltering Ottoman empire.[7] In June 1920 a part of the army arrived in Yaliciflik and the inhabitants welcomed it with great enthusiasm. Both my grandfathers enlisted as volunteers in the army, most notably in the II Army Corps under the command of Prince Andrew, the great grandfather of the present King of the United Kingdom, SP Charles III. The II Army Corps reached as far as

---

Γενοκτονία - Ο Αφανισμός των Χριστιανικών Μειονοτήτων της Τουρκίας, 1894-1924, μτφρ. Αστερίου Μενέλαος, Αθήνα: Πατάκη, 2021.

[6] Βλάσης Αγτζίδης, *Μικρά Ασία - Ένας οδυνηρός μετασχηματισμός (1906-1923*), (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Παπαδόπουλος 2015), pp. 61-62, 66-68, 73, 83. Nicholas Doumanis, *Before the Nation. Muslim-Christian Coexistence and it's destruction in late Ottoman Anatolia*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013), pp. 151-157. See also the Greek edition and translation: Νικόλας Ντουμάνης, *Πριν από την καταστροφή - Η συνύπαρξη χριστιανών και μουσουλμάνων στη Μικρά Ασία*, μετφρ. Ίων Βασιλειάδης, (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Παπαδόπουλος 2022), pp. 264-275. See also, Οικουμενικό Πατριαρχείο, *Μαύρη βίβλος, διωγμών και μαρτυρίων του εν Τουρκία ελληνισμού (1914-1918)*, εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει, εκ του Πατριαρχικού Τυπογραφείου, 1919); especially for the atrocities and displacements in the Metropolis (Diocese) of Nicomedia (modern Izmit) where Yaliciflik belonged, see pp. 106-114.

[7] Άγγελος Συρίγος-Ευάνθης Χατζηβασιλείου, *Μικρασιατική Καταστροφή - 50 Ερωτήματα και Απαντήσεις* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Πατάκη 2022[2]), pp. 81-85. Θάνος Μ. Βερέμης, *Μικρή Ιστορία της Μικρασιατικής Καταστροφής* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Πατάκη 2022), pp. 16-22.

Sakarya River, where a battle took place lasting for 21 days (23 Aug-13 Sep 1921). During the counterattack of Young Turks army leading by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the II Army Corps retreated, as did the entire army. My paternal grandfather was captured and taken to a prisoners war camp in Adana, and he was released in 1924 after a prisoner exchange. In the meantime, his family were forced to leave the village boarding a cart to the harbor of Mudanya, on the north coast of northwestern Anatolia on the Sea of Marmara. My other grandfather was luckier; he met his family at that port. They tried to hug him, but he stopped them, saying he was covered in lice. Finally, the villagers managed to reach Greece, at the port of Piraeus, thanks to the kind offer of Philippos Kavounidis (1875-1940), a ship-owner, who made his ships available to transport them.

After that, they moved northwest, reached Ptolemaida, a town in northwestern Greece, and half of them settled there. The other half migrated northeast, looking for a place where "water, stones, and wood", as they used to say, would be available and plenty. Eventually, they found a village (Paleochori), at the foothills of Mt. Pangaion, close to the northeastern Greek city of Kavala, that had all three. Greeks and Turks alike were living there, in separate districts. The Turkish people were scared because of the war, but also due to the hostility and mistreatment by the native Greeks. The relations of the refugees with the native Greeks were not good at first. The locals derogatorily called them "tourkosporoi", that means "Turkish offspring".

Then, according to a decision taken by the state, the refugees had to be hosted by Turkish families, who had to take care of the food and accommodation expenses of them. My maternal grand-father's family was hosted by a Turkish family named Karahasan. When Ahmet Karahasan went to the village grocer to pay what my grandfather owed, he found that there was no debt. Ahmet asked my grandfather: "Well, don't you eat?" and my

grandfather replied: “Since you are hosting me, must you also feed me?”.

Ahmet Karahasan never forgot that answer. He didn’t have a child at that time; my grandfather had a son. The Karahasan couple treated this child as if it was their own. The two families became so close that my grandfather’s nickname was now “Karahasan”.

On the 30th of January 1924, *The Convention on Exchange of Greek and Turkish populations* was signed in Lausanne, which called for the exchange based on religion.[8] So, the Karahasan couple, Ahmet and Aisha, left Greece, but communication between the two families, never stopped.

Exactly one hundred years have passed at the time of this writing. From time to time, since the *Convention on Exchange*, members of both families met each other, either in Greece or in Turkey. The last time my family met the descendants of Ahmet Karahasan was almost a year ago, and they hope to meet them again. I shared this story to remind that despite the differences between people whether ethnic, religious, or whatever, what remains is that we are all humans who inhabit in the same world. I believe this thought is best expressed by Stephen Hawking, the famous theoretical physicist and cosmologist, in his last book, titled *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*. He writes: “When we see the Earth from space, we see ourselves as a whole. We see the unity, and not the divisions. It is such a simple image with a compelling message: one planet, one human race”.[9]

Thank you for your time.

[8] Βλάσης Αγτζίδης, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-198.
[9] Stephen Hawking, *Brief Answers to the Big Questions* (New York: Bantam Books 2018), p. 18.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Αγτζίδης, Βλάσης. *Μικρά Ασία-Ένας οδυνηρός μετασχηματισμός (1906-1923)*, Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Παπαδόπουλος, 2015.

Αναγνωστοπούλου, Σία. *Μικρά Ασία, 19ος αιώνας-1919. Οι ελληνορθόδοξες κοινότητες - Από το μιλλέτ των Ρωμιών στο ελληνικό έθνος*, Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Πεδίο, 2013.

Βερέμης, Θάνος Μ. *Μικρή Ιστορία της Μικρασιατικής Καταστροφής*, Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Πατάκη, 2022.

Doumanis, Nicholas. *Before the Nation: Muslim-Christian Coexistence and its Destruction in Late Ottoman-Anatolia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Hawking, Stephen. *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*, New York: Bantam Books, 2018.

Morris, Benny and Ze'evi, Dror. *The Thirty-Year Genocide, Turkey's Destruction of its Christian Minorities 1894-1924*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2019.

Ντουμάνης, Νικόλας. *Πριν από την καταστροφή - Η συνύπαρξη χριστιανών και μουσουλμάνων στη Μικρά Ασία*, μτφρ. Ίων Βασιλειάδης, Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Παπαδόπουλος, 2022.

Οικουμενικό Πατριαρχείο. *Μαύρη βίβλος, διωγμών και μαρτυρίων του εν Τουρκία ελληνισμού (1914-1918)*, εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει, εκ του Πατριαρχικού Τυπογραφείου, 1919.

Πέκου, Φωτεινή. *Από τη γη της Μικρασίας στη γη της Εορδαίας*, Πτολεμαΐδα 2022.

Συρίγος, Άγγελος-Χατζηβασιλείου, Ευάνθης. *Μικρασιατική Καταστροφή-50 Ερωτήματα και Απαντήσεις*, Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Πατάκη, 2022[2].

Χατζούδη-Τούντα, Ελένη. *Η Ηλιοστάλακτη από τη Βιθυνία*, Αθήνα: Βιβλιοπωλείο της «Εστίας», 1984.

The (g)hostliness of Strangers: On Albert Camus's Exiles and Guests

Dr. Alessandra Capperdoni, Lecturer,
Global Humanities Department,
Simon Fraser University.

> Isn't the question of the foreigner [*l'étranger*] a foreigner's question?
> Coming from the foreigner, from abroad [*l'étranger*]?
> […] in many of Plato's dialogues, it is often the Foreigner (*xenos*) who questions.
> He carries and puts the question.
> (Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality, 3, 5*)

It is as a matter of urgency that the question of the foreigner, "Ο Ξένος," has (re)announced itself as the question confronting the new century, in its political necessity as well as its philosophical obsession. The speed at which mass migration is increasing across the world—in the wake of conflicts, sometimes preceding conflicts, or in the wake of economic dispossession, environmental loss, and social disenfranchisement—is not a question reducible to staggering statistics or feelings of habituation to "the new normal." It is also a question forcing us to the limit of our certitudes, possibilities, established knowledges, and customs. It is a question that points to its own unresolved condition, for the entire twentieth century, perhaps with the exception of a few decades when the illusory perception of stability dominated, was already marked by the shock of the utter tragedy of mass-displacements that took place at different moments. The first moment was the object of the analysis of the modern history of minorities by Hannah Arendt, when a new vocabulary was revealing the legal and discursive

limitations confronting the phenomenon of stateless people, refugees, the departed, the displaced, and the homeless that two World Wars had left behind.[1] The second moment followed from the accelerated and uneven development of a new phase of rapid industrialization in the global North, the break-down of colonial Empires, the violence erupting in postcolonial States, and the steady but aggressive movement from industrial capitalism to financial capitalism marked by the onset of neoliberal ideologies. Today the urgency is confronting us in the deathbed of the Mediterranean Sea or along the shores of the Indian Ocean, in the asphyxiating trucks and cargo ships that carry the new embodiment of outsiderness across land borders, in the thirst of desertic lands across the border between Mexico and the US, and the list could go on and on. Perhaps not coincidentally, the twenty-first century has also announced itself with a symbolic act of violence, carried out through an ideology that could have not represented a more radical sign of foreignness to the idea of the West: the terrorist attack to the Twin Towers in New York in the name of religious fundamentalism. The epistemological and ontological limit of the idea of "the foreigner" has then shown itself in its naked violence: Who or what embodies the sign of the foreigner? To whom is it opposed? All of a sudden, at least for those who had not undergone such experience in its historical dimension, the notion of the immigrant, the stranger, the refugee, or the asylum seeker, put into question the notion of the citizen, the legal resident, the resident alien, or whatever signifier is endowed to those who constitute "us" and who are allowed to stay. A national passport or a resident card were suddenly no longer enough to protect you from the possibilities of violence. Twenty years have passed since the attack and rather than finding answers, we seem to encounter only more and more questions. Why, then, turn to the field of writing that is literature to address the reality principle for which social thought

[1] Hannah Arendt, "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man," in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Mariner Books, 1973).

and political science seem more adept? What is the question of the foreigner? To whom does it speak? And if it speaks, what does it say?

It is not without some anticipation that this article returns to a well-known short story by the French-Algerian writer Albert Camus. The title of the story is translated into English as "The Guest," a translation that hides the possibilities opened by the original French title "L'Hôte," signifying simultaneously *the host* and *the guest*. My reason for choosing to discuss the translated text is not instrumental (I do read French and my discussion could easily be performed in French language) but rather a choice that points to the ethics of writing and writing as responsibility toward the other, for the act of translation brings forth possibilities and contradictions concealed by the familiarity of language of the original text. Translation is a call to the openness of futurity—the reading act to come—that reveals what Walter Benjamin calls the essential kinship of languages and at the same time the essential foreignness of languages to each other—the untranslatability of language.[2] Translation, as the history and theory of this practice have convincingly shown, is always about betrayal, for the *trans-latare* of the Latin language (i.e., the carrying across riversides) enacts a loss of meaning that speaks to the very nature of the linguistic sign. The English translation of the story, in this case, conceals the sign of the impossibility of translation, of the double bind, or the aporia of language. Can we cross over to the foreigner's land? If so, would the land remain the foreigner's land? But I am also reading this story in the awareness that Camus's repeated return in his oeuvre to the theme of exiles and strangers of different sorts, from the novels *L'Étranger* (*The Stranger*) and *La Peste* (*The Plague*) to the short stories of *L'Exile et le Royaume* (*Exile and Kingdom*), points to an interest, or perhaps an instinctual attraction, for what lies outside the borders of the language of community and

[2] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," *TTR: traduction, terminologie, rédaction*, vol. 10, n° 2, 1997, pp. 151-165.

identity. I chose this story for a discussion of the question of the foreigner because its approach to the theme of exile and foreignness refuses facile categorization and the force of boundaries that are also responsible for the instantiation of the outsider. It is an approach that is remarkably resonant with Jacques Derrida's trope of the ghostliness of language—in this case, of the ghostliness of the stranger that upsets the mastery of home and *ipseity*—and raises questions at a time, our time, when notions of home, belonging, identities, have renewed the double bind of their ferocious power.[3]

"L'Hôte" was published in 1957 by Gallimard in a collection entitled *L'Exil et le Royaume* (*Exile and the Kingdom*)—a title that ties the six short stories contained in the book to the theme of exile, bearing clear connections to the philosophy of the Absurd to which Camus owes his reputation.[4] It is precisely in this light that the story has been received, but the conflation of philosophical writings with literary writings in its critical reception has also operated an obfuscation of potential different readings. The story recounts an episode in the life of a French Algerian schoolmaster, Daru, a *pied-noir* who lives and teaches on the Algerian plateau. His pupils come from impoverished and Arab-speaking families. He loves his work and the place where he lives, which is also the land where he was born. One day, a police officer (a gendarme) with whom he is in friendly relationships, Balducci, arrives uninvited to his place and leaves an Arab prisoner in his

[3] Hauntology is a term introduced by Jacques Derrida in *Spectres of Marx* (1993). The 'ghost' is not to be understood as the legacy or intrusion of the past into the present but the intrusion of irrecuperable Otherness in our intellectual horizon, an intrusion that we have a duty to preserve. Thus, hauntology (deconstructing and replacing ontology) occupies the space of Levinas's Otherness. Hauntology is an ethical injunction that is inherent in language itself. In this article, the (g)hostliness of language and of strangers also plays with the idea of the kernel 'host' that inhabits both the word and the figure of the ghost.

[4] Albert Camus, "L'Hôte," in *L'Exil et le Royaume* (Gallimard : 1957). Citations from the English translation: "The Guest," in *Exile and the Kingdom*, Trans. Justin O'Brien (Alfred A. Knopf, 1957). The philosophy of the absurd is best explored in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien (Hamish Hamilton, 1955).

hands. The Arab remains unnamed throughout the story, as in the case of *The Stranger*, where the victim of the protagonist's murder remains throughout the novel 'the Arab'. Camus's attentive and precise crafting of his stories suggests the significance of this narrative choice, which obviously deserves attention. After some chatting, Balducci makes known to Daru that the latter is ordered by the authorities to take charge of the prisoner, guilty of murdering his cousin over a question of grain, and to deliver him to the next police station where he will be imprisoned. Balducci cannot complete the delivery himself since he is wanted back as soon as possible to his station: there is in fact talk of revolt and possible attacks on the part of the Arab population. In the background of the story is the ongoing Algerian Revolution, to which both speakers allude, but the impending danger is that the people of the prisoner will try to free him. Throughout this time the Arab remains silent, following meekly the orders of Balducci while his gaze rests intently on the two of them, sometimes "with his feverish eyes" and "with a sort of anxiety."[5] Daru's uncertainty and unwillingness to comply are evident in his failed attempt to oppose the order and his unsuccessful refusal to accept the revolver that Balducci leaves behind for defense purposes. He has no choice: it is a police order, but his firm dissent is communicated in no uncertain terms. Left alone with the prisoner, he cares for his physical well-being (food and sleep) until the next day, when they leave. The entire night is spent in a climate of uncertainty, during which Daru ponders the unwanted task that he has been assigned and shows ambivalence toward the Arab, a mix of sympathy, fear, and wrath, almost welcoming the possibility that he might escape. But this is not the case and the next morning they prepare to leave. After a long walk they come to a crossroad where they stop. Daru consigns to the prisoner food and money and shows him two possible destinations. It is a choice between punishment and freedom: one road will lead him to the police station where they are waiting for him. The other

[5] Albert Camus, ibid., 108, 109.

will lead him through the plateau where he can reach the nomads who will host him, as from their customs. Then he departs, leaving the speechless Arab behind, but after some time he comes back to the point where he had left him only to realize with some disappointment that the Arab has taken the road to the police station. He then returns home and on the blackboard of his classroom he reads a message written in chalk and left for him anonymously: "You handed over our brother. You will pay for this."[6] The story concludes with the narrator's remarks about the utter loneliness of Daru in this land that he loves so much.

The story presents many interesting points of reflection. Although the affinity that Camus displayed with the existentialist circles in which he moved may prompt the adoption of a Sartrian interpretive lens—i.e., the idea of absolute freedom and the (non)choices taken by the three different characters—it is ethics that comes to the forefront through the question of the responsibility to the other that the title invokes. Who is *l'hôte* of the title? Is he guest or host? What kind of responsibility toward the other is expected of him? Who is the other in the first place? And what are the effects of such responsibility? Ethics traverses the work of all French existentialist philosophers, despite some important differences. In Jean-Paul Sartre it contends with the central concern of the absolute freedom of man and the effects of bad faith on individual authenticity in what was to lead to the construction of an ethics of Nothingness, while Simone de Beauvoir addresses the double nature of man, simultaneously subject and object, and an ethics of ambiguity that should respond to each situation in its particularity.[7] The position of Camus about French existentialism is one of affinity but also ambivalence, sharing fundamental concerns but not necessarily the methods and the results of his circle of friends. Camus's philosophical universe

[6] Ibid., 117
[7] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (The Philosophical Library, 1948).

is not built on a Hegelian vision but on a notion of the Absurd that is anti-nihilistic and supports the thought-to-action movement of "the rebel."[8] Yet Camus never offers a systematic understanding of ethics. His ontological grounding is firmly positioned in the idea of the Absurd, but his considerations on ethics do not coalesce in one single work or idea and have to be carved out attentively from his literary works. A possible reading of an ethics of rebellion in Camus is proposed by James E. Caraway, but such interpretation does not take into consideration the contradictions presented in his carefully crafted stories—for example, ambivalent feelings on his part about the very idea of rebellion, which goes hand in hand with his analysis of the French-Algerian war and his repudiation of violence from either side.[9] The fundamental ambiguity in Camus's work is precisely the question as to who this other is and what it is that is due to them. It is an ambiguity that brings Camus closer to De Beauvoir than Sartre.

Levinas's philosophy of ethics as Infinity may provide a useful lens for reading the ethical concerns that the story raises.[10] Infinity, Levinas argues, responds to the call of the other. It sets itself in contrast with the Totality that has characterized the history of Western thought and its philosophy of absolute systems. "This history," Levinas notes, "can be interpreted as an attempt to universal synthesis, a reduction of all experience, of all that is reasonable, to a totality wherein consciousness embraces the world, leaves nothing other outside of itself, and thus becomes absolute thought."[11] This totalization that equates consciousness of the self

---

[8] Albert Camus, *L'Homme revolté* (Gallimard, 1951). *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, trans. Anthony Bower (Knopf, 1956).
[9] James E. Caraway, "Albert Camus and the Ethics of Rebellion," *Mediterranean Studies* , 1992, Vol. 3, Spain & the Mediterranean (1992), 125-136.
[10] See especially Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne, 1969) and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981), as well as the untranslated *Difficile liberté* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1963) and *Humanisme de l'Autre homme* (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1972).
[11] Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1982), 75.

with consciousness of the whole, Levinas explains, characterizes the great philosophical systems but disregards the fact that the relationship between humans is not synthesizable: "The irreducible and ultimate experience of relationships appears to me in fact to be elsewhere: not in synthesis, but in the face to face of humans, in sociality, in its moral significations."[12] In Levinas's thought, First philosophy is ethics and ethics cannot reduce the other to the Same. On the contrary, "the idea of the Infinite implies a thought of the Unequal," and "the relation to the Infinite is not a knowledge, but a Desire."[13] Levinas outlines a tension between Totality and Infinity that can help us navigate Camus's story, offering a reading framework that speaks to the question of the foreigner.

In "The Guest," otherness operates on different levels. The most apparent one is the relation of Balducci and Daru with the Arab in contrast with their relationship with each other. Ethnicity and a shared cultural baggage are an obvious indicator of Balducci and Daru's social similarities: they both belong to the community of the colonial settler nation and both occupy public offices—the first is a gendarme and the second an elementary school teacher. They are French Algerians, but not from the metropolitan centre: Balducci is a Corse and Daru is a *pied noir* from the impoverished periphery. They do not display any antagonism, fear, or resentment toward the indigenous population. On the contrary, they show a certain familiarity with their customs and social values. The only concern that is voiced by Balducci is the close approach of the signs of the revolution, and given his disposition toward the Arab, wavering between neutrality and human sympathy, we can only infer that such concern finds its validity in a very practical knowledge of the violence that rebellions and uprisings usually bring about. But the similarities end here. The narrator has already made clear that Daru shares a very deep attachment to this land and to the pupils of his school, reinforced by a shared experience of

[12] Emmanuel Levinas, ibid., 77.
[13] Emmanuel Levinas, ibid., 91, 92.

poverty and geographic isolation. No suggestion is made that the ethos of his teaching enact an assimilationist policy—Daru is more interested in the well-being of his pupils and their families than in the content of his classes—but the colonial framework of his teaching post is not concealed either: the map of the four rivers of France designed on the blackboard is mentioned twice in the story. The love for land and people is suggested in the lengthy exploration of Daru's feelings about his solitary life on the plateau and the pleasure that he experiences in the dissonance of the local: "This is the way the region was, cruel to live in, even without men—who didn't help matters either. But Daru had been born here. Everywhere else, he felt exiled."[14] In Daru's hesitant feelings, at home yet not quite at home at the same time, the narrator suggests an inalienable sentiment of difference that Daru perceives about himself, his place in the world, his relation to others, indigenous people and land alike, a perception that is never quite settled but comes into the foreground at the end. Is he the *host* or the *guest* in this story?

It is with the Arab that the veil of familiarity, albeit alienated familiarity, is torn and otherness enters Daru's life as an event. The outsider status is embodied not only in the Arab's prisoner-identity, and thus in the physical performance of his status of offender against the law, but also in the phenomenology of his body as it appears to the observing Daru: "At first Daru noticed only his huge lips, fat, smooth, almost Negroid; yet his nose was straight, his eyes were dark and full of fever. The *chèche* revealed an obstinate forehead and, under the weathered skin now rather discolored by the cold, the whole face had a restless and rebellious look that struck Daru when the Arab, turning his face toward him, looked him straight in the eyes."[15] His lingering gaze on the particulars of the Arab's face and head mark what Levinas calls the

[14] Camus, "The Guest," 107.
[15] Ibid., 108.

thought of the Unequal, but does not enact objectification.[16] remains a mystery to the eyes of Daru, irreducible to knowledge. At the same time, even in his motionless silence or few sparse words, the Arab questions Daru's position and the guest-host relationship that in this paradoxical circumstances Daru is displaying: "Why do you eat with me?"[17] The question could be easily rephrased as "Who are you?" and it is in this sense that the short back and forth exchange between the two unfolds. Daru, of whom the narrator has already remarked his sentiments of wrath and annoyance, is obsessed with knowing the reason he killed, while the Arab asks what will happen to him next. The misencounter of their words and the failed mutual recognition could not be more evident. To this hypothetical yet implicit question, "Who are you?", we do not expect to hear an answer that would prompt a "Ah, this is who you are" or "Ah, now I understand you." Such a move would have implied Equality. Instead, this scene of address performs a failure of recognition, reintroduces the thought of the Unequal, and for this reason gives way to the possibility of Desire. Unexpectedly, but also ambiguously, as the Arab asks whether the gendarme will come back the next day and whether Daru will go with them, he also spells out an ambiguous invitation: "'Come with us,' he said."[18] Is the Arab still referring to the travelling party of the next day? Or is this an invitation to join *the other party*, the indigenous people? And as Judith Butler remarks in her reading of Levinas, it is as the consequence of being the subject to the unwilled address of the other that responsibility emerges.[19] It is a non-symmetrical relationship that cannot expect anything in return—and which makes of responsibility the essential structure of subjectivity because it opens to the social bond of Desire. It is an invitation that the Arab spells out to "join," being-

[16] Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity. Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, ibid., chp. 7: The Face.
[17] Ibid., 112.
[18] Ibid., 113.
[19] Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (Fordham UP, 2005), 85.

with, rather than being reduced-to. It is the promise of a liberation from identity (of Self-Consciousness, of the Same) and enter what Jacques Lacan was to theorize, in the field of psychoanalysis, as a non-relation.[20] This choice, at this point in the story, would have led to an encounter with Infinity—but it was not to be.

On a literal level, the obvious 'ethical' choice presented in the story is the one that confronts Daru and that becomes the primary focalizer of the narrative. Should he follow the order and thus participate in the punishment of the Arab? Or should he break the law and set him free, thus betraying the French Algerian state? Camus does not insist much on the choices of the gendarme Balducci in the first part of the story—he is, in the end, a representative of the law—but a comment by Balducci on the consequences of shame in carrying out his duties, even after a long career, suggests an awareness on his part of his implication in the colonial system: "I don't like it either. You don't get used to putting a rope on a man even after years of it, and you're even ashamed—yes, ashamed. But you can't let them have their way."[21] It is the abstract force of the law (and by default of colonial power) that Balducci upholds, and even if fighting the revolution is perhaps more urgent than punishing the Arab for a criminal act originating in a family dispute, his stance is not without full awareness of his own responsibility in the system—hence his shame for subjecting another human being to the dehumanizing force of the law. Daru, instead, announces immediately that despite the disgust he feels for the crime committed by the Arab, he will not turn him in. But despite the declaration of his intentions, he withdraws from any responsibility, leaving the choice (either imprisonment or flight) to the Arab himself. If in the case of Balducci we can talk of a missed possibility of unconditional response, in the case of Daru the failure to respond unconditionally is the refusal to accept the demand of

[20] Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire. Livre XVII. L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-70*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Seuil, 1991); *Le Séminaire. Livre XX. Encore, 1972-73*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Seuil, 1975).
[21] Camus, ibid. 110.

the other, which has been voiced at different points in the story—through body language, through the Arab's words "Come with us," and to the very end through the Arab's resistance to Daru's abandonment. Balducci's shame is predicated upon the self-awareness of the gendarme of his own position in the system. It anticipates but also contrasts Daru's shame, never mentioned as such in the story, but which becomes apparent in the void felt by Daru in the final act of the story as the anonymous inscription on the blackboard confronts him.

The double connotation of guest and host in the title of the story gets lost in modern English, which replaces two words for one. The words *host* and *guest* share the Proto-Indo-European etymological root *ghos-ti-*, meaning stranger, guest, host.[22] These are terms that imply relationality but also bear connotations that have evolved in time as opposition. A guest can be a friendly visitor but also a stranger, an enemy, or a parasite. A host is someone who offers hospitality, but the term can also indicate a gathering of war. The French term has maintained the characteristic of what Derrida calls *undecidability*, where one word can produce different meanings that are conventionally mutually exclusive terms.[23] The ambiguity of the French *hôte* is central to the story. Who is the guest and who is the host in the story? On one level, guests are the Arab and Balducci, who arrive unexpectedly, but it is the Arab that subverts the expectations of Daru's life. Yet the Arab is indigenous to the land, unlike Daru and Balducci, who belong to the settler community. The choice of the title reverses the problematic relation

[22] Calvert Watkins, ed., *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots: Third Edition* (Houghton Miffin Company, 1985), p. 23.

[23] Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago, 1981). See also, Jacques Derrida, ''Force of Law,'' trans. Mary Quaintance, *Cardozo Law Review* 11 (1989–90), 920-1029. For Derrida, the textual instability of meaning which undecidability indicates can refer to what resists binary systems, what marks the limits of completeness of meaning (or decidability), and what is foreign and heterogenous to determination. The title of Camus's story opens up to all three possible readings.

of guest-host relationship. We are invited to reflect on the conditions of settler colonialism, where the true (uninvited) guests are in fact the French (or, in a broad sense, the colonizers) and the (unwilling) hosts are the native Algerians. But the philosophical thrust of the story does not seem to be content with this explanation. Settler-colonial relations play an important role in the story but at the same time the tone, established by the third-person narrator, does not assign them the ultimate interpretative key. While the cultural difference between the characters is kept in full sight, it is the ethical relation between them that invites the reader's attention. The schoolmaster, we are told, feels like an exile everywhere, except on this land. More particularly, he experiences his home as a kingdom. These feelings suggest a mastery of ownership and of self-presence that brings together the dimension of the political and of self-consciousness (being oneself). Such mastery is unsettled by the very law of hospitality that he exercises toward the Arab. He is not simply accepting him as a charge in his house, albeit feeling subject to this implicit demand for acceptance. He cares for his well-being, providing him with food and a place to sleep, while being concerned about his unnecessary physical restriction: he provides xenia. The Arab becomes less of a prisoner and more of an/other human being. But this hospitality shakes the mastery of Daru: his political and ethical beliefs, regarding the current colonial war as well as the crime of murder, are both undermined. He loathes the action for which the Arab is responsible but is also wary of handing him over. Something has entered his house—and that something, under the guise of the Arab, is the demand of the other of hospitality as unconditional hospitality because ethics, Levinas reminds us, is being responsible not only for the other but also for the responsibility of the other.[24] It is this burden of responsibility toward the stranger that he finds himself unable to bear. By giving

[24] Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. R.A. Cohen (Duquesne UP, 1982), p. 99: " […] I am responsible for a total responsibility, which answers for all the others and for all in the others, even for their responsibility. The I always has one responsibility *more* than all the others."

to the Arab the freedom to choose between imprisonment and freedom, Daru shifts its burden onto him and deflects his responsibility. The weight of this (non)choice is apparent to the Arab and as "a sort of panic was visible in his expression," he seems to plead with him: "'Listen,' he said," before being silenced by Daru: "Daru shook his head: 'No, be quiet. Now I'm leaving you'."[25] It is also a failed attempt. Not only does the Arab make an unexpected choice by choosing the road of his imprisonment, but Daru's return to his house is met with an anonymous writing on the blackboard, taking him to task for the refusal of choice that was his choice: "You handed over our brother. You will pay for this."[26]

Who is the author of this writing? The logical suggestion is the people from the Arab's village, whose demand of the law of hospitality has not been respected. This interpretation is supported by Daru's sensing of other noises during the night and in the morning at their departure (Are they under observation? By whom?). Yet there is no certainty about this reading of the text. Are the unseen authors real or a figment of Daru's imagination and an expression of his shame? The writing appears as an inscription of the consequences of the perversion of the law of hospitality through Daru's very refusal to respond to the demand of responsibility of the other. It is the refusal of the master of the house who bars the entry to the guest-foreigner who will subvert his ipseity and sovereignty as host (yet a guest-foreigner who, like Oedipus, is always already part of the 'at home'). The origin of the writing is unknown, perhaps because the origin is language itself and the ghostly relation of language to the world. Perhaps it is an inscription of the land itself, a silent but not voiceless character in a story where ethnicities, nationalities, languages, customs, and different understandings of what counts as law are put at play—and where the violence of the law of the proper can only be voiced as

[25] Camus, "The Guest," 116.
[26] Ibid., 117.

violence against the land, something for which all human groups are responsible.

Works Cited

Arendt, Hannah. "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man." *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Mariner Books, 1973.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Translator's Task." Trans. Steven Rendall. *TTR : Traduction, terminologie, rédaction*, vol. 10, n° 2 (1997) : 151-165.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Trans. Bernard Frechtman. The Philosophical Library, 1948.

Butler, Judith. *Giving an Account of Oneself*. Fordham UP, 2005.

Camus, Albert. "The Guest." *Exile and the Kingdom*. Trans. Justin O'Brien. Alfred A. Knopf, 1957.

Camus, Albert. *The Plague*. Trans. Robin Buss. Penguin, 2013.

Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. Trans. Matthew Ward. Vintage, 1989.

Caraway, James E. "Albert Camus and the Ethics of Rebellion," *Mediterranean Studies* Vol. 3, Spain & the Mediterranean (1992): 125-136.

Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago UP, 1981.

Derrida, Jacques. ''Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority.'' Trans. Mary Quaintance. *Cardozo Law Review* 11 (1989–90): 920-1029.

Derrida, Jacques, and Anne Dufourmantelle. *Of Hospitality*. Trans. Rachel Bowlby. Stanford UP, 2000.

Derrida, Jaques. *Spectres de Marx*. Paris, Galilée, 1993.

Lacan, Jacques. *Le Séminaire. Livre XVII. L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-70*. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. Paris: Seuil, 1991.

Lacan, Jacques. *Le Séminaire. Livre XX. Encore, 1972-73*. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. Paris: Seuil, 1975.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*. Trans. R.A. Cohen. Duquesne UP, 1982.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity*. Trans. by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne, 1969.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Trans. by Alphonso Lingis. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Difficile liberté*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1963.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Humanisme de l'Autre homme*. Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1972.

Watkins, Calvert, ed. *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots: Third Edition*. Boston: Houghton Miffin Company, 1985.

The Xenos Within: On Language and Otherness in Kamel Daoud's Meursault, contre-enquête

Dr. Alexandra Katerina Bacopoulos-Viau,
Weill Cornell Medical College.

Then the Lord said to Moses,
'Look, I have made you like God to Pharaoh.
Your brother Aaron will speak on your behalf, like your prophet.

- Exodus 7:1

A *xenos* [ξένος], the dictionary tells us—and the Homeric corpus reminds us—is not only a foreigner or a stranger, but also a person seeking refuge, a visitor, a guest. To call someone a *xenos* is to hold them both up close and at a distance; to welcome them, fear them, project oneself onto them, remain endlessly fascinated by them. Come to me, the word whispers, and I will tell you who you are. The *xenoi* abound in Greek tragedy: one need only look at the *Oresteia*, its cast of visitors and exiles. As for Medea, that archetypal Other, she is almost irremediably a foreigner in the Greek imagination. A 'barbarian' (Η Μήδεια η ξενοφερμένη), Medea punishes her husband Jason for his desire towards another woman by doing the unthinkable, killing their two children. Stranger, exile, friend, foe—the *xenos* is ever-present, blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior, good and bad, self and other, us and them.[1]

[1] To cite but a few sources: Julia Kristeva, *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* (Paris: Fayard, 1988) [*Strangers to Ourselves*, tr. Leon S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "The Place and Status of Foreigners in Athenian Tragedy." In *Greek Tragedy and the Historian*, ed. Christopher Pelling (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 109–19. On xenophobia,

I come to this as an historian of the mind sciences. In psychiatry, psychopathology, psychoanalysis, the *xenos* (real and imagined) also occupies centre stage. This is notably the case through the slippery concept of alienation. The madman is an *aliéné*, Philippe Pinel, the father of modern psychiatry, insists in his groundbreaking *Traité médico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale* (1800). He is a stranger to himself. Thus begins the age of mental medicine at the turn of the nineteenth century: on a language of estrangement. Operating within that new therapeutic space, the modern asylum, the *aliéniste* (mind doctor) is to help the *aliéné* (patient) recover that part of his reason left intact. Psychiatry was born from this desire to domesticate the Other within, to make one whole. So, too, in many ways, was psychoanalysis: through a fascination with that which is unknown and unknowable. For what else is the unconscious than the recognition of a *xenos* within?

But the first thought that came to my mind, when I was invited to this workshop,[2] was Kamel Daoud's novel, *Meursault, contre-enquête* [*The Meursault Investigation*]. The book—first published in French in Algeria in 2013, then in France in 2014, to great literary acclaim—is a contemporary reimagining of Albert Camus's 1942 novella, *L'Étranger* [*The Stranger*].[3] Daoud's book revisits the classic Camusian story through its mirror image: that of

---

see George Makari, *Of Fear and Strangers: A History of Xenophobia* (London and New York: Yale University Press, 2021).

[2] "ΞΕΝΟΣ: The Stranger, the Foreigner, the Refugee" international workshop, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 28 May 2023.

[3] Albert Camus, *L'Étranger* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942) and Kamel Daoud, *Meursault contre-enquête* (Algiers: Barzakh, 2013 and Arles: Actes Sud, 2014) [*The Meursault Investigation*, tr. John Cullen, New York: Other Press, 2015]. In 2012, a new English translation of *L'Étranger* appeared. This version is not titled *The Stranger*—like its predecessors—but *The Outsider*. As translator Sandra Smith explains in her introduction: "In French, *étranger* can be translated as 'outsider,' 'stranger' or 'foreigner.' Our protagonist, Meursault, is all three, and the concept of an outsider encapsulates all these possible meanings: Meursault is a stranger to himself, an outsider to society and a foreigner because he is a Frenchman in Algerian." (Albert Camus, *The Outsider*, tr. Sandra Smith, New York: Penguin Classics, 2012). In Greek, Camus's novella is rendered *O Xenos [Ο Ξένος]*.

the Other. In the process, it touches upon many of the themes of xenitude: grief, loss, the inevitable untranslatability of words and experience. In what follows, I interrogate the readings of this novel as a case of colonial or postcolonial *trauma*. I suggest that the framework of trauma is exclusionary and ultimately reductive. In *Meursault, contre-enquête,* the poetic and the political are closely interwoven; any reading of it as a mere political manifesto risks effacing the protagonist's voice. It risks, therefore, reproducing the dehumanisation portrayed in this tale.

***

L' Étranger, we recall, follows its narrator Meursault, a *pied-noir* living in 1940s Algeria.[4] The book opens on Meursault learning of his mother's death. He shows no signs of grief or mourning. He goes about his life seemingly unaffected. In Camus's prose, in the protagonist's actions, in his exchanges with others, there is a sense of emotional detachment. (He is a stranger to himself, a stranger to society.) Somewhere along the story, Meursault kills a nameless "Arab" on a beach under the glaring midday sun. Not much is made of this. There is a trial and, ultimately, a death sentence. Meursault, we are to understand, is punished not for his murder but for not having cried at his mother's funeral. Here, Daoud—an Algerian author and journalist—invites a new kind of interpretation. By reenvisioning that story from the perspective of the victim's brother, he questions "why the court preferred judging a man who didn't weep over his mother's death to judging a man who killed an Arab."[5]

The book, then, bears a close intertextual relationship with *L'Étranger*. It is a counter-investigation—for some reason, the 'counter' part has been erased from John Cullen's English

[4] Camus, like his protagonist Meursault, was a *pied-noir*—a term which refers to French citizens born in French colonial Algeria.
[5] Daoud, *Meursault Investigation*, 55. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the novel are from this edition.

translation of the title, rendered simply as *The Meursault Investigation*. From the opening sentence, '*M'ma est encore vivante*' (a play on Camus's '*Aujourd'hui, maman est morte'*) through to various key thematic, narrative, and stylistic parallels, the novel offers us a counterpoint to the Camusian origin myth. The Algerian author is in constant dialogue with his French colonial predecessor. Camus, like Daoud, was a controversial journalist as well as a writer.[6] The two texts and the two authors mirror each other, becoming each other's doubles.

The book takes place in a present-day bar in Oran. Its narrator is Haroun, the surviving brother of the Arab. "Just think, we're talking about one of the most-read books in the world," he muses. "My brother might have been famous if your author had merely deigned to give him a name."[7] His aim is to tell that story anew, to give a voice and an identity to his brother. He does so in a long rambling monologue addressed to a nameless French listener. Our narrator speaks in the first person and addresses his guest in the second person: *your* hero, *your* book, *your* language. Haroun, we learn, was seven when his older brother Moussa was killed. Some seventy years later, he is now an aging man looking back at a life not lived. We learn of his "ghost's childhood" spent in the village of Hadjout, alone with his mother, haunted by the memory of his brother and a father who left too early ("everything revolved around Moussa, and Moussa revolved around our father, whom I never knew and who left me nothing but our family name.").[8] We learn of his fraught relationship with his mother who, as a result of the tragedy, "imposed on me a strict duty of reincarnation."[9] We learn of his frustrations, of his desires, of his

[6] On Camus's complicated legacy and his omnipresence in contemporary Algerian fiction, see Madeleine Dobie, "We Are in a 'Camus Moment' - But What Can the Great French-Algerian Author Teach Us about the World Today?" *National Book Review*, May 5, 2016.
[7] Daoud, *Meursault Investigation*, 52.
[8] Ibid., 46, 9. In this text I have kept Daoud's original Moussa and Haroun, but Cullen translates them as *Musa* and *Harun*, respectively.
[9] Ibid., 41.

thoughts on revolutionary and postrevolutionary Algeria. Opposite the coldness of Camus's book, Daoud's novel is warm, boiling, filled at times with rage and despair. Emotions are served raw. But there is also a playfulness to this literary counter-investigation. Daoud shows a clear tenderness for both Haroun and for the author whose story inspired his own.

A mirror image, then; a negative. Black becomes white and white becomes black. Consider the opening of the novel, which is worth quoting in full:

> Mama's still alive today. *[This is a play on Camus's opener: "Mama died today."]*
>
> She doesn't say anything now, but there are many tales she could tell. Unlike me: I've rehashed this story in my head so often, I almost can't remember it anymore.
>
> I mean, it goes back more than half a century. It happened, and everyone talked about it. People still do, but they mention only one dead man, they feel no compunction about doing that, even though there were two of them, two dead men. Yes, two. Why does the other one get left out? Well, the original guy [Camus] was such a good storyteller, he managed to make people forget his crime, whereas the other one was a poor illiterate created by God only, it seems, to take a bullet and return to dust -- an anonymous person who didn't even have the time to be given a name.
>
> I'll tell you this up front: The other dead man, the murder victim, was my brother. There's nothing left of him. There's only me, left to speak in his place, sitting in this bar, waiting for condolences no one's ever going to offer me. Laugh if you want, but this is more or less my mission: I peddle offstage silence, trying to sell my story while the theater empties out. As a matter of fact, that's the reason why I've learned to speak this language, and to write it too: *so I can speak in the place*

> *of a dead man, so I can finish his sentences for him.* The murderer got famous, and his story's too well written for me to get any ideas about imitating him. He wrote in his own language. Therefore I'm going to do what was done in this country after Independence: I'm going to take the stones from the old houses the colonists left behind, remove them one by one, and build my own house, my own language.[10]

To give something, someone a name is to offer them a space in the world, to make them real. Here, Haroun restores his brother his name and therefore his humanity. My brother's name was Moussa, he tells us from the start.

This insistence with naming becomes a veritable obsession throughout the book. Of Camus's antihero, Meursault, our narrator notes that "everyone got the picture, right from the start: *He* had a man's name; my brother had the name of an incident."[11] A few pages later, he exhorts his interlocutor to take note:

> I maintain that when you're investigating a crime, you must keep in mind its essential elements: Who's the dead man? Who was he? I want you to make a note of my brother's name, because he was the one who was killed in the first place and the one who's still being killed to this day. I insist on that, because otherwise, we may as well part right here.[12]

Every time his brother is unnamed, every time the book is read, he is killed again. The lack of name becomes a symbol of colonization. "For centuries, the settler increases his fortune, giving names to whatever he appropriates and taking them away from whatever makes him feel uncomfortable."[13] Not so here:

> Moussa, Moussa, Moussa… I like to repeat that name from time to time so it doesn't disappear. I insist on that, and I

[10] Ibid., 1-2 (emphasis mine).
[11] Ibid., 3 (emphasis in the English translation, but not in the original French).
[12] Ibid, 11-12.
[13] Ibid., 13.

> want you to write it in big letters. Half a century after his birth and death, a man has just been given a name. I insist.[14]

He returns to it again and again, for "[y]ou can't easily kill a man when he has a given name."[15] Only through naming can his brother's story be told anew. "It's as important to give a dead man a name as it is to name an infant. Yes, it's very important. My brother's name was Moussa."[16]

So strong is his obsession with naming that Haroun has reorganised his world around it. Thus is everyone around him, in that bar which becomes the scene of his lament, christened with the name of his brother. The barman has become Moussa. So too is the old blind man sitting in the back. If things and people are given names, perhaps the violence of colonization can be undone. If things and people are given his brother's name, perhaps his brother can be brought back to life.

The act of naming and renaming, then, becomes a way for Haroun to make sense of his world, to reimagine it and rewrite it in his own way. By telling Moussa's story—by rendering him not-nameless—the narrator offers us a counter-archive to the archives of the state. Much of this is enacted through the search for a new language. After all, this is why Haroun "learned to speak this language [French], and to write it too": to "speak in the place of a dead man," to "finish his sentences for him."[17] It is the language of Camus, of Meursault, of the Other. The language of *your* hero.

Haroun must make his own this language of the Other. This serves a twofold purpose. Firstly, to undo the erasure of history. After all, he reminds us, this is where it all began: rather than searching for the truth, rather than investigating in the real world, rather than looking for him and his family, "[e]veryone was knocked out by the perfect prose, by language capable of giving air

[14] Ibid., 14.
[15] Ibid., 53.
[16] Ibid., 22.
[17] Ibid., 1.

facets like diamonds."[18] Reality, in other words, has become bound up with the fantasy contained within the origin story (Camus's novel). There is a conflation between Meursault and Camus. In writing his book, the French listener is told, your author committed a crime.

In fact, so convincing is this alternate reality—Meursault's, Camus's, the killing of the nameless Arab—that Haroun himself believed it as well. During his early years, that is. Then his suffering began. This happened around adolescence, he tells us, "when I learned to read and realized what an unjust fate had befallen my brother, who died in a book."[19] If reality lies in books, he must learn to read. If he wants to enter into a new order, he must learn this new language.

It becomes clear early on that this schism between us and them is to be found in the linguistic realm. "I'm sure you're like everyone else," he laments to his listener at the outset, "you've read the tale as told by the man who wrote it."

> He writes so well that his words are like precious stones, jewels cut with the utmost precision. A man very strict about shades of meaning, your hero was; he practically required them to be mathematical. Endless calculations, based on gems and minerals. Have you seen the way he writes? He's writing about a gunshot, and he makes it sound like poetry! His world is clear, exact, honed by morning sunlight, enhanced with fragrances and horizons.[20]

Against this purity, "[t]he only shadow is cast by 'the Arabs,' blurred, incongruous objects left over from 'days gone by,' like ghosts, with no language except the sound of a flute."[21]

Haroun's symbolic re-birth is thus inextricably bound up with the learning of that new language. But learning French also

[18] Ibid., 4.
[19] Ibid., 33.
[20] Ibid., 2.
[21] Ibid., 2.

serves another purpose. It becomes a way for Haroun to escape the confines of the family. "As soon as I learned to read and write," he notes, "everything became clear to me: I had my mother, while Meursault had lost his."[22] To leave the language of the mother is to break off from the dramatic grief that has engulfed their home. It is also to leave behind the world that she inhabits: A peasant "snatched away from her tribe, given in marriage to a husband who didn't know her and hastened to get away from her," she, too, speaks a foreign language—one that is neither that of the French colonists nor of the Algerian government that has followed.[23] The drama, the grief, the mythmaking, the martyrdom, all of it made Haroun "impossibly ashamed of her" as a child. It led to the search for a new mother tongue.

> [I]t pushed me to learn a language that could serve as a barrier between her frenzies and me. Yes, the *language*. The one I read, the one I speak today, the one that's not hers.[24]

Opposite the language of your hero,

> Hers is rich, full of imagery, vitality, sudden jolts, and improvisations, but not too big on precision. Mama's grief lasted so long that she needed a new idiom to express it in. In her language, she spoke like a prophetess, recruited

---

[22] Ibid., 10.

[23] Ibid., 36. As Claire Messud reminds us in her sensitive reading of the novel, this trope of a man whose life has been warped by his mother's legacy of rage and grief is a familiar one in postcolonial literature. "The 'cultural gulf' that separates Haroun's mother's perspectives from the Western views of Meursault/Camus," she notes, "is reminiscent of the gulf between Petrus, a black, polygamous South African farmer, and the white Lurie family in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*." In both cases, "this separation results in a violent act that casts doubt on the new order." (Claire Messud, "The Brother of the 'Stranger.'" *New York Review of Books*, October 22, 2015; reproduced in Part Two of *Kant's Little Prussian Head and Other Reasons Why I Write: An Autobiography in Essays*." New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2020).

[24] Ibid., 37 (emphasis in the original). In the French text, Daoud uses the word *langue*: "*sa langue à lui*," "*une langue à moi*."

> extemporaneous mourners, and cried out against the double outrage that consumed her life: a husband swallowed up by air, a son by water. I had to learn a language other than that one. To survive.[25]

Starting in adolescence, a new life began to open up for him as "[b]ooks and your hero's language gradually enabled me to name things differently and to organize the world with my own words."[26] This is especially meaningful since it was a young woman, a scholar named Meriem, who first brought the book to him and introduced him to that origin story. Meriem—who becomes the object of Haroun's desire—allows him to escape from his condition. Later, after she leaves, he will read the book again not to look for his brother's traces but to find Meriem.

Language therefore becomes closely entwined with the naming of the brother and with Haroun's entrance into adult life. But to tell his story, Haroun has to invent a new language. One that is different from the language of his origins, and one that is different from the language of *your* hero. This new language will become his own. ("Besides, he remarks, "the country's littered with words that don't belong to anyone anymore … [words] transformed by the strange creole decolonization produces.")[27] Only equipped with these new words may Haroun "take the stones from the old houses the colonists left behind, remove them one by one, and build my own house, my own language."[28] Only then can he finish his brother's sentences and be freed of the past.

By learning this language of the Other, Haroun may now fully live out his destiny: to become his brother's prophet. Is it a coincidence that Daoud chose to name his protagonists Moussa and Haroun? The biblical parallels take on their full symbolism as the story progresses. Through French, Haroun/Aaron can give voice to

[25] Ibid., 37.
[26] Ibid., 37.
[27] Ibid., 2.
[28] Ibid., 2.

his brother, Moussa/Moses, rendered unable to speak. "*Your brother Aaron will speak on your behalf, like your prophet.*" (Exodus 4:10-17; 7:1).[29]

With this new language acquired, Haroun's task is clear: to rewrite the story of the stranger

> in the same language, but from right to left. That is, starting when the Arab's body was still alive, going down the narrow streets that led to his demise, giving him a name, right up until the bullet hit him.[30]

***

What does it mean to rewrite a story from right to left?

In this endless quest for traces that is Haroun's recounting, the narrator wishes to leave new traces. In the absence of them he must create them. Remember, he insists, the only truth is that found in books. Anything remaining from his and his family's side of the story has been erased. His father did not leave anything behind him. Most importantly, Moussa's body has not been found. "There's no trace of it in the official police reports filed in any police station," Haroun specifies, "none in the minutes of the trial, nothing in the book or in the cemeteries. Nothing."[31] Without the body, he and his mother have received neither pension nor reparation. With no proofs or witnesses to be found, Haroun begins to doubt himself: "Maybe it was me, I'm Cain, *I* killed my brother!"[32] Telling his story in his own words—*finishing his brother's sentences for him*—therefore allows him to create new traces. It offers a new

[29] In the Book of Exodus, God appoints Aaron as Moses' prophet (Exodus 4:10-17; 7:1). The Quran goes farther and mentions that Aaron is a prophet and messenger of God (Quran 19:53). Moussa and Haroun are Gallicized spellings of the Arabic names Mūsā and Hārūn, respectively.
[30] Daoud, *Meursault Investigation*, 7.
[31] Ibid., 46-47.
[32] Ibid., 47 (emphasis in the English translation but not in the original French).

version of that crime which he has not committed and for which he continues to be punished.

What makes possible this counter-investigation is the presence of the nameless listener. ("Are you asking me if I want to continue? Yes, of course, at last I have a chance to get this story off my chest!")[33] For years Haroun has been hoping and waiting for someone to "come along, someone I could finally tell this tale to..."[34] His silent interlocutor thus takes on many identities: he is at once reader, confidant, investigator, friend, colonist, guest, foreigner, enemy. He is also, in other words, a *xenos*.

Let us then read the text as such: an encounter between two strangers. It is an encounter marked by deep ambivalence. On the one hand, there is a fraught relationship with this listener who is addressed, in turn, as "my young friend," "Mr. Investigator," "young man," "*monsieur l'inspecteur universitaire*"—a nameless companion whose foreignness cannot be forgotten because every day he brings with him into the bar that book full of "sublime lies" as a reminder of the primal murder committed by his hero.[35] On the other hand, there is a desire for rapprochement ("Will you come tomorrow?"[36] / "I think I'm really starting to like you!").[37]

Perhaps most tellingly, there is also an identification between Haroun and the world of his listener. Never having joined the resistance movement and openly critical of a postcolonial country from which he finds himself increasingly alienated, Haroun is as much an outsider as Camus's antihero. In fact, as this counter-investigation progresses, the reader comes to realise that Haroun becomes Meursault's double; that he identifies more closely with him than with his fellow Algerians. The lines become

[33] Ibid., 15.
[34] Ibid., 54.
[35] "I read it twenty years after it came out," Haroun notes, "and it overwhelmed me with its sublime lying and its magical accord with my life." (Ibid., 48)
[36] Ibid., 49.
[37] Ibid., 51.

blurred, the boundaries between the protagonists increasingly porous.

This becomes most evident with Haroun's second symbolic rebirth: his killing of a Frenchman, twenty years after his brother' murder. The confession happens midway through the book. On a hot night in July of 1962, immediately after liberation, Haroun enacted his vengeance on a deserted beach. It was an inevitability, he tells us. That night, "the moon obliged me to finish the job your hero began in the sun."[38] Here, the Camusian triad—the beach, the sun, the absurdity—becomes all the more powerful in its twisted repetition. All of it is flipped on its head: Sun turns to moon; the nameless Arab, shot at 2pm by Meursault, becomes a Frenchman shot at 2am. (The victim has a name this time: Joseph Larquais.) Each one becomes the other's mirror image. There has been another absurdly senseless murder, another man killed in a "majestically nonchalant" act.[39]

Now that he has enacted his brother's revenge, Haroun can start to live again. The two gunshots—"like two sharp raps on the door of deliverance"—bring together life and death, marking a new beginning. [40]

> You're asking me what I felt afterward? Huge relief. A kind of worthiness, but without honor. . . It was as if perspectives were opening up and I could finally breathe. Whereas I'd always lived like a prisoner until then, confined within the perimeter established by Moussa's death and my mother's vigilance, I now saw myself standing upright, at the heart of a vast territory: the whole nocturnal earth, the gift of that night.[41]

---

[38] Ibid., 32.
[39] Ibid., 5. Camus's Meursault commits his murder on 5 July 1942; Haroun commits his on 5 July 1962, exactly twenty years later.
[40] Ibid., 85.
[41] Ibid., 78.

Just like Meursault, Haroun expresses no guilt or remorse. "It was not a murder but a *restitution*," he specifies.[42] There is no nervousness at the police station, where he is taken for interrogation and detained in a prison cell. There is no desire to undo anything. Only now that he has committed this murder can our protagonist be free again:

> Like a flash – like a shot! – I had a sense of immense space, I grew dizzy at the possibility of my own freedom, I felt the hot, sensuous dampness of the earth and smelled the lemony perfume in the hot air. It occurred to me that I could finally take in a movie or go swimming with a woman.[43]

Haroun's vengeful act demarcates his old self from his new one; it is both an ending and a beginning. His sharing of his secret feels not so much like an unburdening than a revelation. The story has been rewritten. The tension has been released.

What follows, in the second part of the book, is a severe reading of contemporary Algeria. Through this revised tale of crime and punishment, Daoud offers a critique of the postcolonial country from which he has become estranged. Whereas Meursault was convicted because he did not perform the act of the dutiful son at his mother's funeral, Haroun is interrogated because his timing is off. "This Frenchman, you should have killed him with us, during the war, not last week!" shouts the local colonel during a farcical interrogation that echoes the origin story.[44] Haroun is indifferent to this scene, to the possibility of going to jail, indeed to any state authority: police officers are, like him, officers of a failed state (he himself used to work as a government land administrator). Above all, it is the dominance of religion which fuels his hostility. "I'll go so far as to say I abhor religions. All of them! Because they falsify the weight of the world." Still, he observes, "At the time when I did

[42] Ibid., 75 (emphasis in the original).
[43] Ibid., 77.
[44] Ibid., 109.

that killing, God wasn't as alive and heavy in this country as he is today."[45] The fact that his murder is treated by the government officials as a mere inconvenience further exacerbates Haroun's feelings. He is "insulted" at the lightness with which they treated his crime, he tells his guest-stranger; a lightness which replicates the "gratuitousness" of his brother's death.[46] Such is the lawlessness of his country. All of it is embodied in its capital: the city of Algiers, that "dirty, corrupt creature" that steals men and never returns them; Algiers, that city full of strangers ("I see them everywhere, your Meursaults").[47]

Like Camus, whose early work forced him into exile in France, and like Haroun, a stranger in his native Algeria, the nameless listener is also an exile. He is a writer too. We learn this at the very end of the novel. "Do you find my story suitable?" Haroun asks his interlocutor when he is done with his tale. "It's all I can offer you. It's my word. I'm Moussa's brother or nobody's. Just a compulsive liar you met with so you could fill out your notebooks." Whether or not the listener will choose to believe him is out of his hands.

> It's like the biography of God. Ha, ha! No one has ever met him, not even Moussa, and no one knows if his story is true or not. The Arab's the Arab, God's God. No name, no initials. Blue overalls and blue sky. Two unknown persons on an endless beach. Which is truer? An intimate question. It's up to you to decide.[48]

And so, this stranger will leave the bar, satisfied at his recounting. To his listener whom he's "been waiting for … for years," Haroun has offered a counter-narrative. [49] (In lieu of

[45] Ibid., 69, 87.
[46] Ibid., 111.
[47] Ibid., 21, 139.
[48] Ibid., 143.
[49] "I've been waiting for you for years," Haroun tells his listener at the outset, "and if I can't write my book, at least I can tell you the story, can't I?" (Ibid., 6)

Moussa's body, that is all he can offer.) His story is spoken in his new language—the language of the Other. It acts both as revenge and confession. Telling his story in his own words therefore allows him to create new traces, to rewrite the origin myth. In the process, it also grants him access to a new status. For if the original murderer (your author, your hero) is an author because he killed an Arab and told the world about it, could Haroun, too, become an author in offering this counter-investigation? "[Y]ou know, I never bothered myself to write a book," he confides midway through his tale. "[A]nd yet I dream of committing one."[50]

***

Meursault, contre-enquête is a meditation on the act of writing, on freedom, on the close ties between authorship and authority, on invisibility, on inevitability. To grant someone the status of author is to afford them the possibility of committing violence through words. It is to imagine a world in which they, too, may be licensed to enact literary murders. Such is the power of this book: a reclaiming of the poetic voice through language. For Haroun, the poetics and politics of language are to be understood in his own terms, which is to say alongside each other. His aim is to make "the murderer's words and expressions" one's "*unclaimed goods*;" to transform the world with his tale.[51] This, after all, is what Camus did: He "was such a good storyteller, he managed to make people forget his crime."

---

[50] Daoud, *Meursault Investigation*, 98. Haroun exposes his conception of authorship right from the start: "I think I can guess why people write true stories," he notes. "Not to make themselves famous but to make themselves more invisible, and all the while clamoring for a piece of the world's true core." (Ibid., 6) In this respect, consider also the opening lines of Daoud's second novel, *Zabor ou Les Psaumes*: "Writing is the only effective ruse against death. People have tried prayer, medicine, magic, reciting verses on a loop, inactivity, but I think I'm the only one to have found a solution: writing." (Kamel Daoud, *Zabor, or The Psalms*, tr. by Emma Ramadan, New York: Other Press, 2021, 1).
[51] Ibid., 2 (emphasis in the original).

Meursault, contre-enquête and *L' Étranger* were written from what one might call the two sides of colonial history. Daoud is a journalist in Oran and Camus a journalist in Algiers. These two cities carry great historical and symbolic weight: the invasion of Algiers, in 1830, marked the beginning of French colonisation; and it was in Oran, in 1962, that the massacre of European civilians took place after the official recognition of Algerian Independence. What unites Daoud and Camus is a shared language. (« *Ma patrie, c'est la langue française* » [My homeland is the French language], Camus has famously declared.) For Daoud/Haroun, this language of the Other becomes a way of transcending one's status. But it does much more, too: Just like for so many other contemporary Algerian writers, French here takes on a life of its own and becomes a space of artistic and social emancipation.[52]

Though Daoud's story weaves together the poetic and the political, the latter is often obscured in various readings of the novel. Since the book's publication a decade ago, much of its reception has focused solely on *Meursault, contre-enquête*'s political dimension. For some, the story is a "coded text" to be read alongside the thousands of Algerian civilians who disappeared during the bloody civil war of the 1990s and who remain

[52] Of Daoud's style within and beyond the novel, Veronic Algeri notes: "*La langue que Daoud s'approprie est littéraire dans l'écriture romanesque mais aussi dans ses témoignages journalistiques. Tel un roman, la chronique est une écriture de la jouissance et du jeu (non pas de la justice mais de la justesse), où la langue française . . . n'appartient ni aux victimes ni aux bourreaux*." (Veronic Algeri, "Le vertige intertextuel. Une lecture de Kamel Daoud, Meursault, contre-enquête," *Revue italienne d'études françaises* 9 [2019], 7). On these topics, see also *Irene Ivantcheva-Merjanska, Écrire dans la langue de l'autre*: *Assia Djebar et Julia Kristeva* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2015), Lobna Mestaoui, "Le 'butin de guerre' camusien, de Kateb Yacine à Kamel Daoud," *Babel* 36 [2017] (online), and Sarah Claire Dunstan, "La langue de nos maîtres": Linguistic Hierarchies, Dialect, and Canon Decolonization During and After the *Présence Africaine* Congress of 1956." *Journal of Modern History*, 93/4 (December 2021), 749-1000.

unaccounted for.[53] For others, it is a case of "colonial trauma" highlighting the wounds left open after the French occupation of Algeria.[54] By anchoring this murder in history, others have claimed, Haroun's story is a veritable political manifesto.[55] However important, these symptomatic readings only tell part of the story. To be sure, the novel engages with postcolonial themes—questions of asymmetry, of archives, of counter-memory—and contains various key ingredients of the so-called "trauma plot"—the broken protagonist, the sense of loss, the before and after. Yet this interpretation seems to me insufficient. It ironically tends to leave out Haroun's voice.

Much of this line of analysis is influenced by Daoud's role as *agent provocateur* in the news media. Like Camus, Daoud is a public intellectual. Through his writing as a journalist and a novelist, he has voiced his opinion on various contemporary debates in Algeria and on the so-called Arab World. Daoud is not averse to controversy. His analyses often bring with them their share of polemic on both sides of the Mediterranean—and beyond. For some, he perpetuates orientalising tropes; for others, he does not go far enough in his critique. In any case, there is no doubt that he is an *intellectuel engagé*. "The intellectual is the unbending witness to his era," he has said, "one that leads to liberty or surrender." Against rising totalitarianisms, "he's the voice that carries and proclaims, but also reminds."[56] Daoud's secularist

---

[53] Kathryn Lachman, "The Meursault Investigation: Literature and the Disappeared," *Yale French Studies*, No. 135/136, Special Issue "Existentialism 70 Years After" (2019), 202.

[54] Karima Lazali, *Le Trauma colonial: une enquête sur les effets psychiques et politiques contemporains de l'oppression coloniale* (Paris: La Découverte, 2018) [*Colonial Trauma*: *A Study of the Psychic and Political Consequences of Colonial Oppression in Algeria,* tr. Matthew B. Smith, Cambridge: Polity, 2021].

[55] "This response to Camus's *The Stranger*," reads the description of the Penguin Random House Canada edition, is at once a love story and a political manifesto about post-colonial Algeria, Islam, and Western indifference to Arab lives."

[56] Cited in Messud, "The Brother of the 'Stranger.'" See also Daoud's recent thoughts on what he terms the "frozen" intellectual [*l'intellectuel congelé*], i.e.,

reflections on Algeria, present everywhere in his work, have garnered significant attention both within and beyond the Francosphere. It was *Meursault, contre-enquête*, his first novel, which cemented his international recognition. It obtained the Prix Goncourt du premier roman and was a finalist for the prestigious Prix Goncourt itself. Translated into 28 languages, the book has been called "perhaps the most important novel to emerge out of the Middle East in recent memory."[57] Critics and scholars alike have hailed it as a "virtuosic response to Camus;" a tale that perfectly captures and embodies the failures of postcolonial regimes.[58]

And yet there is something unique about its reception in Algeria and France, Daoud tells us. According to him, this is because these two countries are marked by an "excess of history"—trapped as they are by "the weight of history, the colonial crime and what ensued."[59] People in France and in Algeria "cannot manage to read Camus like a writer," he claims. Why? When there is an excess of history, people don't dream with Camus; they don't fantasize with him. Instead they try to decipher, interpret, decode, understand. In countries like Algeria and France, he continues, fiction is rarely "tolerated" for its own sake. This is because the imaginary [*l'imaginaire*] gets lost somewhere along the way:

> Totalitarianisms produce novels that are primarily didactic, like Soviet realism, or that are designed to illustrate a policy,

---

the intellectual from the former colonies whose voice will forever be frozen in time and therefore silenced in the ongoing "memory wars" between Algeria and France: Kamel Daoud, "L'intellectuel congelé," *Le Point*, 8 February 2021.

[57] Azadeh Moaveni, "Review of 'The Meursault Investigation' by Kamel Daoud," *Financial Times*, London, 10 July 2015.

[58] The quote is from Kathryn Lachman, a literary scholar who invites the reader to "recognize what is at stake between the lines" in *Meursault, contre-enquête*: "beyond the fictional effacement of one particular Arab," she writes, "the novel evokes a recurring history of violence and forced disappearances, a lack of accountability, and the trauma and lack of closure that ensues when families are denied the possibility to bury their dead—a trauma Algerians endured repeatedly under French colonial rule . . ." (Lachman, "The Meursault Investigation," 203).

[59] Kamel Daoud, The Yale Lecture, 9 November 2015, available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oF5kWeLGRv8&t=146s.

> so they are closer to propaganda. This creates novels that nobody reads, that disappear. Literature needs the imaginary to be respected as something fundamental and not as an artifact.[60]

It would seem, then, that to read *Meursault, contre-enquête* as a mere postcolonial *response* to *L'Étranger* is to negate its literariness. These kinds of interpretations—and there are many—leave out, or make secondary, the inherent playfulness and raw aesthetic value of the novel. If we follow Daoud in claiming that literature "needs the imaginary to be respected as something fundamental and not as an artifact," reading this novel primarily as a response to Camus is to reproduce the colonial act.[61] This type of interpretation, which perpetuates a sense of xenitude, is especially notable in English-speaking commentary on the subject.

The same goes for "colonial trauma." In the past few decades, trauma has become a kind of lingua franca for writers, scholars, and various cultural commentators attempting to portray an array of difficult life stories. The term operates as a catch-all phrase; its associated symptoms—flashbacks, amnesia, repetition—quick cultural reference points. If Daoud resists an attempt to fix Haroun's experience in the language of the traumatic—the word trauma appears nowhere in the book—, its shadow haunts much of the book's reception. In this context, the novel turns into a prop for something bigger; it is pigeon-holed into a common language: the language of trauma.

This phenomenon is perhaps most evident in Karima Lazali's recent book, published in English as *Colonial Trauma*: *A Study of the Psychic and Political Consequences of Colonial Oppression in Algeria*.[62] The author, a Franco-Algerian psychoanalyst drawing on her clinical experience in Algeria over the past two decades, found in her practice that many of her patients experienced difficulties

---

[60] Ibid. (modified translation).
[61] Ibid.
[62] Karima Lazali, *Le Trauma colonial.*

that could be attributed to the effects of coloniality. In postcolonial Algeria, Lazali notes, the violence of colonisation and its aftermath turned everyone into strangers: People were renamed or unnamed; links with the past were broken.[63] This has given rise to a unique form of "social trauma" which, she writes, "overwhelms and dissolves the subject."[64] Such is the author's entryway into *Meursault, contre-enquête*: beyond the text itself, she sees in the novel a way of taking the reader closer to what has been and continues to be erased by the social and political order. "This is the role and purpose of Algerian writers since the birth of Francophone Algerian literature in 1940s and 1950s," Lazali writes; "to find a manner of engaging a wounded public and resisting the political order."[65] *Meursault, contre-enquête* here serves as an illustration of "colonial trauma"—a trauma which, she explains, cannot be reversed because it blurs the boundaries between the self and the collective. Colonialism, Lazali reminds us again and again, has resulted in a kind of social "inertia;" it has led to the "relinquishment of being."[66] This is what happens to a people whose history has been written out, the author notes. These are the deep and irreversible scars that colonisation has left on the Algerian psyche.

In tying personal to collective consciousness, Lazali operates a rapprochement with the psychiatrist and decolonial thinker, Frantz Fanon, whom she mobilises throughout her book. Fanon called for *disalienation* in psychiatry as a radical political praxis. "[T]he Arab [is] permanently alienated in his own country," he famously wrote in a letter to the Governor General of Algeria in

---

[63] Throughout her book, Lazali regularly refers to *colonisation*—a long-standing political, economic, social, legal, and human process that serves to establish control over indigenous people. As she has noted, "colonialism is a fact whereas coloniality is a system that occupies a central place in the modern capitalist economy." (Chayma Drira, "Le trauma colonial, ce passé qui ne passe pas: Entretien avec Karima Lazali," *Vacarme* 2019/3, p. 108; translation mine).
[64] Lazali, *Colonial Trauma*, 100.
[65] Ibid., 100.
[66] Ibid., 211.

1956 when he resigned his position as a psychiatrist at Algeria's Blida-Joinville Psychiatric Hospital.[67] But if Fanon's solution to this sense of permanent alienation was revolution, Lazali paints a very different picture of the postcolonial psyche. By describing her subjects as passively enduring their condition, she leaves little space for emancipation and for other experiences outside of trauma. Fanon's "New Man"—that revolutionary subject born out of decolonisation—is nowhere to be found here. [68]

Lazali adds a welcome voice to the proliferation of accounts, both fictional and nonfictional, about trauma from global, non-Anglophone perspectives. This attempt to *decentre trauma discourses* is much needed. But trauma itself might be the issue. In the past two decades or so, the field of Trauma Studies has undergone significant transformations. Its critics were (and continue to be) legion: Classic formulations of trauma crystallized in the early 1990s, these critics argued, are overly male-centric, overly Euro-centric, overly focused on the single-event view of trauma as opposed to the more systemic traumas of racism and colonisation.[69] Moving beyond these cultural scripts would create

---

[67] Frantz Fanon, *Écrits sur l'aliénation et la liberté*, ed. by *Jean Khalfa* and Robert Young (Paris, La Découverte, 2015) [which appeared in English as *Alienation and Freedom*; the quote here is from the letter transcribed in the English edition, pp. 433–35].

[68] On this argument, see Joelle Abi-Rached, "Frantz Fanon and the Crisis of Mental Health in the Arab World," *Psyche/Aeon magazine*, 23 June 2021: https://psyche.co/ideas/frantz-fanon-and-the-crisis-of-mental-health-in-the-arab-world (accessed 30 October 2023). On Fanon's writings, see Fanon, *Écrits sur l'aliénation et la liberté*, and Adam Shatz, *The Rebel's Clinic: The Revolutionary Lives of Frantz Fanon* (New York : Macmillan, 2024).

[69] The classic formulations, usually centred on the Holocaust as a major twentieth-century traumatic rupture, are Shoshona Felman and Dori Laub's *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), as well as Cathy Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). On calls to decolonise trauma studies, see e.g., Sonya Andermahr (ed.), "Decolonizing Trauma Studies: Trauma and Postcolonialism," Special Issue of *Humanities* 2015(4), 500-923.

radically different possibilities for thinking about experiences of suffering, we have been told. And yet the trauma genre remains problematic. As a field of enquiry, Trauma Studies has continued to be exclusionary, privileging certain types of suffering over others.[70] This serves as a reminder that trauma as an object of study needs to be historicised, problematised, and re-politicised.[71] It also begs the question: What lies outside of trauma? What social, artistic, and political possibilities may open up by looking beyond this culturally sanctioned corpus of witnesses?

Finding new ways and words for thinking about experiences of pain, suffering, and everything that lies in between seems more urgent now than ever. The "trauma plot," as *The New Yorker* writer Paruh Sehgal recently called it, has become a common language for our twenty-first century world.[72] But trauma's increasingly elastic nature—witness its ever-changing and ever-expanding clinical definition—in many ways limits and

---

[70] On the trauma genre's failure to consider the Palestinian Nakba, for example, see Rosemary Sayigh, "On the Exclusion of the Palestinian Nakba from the 'Trauma Genre,'" *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Autumn 2013), 51-60. Sayigh asks "whether the trauma genre does not itself set up 'cultural frames of reference' that delimit what it recognizes as suffering. Have the witnesses whose writing constitutes the trauma genre—psychologists, literary scholars, film makers, social scientists—selectively focused on particular cases of social suffering, highlighting some and excluding others?" This feels more relevant than ever as I write these lines (November 2023).

[71] For excellent (and now classic) such analyses, often revolving around the creation of "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD) as a diagnostic category, see Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *L'Empire du traumatisme. Enquête sur la condition de victime* (Paris: Flammarion, 2007) [*The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry Into the Condition of Victimhood*, tr. Rachel Gomme, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008], Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), Dagmar Herzog, *Cold War Freud. Psychoanalysis in an Age of Catastrophes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), and Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*: *The Aftermath of Violence: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

[72] Paruh Sehgal, "The Case Against the Trauma Plot," *The New Yorker*, 27 December 2021.

confines the contours of experience. The trauma plot tends to follow a familiar narrative arc. It adheres to a basic script which has come to structure our view of the world and which we have come to accept. Yet the term arguably obscures other experiences of pain and suffering. It also obscures realities that may exist *alongside* pain and suffering—hope, desire, emancipation.[73] So what do we talk about when we talk about trauma? How to encapsulate these complex experiences into a single word, a single story? What gets left out? Perhaps most important in this respect is Sehgal's observation that trauma has "come to be accepted as a totalizing identity." This identity tends to exclude all others; the traumatic subject will forever remain such. To say of Haroun that he has *gone through trauma* is to flatten out the singularity of his experience. It is to rewrite his story for him, to turn him into a stranger.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I should like to thank Professor Kirki Kefalea and the members of the Organising Committee of the "ΞΕΝΟΣ: Stranger, Foreigner, Refugee" workshop for this invitation. I am also most grateful to the participants of the Weill Cornell Working Group on "Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis & Society" (Thomas Dodman, Stefanos Geroulanos, Ben Kafka, Nathan Kravis, George Makari, Alexander Miller, Orna Ophir, and Kathryn Tabb) for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

[73] In this sense, analyses which move beyond this trauma-resilience paradigm seem to me more generative. A recent example of this move away from trauma is the 2021 book *Psychoanalysis Under Occupation*, in which psychoanalysts Lara and Stephen Sheehi explore the realities of Palestinian life under occupation. The book highlights "the appearance of settler colonialism as a psychologically extractive process, one that is often effaced by discourses of normalisation, 'trauma,' 'resilience,' and human rights." As one reviewer put it, in rejecting this binary paradigm, the authors "make the thought-provoking argument that their patients' psychic life cannot be reduced to their experience of settler colonialism's violence, and assert that their subjectivities remain open to desire, emancipation, and the will to live." (Lara Sheehi and Stephen Sheehi, *Psychoanalysis Under Occupation. Practicing Resistance in Palestine*, London: Routledge, 2021).

Page intentionally left blank.

Page intentionally left blank.