

Campus in Camps
Collective Dictionary

XENIA



جامعة إكسيتير
جامعة إكسيتير

UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER

XENIA

Campus in Camps
University of Exeter

EXETER AND FROM BRANSCOMBE TO BEER (UK)

This booklet is an outcome of the "Ancient Journeys and Migrants" course at the University of Exeter and our thinking together with Campus in Camps. In exploring the ancient stories and remains of those who moved through a world without maps, borders, or nation-states, it reveals the shifting attitudes to the outsider – the guest and the host – exposing how fleeting are the conventions that take shape in the here and now.

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INTRODUCTION

Isshaq Al-Barbary

In July 2016 Campus in Camps started a dialogue with the course *Ancient Journeys and Migrants* convened by Elena Isayev at the University of Exeter, in the UK. This also included open talks with the *Migrations Programme* and the *Political Theory Reading Group* hosted at the University. The collaboration draws on the Collective Dictionary as the tool, which Campus in Camps has deployed to explore knowledge beyond the boundaries of preconceived and dogmatic forms of learning and dialectic. Such a group effort is fundamental for laying the fertile ground on which to raise rooted initiatives.

Through video calls, email conversations and on-site workshops with the students at Exeter, we together rediscovered and reinforced the idea that awareness is shaped by investigating the Self and is built on direct experiences, rather than relying on internal or external authorities alone. Through a somewhat organic development Exeter students made the concept of *hospitality* emerge stronger, by choosing the word *Xenia* (*guest-friendship* in ancient Greek) as the pivotal concept to conceive a new Collective Dictionary. Thus they paved the way for a novel understanding of the relationships, legacies, differences and idiosyncrasies, traceable between ancient and modern hospitality, in light of the contemporary refugees' reality of constraint.

One of the proposed conceptions of *hospitality* I found most interesting is in the way that it complemented the act of listening. The mutual understanding that comes from listening to each other makes a durable hospitality possible. A wider meaning of *welcoming* goes beyond the immediate need for food and reaches the craving for thought, required to better understand and re-adapt ourselves to the present. *Ancient Journeys* became a fitting journey within which to host each other's thoughts and perceptions, respectful of the different ways that hospitality can be enacted.

These are not elite concepts. These are fundamental and essential steps, in a time of colonial order and rising barriers, to challenge an increasingly weaponized domain with tools of understanding.

STATE OF SUSPENSE

Elena Isayev

We waited, we hoped, we waited, we speculated, we waited, we doubted, we waited, we felt helpless, we waited, we found other ways, while we waited, we waited, we waited, and wondered:
Would the host and guest ever meet – would there be xenia?

Visa application for entry into the UK:

Submitted from Dheisheh refugee camp, West Bank, Palestine, through Ramallah, via Amman, Jordan: 25 January 2017.

Decision is made: a few days later, but communication about decision is denied.

Documents Received with Visa: 1 March 2017.

Events in Exeter, UK, took place: 18–23 February 2017.

The possibility for hospitality is not always dependent on the will of the host and the guest – but a third other: the state that can oblige or deny hospitality. We in the end were not denied – on the surface we withstood a comparatively minimal state of suspension – although even its consequences were/are profound. The mechanism behind this seemingly minor delay, and those which are endured for whole lifetimes, is the same. Below is a diagrammatic chain of one of its processes. In its anonymised form – to protect the individuals

involved – it captures the banality that transcends any single circumstance, negating exceptionality. The cogs move at their own speed, the inner workings are ambiguous: intention, discretion, carelessness? Randomness, disorientation and uncertainty is what we experienced.

Today's protracted states of suspension are extreme, not only because of the increasing permanence of refugee camps, but also because of the prevention of mobility itself. In such liminal spaces, which elicit compelled agency, communities nevertheless form and function beyond mere survivalism, while eluding normalisation. From displacement emerges an exceptional politics. In its most positive and pragmatic form it is recognisable in such initiatives as the Collective Dictionary – a dynamic constitution – created through Campus in Camps, from Dheisheh Refugee Camp. It does not only offer a way to be part of the world from within, but also to reach beyond the walls – to teach and inspire. What is given and what is received? To whom is reciprocity owed? The roles of host and guest become ambivalent in the context of such exceptional politics. The city/state loosens its claim on being the ultimate host. Xenia no longer waits but becomes un-placed.

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing you in respect to [redacted] collaboration with [redacted] and the Ancient Journeys and Migrants Classics Module over the use of the Collective Dictionary Model for a way of exploring concepts, ancient and modern, around the theme of migration, displacement and belonging.

At the outset, I would like to express how delighted and pleased we are at the [redacted] program, to see that the idea of "Collective Dictionary", which we consider to be the constitution of the program, has won your admiration and proven its value and success in-order for it to be shared among colleagues and students and has come to be practiced by them. Therefore, we wish to express clearly and openly that we support this collaboration and commit to publishing a new volume of the Collective Dictionary in collaboration with your students. We believe that the ancient Greek concept of "Xenia", roughly translated as a duty of hospitality, is of great relation to the experience and life of refugees experience and the refugee camp too.

Meanwhile, I am happy to take part in the discourse around the subject, and planned activities with University and members of the public and deliver a presentation and/or a talk on the work of the [redacted] and its Collective Dictionary at the University of [redacted]. We have had a number of similar experiences at other Universities and academic institutions in different parts of the world that were very successful and valued (most recently in Utrecht in association with [redacted] and [redacted] organisation). In addition I am happy to participate in a workshop or reading group around some of the links between the theoretical and practical elements of the key concepts being considered, and especially the nature of the politics of exception, that the refugee experience engenders.

Kind Regards,

[redacted] program Coordinator

[redacted]
Dheishah Camp, Bethlehem
Palestine

To: [redacted]
Bethlehem

West Bank

Palestine

Passport Number: [redacted]

Date of birth: [redacted]

Re: Invitation to lead workshops for the Migration Program and the Political Theory Reading Group.

Dear [redacted],

On behalf of the Department of Classics and Ancient History and the Political Theory Reading Group,

I would like to officially invite you to lead a number of workshops, which are part of the Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Research initiatives at the University of [redacted]. They will take place on a number of days in the period between 13 - 28 February 2017.

Several of these workshops form part of the course on Ancient Journeys and Migrants, which explores the conceptual understanding and the relationship between ancient and modern hospitality (or Xenia) and asylum. As part of these investigations they will involve a series of events that will take place in the University, and also include the wider community especially through the Global Centre. These draw on the inspiring models of [redacted] and your work within it, especially the initiative of the Collective Dictionary. They allow for the creation of critical learning environments and experiences that move beyond the established and regulated contexts of knowledge production. Together with your organisation we hope to further encourage co-creative practices and foster reciprocity and engagement of a wide constituency in the process of learning. We would like to invite you to lead and help co-ordinate a number of the events: an interpretative reading of relevant studies and texts; a landscape coastal journey (probably 18-19th);

a discursive dinner held in [REDACTED] on the 22nd including a presentation of your work and experiences.

The other workshop that we would like to invite you to lead is part of an on-going initiative of the *Political Theory Reading Group*, which is made up of students and scholars interested in bringing together theory and practice. In particular, we would like you to present on the practice of exceptional politics, perhaps in relation to one of the volumes from the Collective Dictionary: *the Suburb*.

Your travel expenses, accommodation, and subsistence will be covered by a grant from the University of [REDACTED] Fund for the program workshops, of [REDACTED]. We would be delighted if you would join us.

Yours Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Co-ordinator of the Ancient Journeys and Migrants Course.

[REDACTED]

SUBMISSION of Documents & Biometric Data:

Ramallah Visa Application Centre

25 January 2017

CONFIRMATION of Receipt – Visa Processing Centre – Amman, Jordan

----- Original Message -----

Subject: [REDACTED] Your Visa Application at
the British Embassy in Amman
Date: [REDACTED]
From: <AmmanVisaInfo@fco.gov.uk>
To: <[REDACTED]>

PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE. THIS MAILBOX IS NOT
MONITORED.

Dear [REDACTED]

This email is to notify you that your UK visa application has
been received at the British Embassy (AMMAN) and will now be
prepared for assessment by an Entry Clearance Officer.

Our published service standards say that we will process all
non-settlement applications within 15 working days and all
settlement applications within 60 working days, both from the
date you attended your appointment at the Visa Application
Centre.

If you have purchased the Priority service, we aim to process
Priority non-settlement applications within 5 working days
from the date that you attended your appointment at the Visa
Application Centre, and all Priority settlement applications
within 15 working days of your appointment.

We are currently meeting our service standards and there are
no forecasted delays to our service.

Please note: We strongly recommend that you do not book a
flight to the UK until your visa application has been approved
and you have collected your passport. We do not accept
responsibility for any financial loss incurred as a result of
delays in processing applications and we will not fast-track
applications solely because of travel plans.

Once a decision has been made on your application we will
email you to let you know. You will then be contacted by the

Visa Application Centre with instructions on how to collect
your documents. Please do not go to the Visa Application
Centre before they have contacted you.

In some circumstances, applications require further assessment
which can take longer than our published customer service
standards. If your application is going to take longer than
expected we will let you know.

We would be grateful if you could keep your correspondence
to a minimum during the consideration process. If you need
to contact us or would like to track the progress of your
application, you can do so via our International Enquiry
Service at www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-outside-uk

Regards

UK Visas and Immigration
British Embassy
Amman
www.gov.uk/ukvi

Email: contact details can be found at www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-outside-uk

This is an automated message - do not respond to this email
address as incoming mail is not answered. If you need to
reply telephone the office dealing with your application,
quoting your reference number.

SILENCE

INQUIRY – British Consulate Amman

Phoned: 06 February 2017: [REDACTED] (UK) 00 962 65 [REDACTED]

Received Number to Call UK Visa Immigration in UK

INQUIRY – UK Visas and Immigration International Enquiry Service

SURVEY of Customer Satisfaction

From: donotreply@hgs-ukvi.co.uk <donotreply@hgs-ukvi.co.uk>
Sent: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Customer Satisfaction

Many thanks for your call today - we are committed to improving our services and therefore would appreciate your time in completing this short survey

Please click on this link to complete

[http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/\[REDACTED\]](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/[REDACTED])

Many thanks

Phoned: 06 February 2017: [REDACTED] (UK) 012432 [REDACTED]

Request of Information

Response: to wait for an email asking for client to come in to get back the Visa Documents

SILENCE

INQUIRY – UK Visas and Immigration International Enquiry Service

Phoned: 14 February 2017: [REDACTED] (UK) 01243 [REDACTED]

Request for Information on lack of communication.

Response: to fill in a form and submit to Document Decision
Making Centre in Amman for information

FORM for Escalation

1. Type of escalation:

High - for Visa Application to the UK from Palestine - Very Urgent

Due to event for which Visa is sought, to take place at [REDACTED], begins this week.

I am the person responsible for inviting him from the [REDACTED], and overseeing his logistics.

2. GWF Reference Number:

[REDACTED]

3. Passport Number:

[REDACTED]

4. Name of the applicant:

[REDACTED]

5. Date of Birth:

[REDACTED]

6. Country where applying:

Occupied Palestinian Territories

7. Location of the VAC:

UK Visas and Immigration
British Embassy
Amman

(Documents submitted at the British Consulate in Ramallah)

8. Type of visa:

Standard (Tourist) Academic Visa for the UK

9. Date of biometrics:

[REDACTED]

10. Brief Reason of escalation:

Due to the urgency, since we were told a week ago that a decision has been made on the Visa, but there has been no contact from the VAC, as to what that is, nor any indication of when or where to pick up the documents.

His email is:

[REDACTED]

The Visa is sought for [REDACTED] to lead an event, that begins this week [REDACTED]

CONFIRMATION of Escalation

SILENCE

From: donotreply@hgs-ukvi.co.uk <donotreply@hgs-ukvi.co.uk>
Sent: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: ContactID# [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for contacting UK Visas and Immigration international enquiry service.

With the information you have provided, we have now escalated this case to the relevant department who will investigate your case and will be back in contact as soon as possible.

Thank you for your patience.

For any further details, or should you need to contact us again please refer to our website at <https://ukvi-international.faq-help.com/>, select appropriate country, click next and then select "E-Mail form" and complete as instructed. We will aim to come back to you within 1 day.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

UK Visas and Immigration International Enquiry Service
We would like to invite you to participate in a brief survey about the service you received from us to identify strengths and opportunities for improvements.

<http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/> [REDACTED]

Thank you in advance for your time.

RESPONSE – UK Visas and Immigration International Enquiry Service

From: donotreply@hgs-ukvi.co.uk <donotreply@hgs-ukvi.co.uk>
Sent: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: ContactID# [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for contacting the UK Visas and Immigration International Enquiry service.

I understand you have been waiting for long and apologise for any inconveniences. We have received a response from the decision making centre, following your request for information on the status of your visa application which states as follows:

" Your application has been resolved and dispatched within the UKVI published customer service standards. Please advise if you have not been contacted to collect your decision/ documents "

You are requested to be patient and wait for the processing to be completed.

For any further details, or should you need to contact us again please refer to our website at <https://ukvi-international.faq-help.com/> select appropriate country, click next and then select "E-Mail form" and complete as instructed. We will aim to come back to you within 1 day.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]
UK Visas and Immigration International Enquiry Service
We would like to invite you to participate in a brief survey about the service you received from us to identify strengths and opportunities for improvements.
[http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/\[REDACTED\]](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/[REDACTED])

Thank you in advance for your time

SURVEY of Customer Satisfaction

From: donotreply@hgs-ukvi.co.uk <donotreply@hgs-ukvi.co.uk>
Sent: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Customer Satisfaction

To ensure that we are providing the best service possible we would love you to complete the short survey below.

Please go to the following link

[http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/\[REDACTED\]](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/[REDACTED])

Many thanks for your time

INQUIRY – UK Visas and Immigration International Enquiry Service

CONFIRMATION of Escalation

Phoned: 17 February 2017: [REDACTED] 0124 [REDACTED]

Request of Information

Response: to Check with Client if they have not received
an email (also in SPAM)

To Wait until Amman Office Opens (was unsure if closed on Friday)

From: donotreply@hgs-ukvi.co.uk <donotreply@hgs-ukvi.co.uk>

Sent: [REDACTED]

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: ContactID# [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for contacting UK Visas and Immigration
international enquiry service.

With the information you have provided, we have now escalated
this case to the relevant department who will investigate your
case and will be back in contact as soon as possible.

Thank you for your patience.

For any further details, or should you need to contact
us again please refer to our website at <https://ukvi-international.faq-help.com/>, select appropriate country, click
next and then select "E-Mail form" and complete as instructed.
We will aim to come back to you within 1 day.

Kind regards,
[REDACTED]

UK Visas and Immigration International Enquiry Service

We would like to invite you to participate in a brief survey
about the
service you received from us to identify strengths and
opportunities for
improvements.

<http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/> [REDACTED]

Thank you in advance for your time.

SILENCE

VISA RECEIVED

Meanwhile at [REDACTED]:

Xeniwhere Journey 18 Feb. 2017

Politics of Exception Workshop 22 Feb. 2017

Sanctuary City Seminar 23 Feb. 2017

1 March 2017

British Consulate, Ramallah: Collected in Person

Delayed, en-routed, expected

Flight: Amman - London
Total Price: [REDACTED]

TRAVELERS

[REDACTED]

1 piece of hold luggage included. Click [here](#) for more information.
To check in use the PNR code: [REDACTED]
Electronic ticket number (e-ticket): [REDACTED]

OUTBOUND	RETURN
<p>Amman AMM</p> <p>London LGW</p> <p>Mon 27 Mar 2017</p> <p>03:25 Amman Queen Alia - AMM Ukraine International - (PS0762) Economy</p> <p>07:55 Kiev Boryspil International - KBP</p> <p>Wait: 2hrs 5mins</p> <p>10:00 Kiev Boryspil International - KBP Ukraine International - (PS0111) Economy</p> <p>11:25 London Gatwick - LGW Terminal S</p>	<p>London LGW</p> <p>Amman AMM</p> <p>Thu 6 Apr 2017</p> <p>12:20 London Gatwick - LGW Terminal S Ukraine International - (PS0112) Economy</p> <p>17:40 Kiev Boryspil International - KBP</p> <p>Wait: 2hrs 35mins</p> <p>20:15 Kiev Boryspil International - KBP Ukraine International - (PS0761) Economy</p> <p>23:45 Amman Queen Alia - AMM</p>

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS AND USEFUL INFORMATION

https://

3

SURVEY of Customer Satisfaction

Subject: UK Visas and Immigration Survey

Date: [REDACTED]

From: "UKVI Customer Surveys (no reply)" [REDACTED].gov.uk

To: [REDACTED]

Reply-To: <noreplysurveys@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk>

Dear [REDACTED]

UK Visas and Immigration would like to ask for your feedback in a short online survey. The aim of this survey is to find out how well we met your needs and how we can improve in the future.

You can complete the survey in any of these languages:

English / Arabic / Chinese / Russian / Turkish

Please click on the UKVI Survey to give your feedback.

The questionnaire should take around 10 minutes to complete. It should be completed by the applicant themselves or a parent or guardian who applied on their behalf. If you are not the applicant, their parent or guardian, please send this invitation to the applicant.

Your feedback will be completely anonymous; it cannot and will not be linked with your application in any way.

The success of this research depends entirely on your voluntary co-operation, and we do hope you will be able to take part.

Thank you for your time.

Regards

[REDACTED]
Director, UK Visas and Immigration

NO LINK TO THE SURVEY!!!

WHO AND WHY?

Natasha Collin

We are a group of students from the University of Exeter studying the movements of people in the ancient world and how this can inform our understanding of such movements in the modern world. Through the lens of the Ancient Greek concept of *xenia* (guest friendship), we aim to explore how classical rites of hospitality and duty to strangers in need could be relevant to our society today. The content of this booklet draws its inspiration from shared experiences, stories and knowledge in various mediums.

For this project, we decided to organise a walk along the coast to which we invited the local community, and its inspiring results shaped our entire Dictionary. A shared journey with people from a variety of backgrounds gave each of us the chance to enact the ideal of hospitality ourselves. It was eye-opening to see how *xenia* overcame the barriers of unfamiliarity, breaking down any preconceived notions of host and guest. Instead, the natural world guided us as we explored the Devon countryside together. As a result, the Collective Dictionary records our exploration of *xenia*, from reading ancient examples, thereby furthering our understanding of it in its ancient context, alongside examining its relevance and existence in the modern world.

"Reading makes immigrants of us all. It takes us away from home but more importantly, it finds homes for us everywhere."

- Jean Rhys



DEFINING XENIA

Jack Gladen

Xenia

Collins English Dictionary: “hospitality; from ‘xenos’ guest”

‘But come with me, let us go to the hut, old man, that when you have satisfied your heart with food and wine, you too may tell where you are from, and all the woes you have endured’

– Homer, *Odyssey* (11.44-47)

‘Pericles, son of Xanthippos, one of the ten generals of the Athenians, finding that the invasion was to take place, conceived the idea that Archidamus, who happened to be his friend, might possibly pass by his estate without ravaging it. This he might do, either from a personal wish to oblige him, or acting under instructions from Lacadaemon for the purpose of creating a prejudice against him’

– Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (2.13-14)



Suppliant

Collins English Dictionary: “a person who supplicates; to make a humble request (to someone); plea”

*‘hold reverently in you left hands your white-wreathed suppliant-branches,
sacred emblems of Zeus the enforcer of respect,
and answer the natives in words that display respect, sorrow and need,
As it is proper for outsiders to do,
explaining clearly this flight of yours which is not due to bloodshed,
Let your speech, in the first place, not be accompanied by arrogance,
and let it emerge from your disciplined faces and your calm eyes
that you are free of wantonness’*

– Aeschylus, *The Suppliant Women* (191-197)

‘May Zeus who guards suppliants look graciously on our company’

– Aeschylus, *The Suppliant Women* (1-2)

Asylum

Collins English Dictionary: “a safe or inviolable place of refuge”

*‘Remember to be yielding – you are a needy foreign refugee:
bold speech does not suit those in a weak position’*

– Aeschylus, *The Suppliant Women* (198-199)

Journey

Collins English Dictionary: “a travelling from one place to another; trip or voyage”

*‘Now the mind trembling in anticipation yearns to roam,
now the happy feet grow strong in their pastime.
Be well, o sweet company of friends,
who having wandered far from home together
diverse routes bear back in varied ways.’*

– Gaius Valerius Catullus, *Carmina* (46)



Migration

Collins English Dictionary: *“the act or an instance of migrating; if people migrate, they move from one place to another, especially in order to find work or to live somewhere for a short time”*

‘...Then the Senate granted an audience to embassies from the allies of the Latin name, who had gathered in large numbers from everywhere in all Latium. When these complained that a very great number of their citizens had migrated to Rome and had been registered in the census there... As a result of this investigation, 12,000 Latins returned home: already then a great number of foreigners was burdening the city’

– Livy, *From the Founding of the City* (39.3, 4-6)

‘Such was the awful fate that befell the Romans and Italians throughout the province of Asia; men, women, and children, their freedmen and slaves, all who were of Italian blood; by which it was made very plain that it was quite as much hatred of the Romans as fear of Mithridates that impelled the Asiatics to commit these atrocities.’

– Appian, *Mithridates* (23)

Citizenship

Collins English Dictionary: *“the condition or status of a citizen, with its rights and duties”*

‘Moreover, two kinds of fraud had been practiced to secure individual transfers of citizenship. The law of the allies of the Latin name: that those of them who should leave behind in their hometowns an offspring of their own could become Roman citizens. By the abuse of this law some were injuring the allies, some the Roman people’

– Livy, *From the Founding of the City* (41.8, 6-12)

‘All Gaul is filled with traders, - is full of Roman citizens. No Gaul does any business without the aid of a Roman citizen; not a single sesterce in Gaul ever changes hands without being entered in the account-books of Roman citizens’

– Cicero, *Pro Fonteio* (11-12)

‘But being repulsed on every side by the native-born citizens and excluded, not only from the first, but even from the middle rank, he resented his disfranchisement’

– Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* (3.47)

Home

Collins English Dictionary: “the place or a place where one lives; a house or other dwelling”

‘After being admitted as friends and occupying the city, they first expelled or massacred the citizens and then took possession of the wives and families of the dispossessed victims, just as chance assigned them each at the time of the outrage. They next divided among themselves the land and all other property. Having thus possessed themselves so quickly and easily of a fine city and territory, they were not long in finding imitators of their exploit ... The Mamertines had previously, as I above narrated, lost their support from Rhegium and had now suffered complete disaster at home for the reasons I have just stated.’

– Polybius, *Histories* (1.7-10)

‘The Etruscans looked with disdain on Lucumo, the son of a banished man and a stranger. She could not endure this indignity, and forgetting the love she owed her native land, if she could only see her husband honoured, she formed the project of emigrating from Tarquinii’

– Livy, *From the Founding of the City* (1.34)

A word cloud centered around the word 'family'. The word 'family' is the largest and most prominent. Other words include 'safety', 'comfort', 'happiness', 'belonging', 'freedom', 'laughter', 'reliability', 'familiarity', 'life', 'connection', 'heart', 'positivity', 'loved-ones', 'family-house', and 'friends'.

Foreign

Collins English Dictionary: “of, involving, located in, or coming from another country, area, people, etc.”

‘This stranger – who he is I do not know – has come to my house in his wanderings, whether from men of the east or of the west. He urges that he be sent on his way, and prays for assurance. Let us, as in the past, speed on his conveyance. For no other man, certainly, who comes to my house, waits here long in sorrow for lack of conveyance’

– Homer, *Odyssey* (8.26-33)

‘Alas, to the land of what mortals have I now come? Are they cruel, and wild and unjust, or are they kind to strangers and fear the gods in their thoughts?’

– Homer, *Odyssey* (6.117-121)

‘In response to this the ephors swore to them that they believed their army to be even now at Orestheum, marching against the “strangers”, as they called the barbarians’

– Herodotus, *Histories* (9.11)



INTERVIEWS

Oscar Page

The following questions were put to two people with very different experiences of immigration. One is a university student whose family moved to the UK from Turkey and Iran before she was born. The other is a middle-aged medical professional and mother of two, born in England who moved to the Middle East for several years in a professional capacity. Their reflections on nationality, home and hospitality are interesting in that their contrasting stories demonstrate the range of experiences that fall under the bracket of such terms, whilst the repeated themes of emphasis on family and belonging are present in both accounts. Both reflect on the strong and intimate connection to the countries their families are from, whilst fully recognising when they were outsiders in their country of residence; for the young student it is in colloquial matters of pop culture that she feels ignorant or foreign, whilst for the professional adult, it is in the social divide between different groups.

Project explanation for participants.

The following questions are part of a 3rd year ancient history project working in conjunction with the initiative 'Campus in Camps'. Campus in Camps operates in refugee camps across the world and a significant part of the work they do is the creation of the 'collective

dictionaries'. The collective dictionaries are composed thematically, relating to interesting or central elements of society such as 'Ownership', 'Citizenship' or 'Relation'.

As the name suggests the booklets seek to define the term, but in a broader sense than that of a true dictionary. The history of a term, the reality of its application to day-to-day life or nuances in its interpretation are examples of the wider definition the collective dictionary seeks to create.

Our seminar group has chosen, for its apparent links between the ancient world and the modern, the term Xenia for the creation of a new collective dictionary.

Xenia is the ancient concept of guest friendship and is a prevalent theme in many sources from the ancient world, none more so than Homer's Iliad and Odyssey; the corner stones of ancient literary tradition. The topic offers a range of comparisons between the values aimed towards strangers, guests or foreigners in the ancient world and the modern debates surrounding refugees, borders, nationality and identity.

Note to interviewee.

Please answer the following questions on the topics of home, belonging, nationality and guest hospitality with as much detail as you feel is appropriate.

N.B not all the material submitted will be used, nor will it necessarily be transcribed verbatim.

Instead thematic comparison and analysis will be attempted across different participant answers to the questions.

Interviewee 1

1. Where and when were, you born?

15th October 1995, London

2. Briefly and without any pressure to disclose any information you feel uncomfortable conveying, summarise you or families experience with immigration.

My mum came from Turkey in 1989 to be an au pair to a family in London. She then met my dad a year or so later and decided to stay in London to be with him. My dad left Iran in 1987 to escape conscription which would have likely resulted in his death. He spent a year trying to get from Turkey to London and arrived in London in 1988.

3. Do you consider England to be your home? And do you feel welcome here?

Yes. I feel welcome.

4. What affiliation do you feel to your ancestral home? Have you ever visited it or do you plan to?

I feel like Turkey is definitely my second home. I feel homesick if I don't go every year. I feel a deep emotional connection to both Iranian and Turkish culture. I go to Turkey yearly, I have been to Iran

twice and plan to go travelling there for a few months next year.

5. Do you feel or have you ever felt, like a guest or outsider in England?

Not until I came to university and realised that my general knowledge, television culture, history of music etc. is very behind that of my English friends which made me realise slightly that I can't quite fully identify as completely British. However this feeling isn't necessarily that strong and I don't often feel like an outsider.

6. How do your attitudes towards home and identity differ from that of your parents or grandparents?

My parents have never felt like they belong in the UK (unlike myself). They don't vote because the UK isn't their home, they mostly watch Turkish TV and get sad on Eid because they are away from home. They feel like they will never be British and are still very patriotic towards their own countries. This is completely different from me, as I feel very British while also feeling a strong Turkish and Iranian identity.

7. What in your mind constitutes hospitality?

For me hospitality is anticipating the needs of your guests and sharing everything you have. This definitely comes from my Turkish/Iranian culture. In both cultures it is rude to not be overly attentive

to guests. I don't however take it to the level of my parents because most of my friends are British and I am aware of the differences. Hospitality for me is a very selfless thing as it involves giving away loads and loads of food (food is key) and your energies.

8. In your opinion, at what point does a place become 'home' and a person become a 'local'?

Erm, difficult question. I'd say a home is the place where you are at your most comfortable. Being a local is a less personal thing and alongside the personal element of feeling at home, it involves maybe a good understanding of your surroundings including the culture and area.

Interviewee 2

1. Where and when were, you born?

Chatham, Kent. UK. 31.10.1959

2. Briefly and without any pressure to disclose any information you feel uncomfortable conveying, summarise you or families experience with immigration.

I was asked to work in Qatar between 2012-2015. The workforce model of much of the Gulf states relies very heavily on an 'imported' labour force. People from all over the world come to work in the country where despite very arduous conditions, their pay is significantly better than they can ever hope to receive in their home countries.

3. Did you ever consider Qatar to be your home? Why?

Qatar was my temporary home during my time there, my home would always be where my children are.

4. Do you feel or have you ever felt, like a guest or outsider in Qatar?

Yes, many times. Arabic hospitality is famous and I experienced it many times but equally I always knew the barrier was there – always

knew I could never really be on 'the inside'. You were tolerated based on what you were offering the country. I could never feel at home in a country where so much was so different from where I had lived before. For example, the gender divide was significant, I was a single woman in a senior post, leading a team of men. This was considered most unusual and was a point of issue on many occasions.

5. Was there a concept of guest hospitality in the Middle East? What in your mind constitutes hospitality?

Absolutely. Arabic hospitality is legendary. There's a ritual involved. For example, business is agreed very slowly across several meetings and cups of tea. It was sometimes difficult to get in front of people but once there, you were made to feel very welcome.

6. In your opinion, at what point does a place become 'home' and a person become a 'local'?

There is an old-fashioned expression: home is where the heart is. People can feel at home anywhere I think. It's about levels of comfort, acceptance, understanding, security, belonging etc. For me it is mostly about proximity to family and loved ones. Equally people can be a local in the sense they live in and know an area well, without feeling that they belong.

7. How has you or your family's experience with immigration influenced your ideas of nationality/Home?

The issue of nationality is at the heart of much of this. (I'm not saying that's right but I think it is there any way). The concept of national identity is very strong for many and many assumptions are made about people from different nationalities. I think the same happens in the UK. Certain traits were attributed to people from different nationalities and certain assumptions and expectations made about them. In Qatar different nationalities were placed in a pecking order.

ANCIENT HISTORIANS' PERSPECTIVE

Aldous Poole and Jana Axamitová

In order to broaden our understanding of the concept of xenia, we conducted interviews with three staff members of the University of Exeter's Classics department. We aimed to draw upon their expert knowledge of the ancient world, to examine the key features of xenia, and investigate its place more widely within ancient society. Additionally, we hoped to gain classical scholars' perspective on hospitality in the modern world, and use the ancient context to shed new light on the contemporary situation.

Lynette Mitchell

**Professor in Greek History and Politics, Department of Classics
& Ancient History, University of Exeter**

How would you describe the concept of xenia?

It's something that is quite difficult to explain to people in the modern world because it's so different from anything that we see in the modern world. It's a hereditary relationship; and, although it has all the obligations of kinship attached to it, it is a ritualised relationship rather than a real kinship relationship. The guest-friendship was generally set up between families; one family gave gifts to another family, which was a part of the ritual, and the other family would give gifts in return in order to set up the relationship. It was very structured and very institutionalised in this way. The obligation that is set up is that the two families will look after each other when they need to, for example when they visit the other person's city, the family will look after them and it reciprocates. All this is based on the initial exchange of gifts; then it continues through families and sometimes goes down through generations and it's expected that it will be kept up. It is two different families in two different cities with a ritualised obligation to look after each other.

Do you think that xenia was a religious concept?

Yes, in a sense that Zeus Xenios was in charge of it. There was no religious ritual that went with it, although it is very difficult

to talk about Greek society and Greek ritual without talking about Greek religion. There was an obligation and it was thought that if that obligation was not maintained, there would be retribution according to natural law, which was itself god-given. We have sources that talk about the fact that if you do not do what you should do for your *xenos*, there will be a natural retribution. As most things in Greek society, it is encased with an understanding that the world is ordered by the gods and the gods will interfere if people do not behave the way they should.

Do you believe that it would be the fear of retribution that would motivate people to obey *xenia*?

Absolutely. It doesn't mean they always honoured it - some people took it more seriously than others. We do have examples of some people who do not take it seriously at all, and it was clearly one of the anxieties of Greek society that people won't take it seriously. There is a Greek play, Euripides' *Hecuba*, that has at its heart some of these issues. It is one of the things that is wrapped around with anxiety, but that's true with all Greek relationships which are all very ritualised to varying degrees. *Xenia* is the most ritualised as people didn't have to even know each other for that link to exist. But there is a lot of anxiety about whether people will actually obey it or not, and what will happen if they don't.

Would you say fear was the main motivating factor?

There is a mutuality about it. There is an example in Homer of two *xenoi* from opposite sides, one is a Trojan and the other is a Greek, who meet each other in a battlefield but realising they are *xenoi* and therefore cannot fight each other. They renew their *xenia* by swapping armour, but one swaps gold armour for bronze; and there is a little comment by Homer that this was a joke as one gave more valuable armour than the other. This example is from the eighth century; then we have another example from the fourth century, which is a much more sophisticated world, with a Persian and a Spartan king in a war, and the Persian says: 'We are *xenoi* - why are we killing each other?' and the Spartan replies: 'Sometimes that happens.'. It's clearly picking up on a Homeric story and turning it around, which shows that this was actually a much more complicated relationship than the Homeric story might suggest.

In your opinion, are these examples a true reflection of the reality or are they portraying an idealistic concept of what *xenia* should be?

I think it's both. There is a lot of anxiety wrapped around whether it will actually happen or not, and whether it will work. But we do have good examples where it works absolutely, to the point that somebody could be asked to honour their *xenia* relationship over their relationship with their own city, or other people within the city. That creates a problem - do they honour their *xenos* or do they honour their city? It is a very important structuring relationship

in Greek society; you have to understand it in order to understand Greek society. But it's deeply problematic because of some of the contradictions it produces.

You have given examples about xenia being involved in state politics. Would you say that it was not a private concept in the ancient world?

No. Although the private and public do intercept and overlap, because it's private in nature; but partly because it's so institutionalised, it's also very public. But it still does come down to two people swapping gifts and setting up a relationship.

Do you think these relationships were set up mostly among the upper classes and elites?

Yes. It's been said, and I think it's right, that all Greek friendships are ritualised friendships, and *xenia* is the most ritualised kind. It's conceivable that it could happen lower down the classes, but it was, at least primarily, an elite activity.

Is that because the elites were the most mobile in the ancient world?

Yes, that's exactly the point. They couldn't have *xenos* in their own city, so they needed it more.

You said that the xenia relationships are difficult for us to understand as they are completely different to the relationships we

have nowadays. Do you think there is any equivalent of xenia that exists today?

Not in quite the same way, or at least not in the West. That's why it's so difficult to describe it to undergraduates, because we do not have similar relationships. I suspect that in the Middle East you might find relationships which are much more similar or come close to it in some ways. My friend, who is involved with Syrian refugees, talked about the way the Syrians are looking after each other in refugee situations. It is not quite the same, as it doesn't have that personal, ritualised aspect, but the looking out for people just because they are in trouble and having affinity with them, comes much closer than what we have in the West.

There are examples in the ancient sources of people providing hospitality for complete strangers. Do you think that this did happen in reality?

This is where it gets interesting. The word for stranger is *xenos* and the word for people in *xenia* relationships is also *xenos*, which probably shows where the heart of it comes from. The stranger and the *xenos* are linked together and they're protected by Zeus Xenios. There is always a potentiality of someone becoming your *xenos* - if you take them in, that's the initial gift.

Do you think there is an expectation of reciprocity?

Absolutely. Greek society is a reciprocal society, it's all based on reciprocity.

In the modern world, we feel a moral obligation to help those in need. Is that something we see in the ancient world?

Does altruism exist in ancient Greece? It's one of the questions there is quite a bit of debate about and some people attempt to produce examples of it. If it does exist, I think it's incredibly rare because the moral and ethical code is just so slightly different. You do look after strangers, you do look after suppliants, but in doing that, you have now created a relationship where you want the same back for yourself.

Do you think that is the case nowadays? Although you automatically reach out and help those in need, you expect the same to be done for you if you were to find yourself in a similar situation?

It is the kind of passing on, isn't it? It is what I try to teach my son – you do somebody a kindness, so somebody would do you a kindness. But it doesn't always happen and we know that. I think it was more fraught in the ancient world because it was expected; it is less fraught for us because we might hope it will happen, but we don't necessarily expect it.

Do you think that hospitality has become more private in the modern society?

It's a slightly odd one; we still have state banquets when heads of states come over. At that level, I think hospitality does operate, because it needs to keep things stable. One thing that reciprocity does is keep situations stable. Often it looks really quite crass on the modern international level, whereas it doesn't look particularly crass on an international level in the ancient world. But you need it to keep up appearances and to keep stability.

Do you think that hospitality based on reciprocity could be found on a smaller scale, for example in local communities?

It's what is called a generalised reciprocity. Greek *xenia* is based on what's called balanced reciprocity when you give similarly back; whereas a generalised reciprocity is a concept of passing around, which happens in small communities, in doing something for others because we know they will do the same for us.

Could that be classed as *xenia* in a way?

No. *Xenia*, as it's understood in a Greek context, is based on the fact that it's a balanced relationship. That's why there is the joke in Homer about swapping armour of a different value, because it's supposed to be the same.

Neville Morley

**Professor of Classics & Ancient History, Department of Classics
& Ancient History, University of Exeter**

How would you describe the concept of xenia?

Not an area I specialise in, but as guest friendship, basically an obligation to hospitality. So the idea is that even if it's someone you have never met, you don't know, and you don't know anything about them, nevertheless the expectation is you should give them shelter, feed them, generally welcome them.

Do you think that xenia was a religious concept?

It depends what you mean by religious really. I think yes and no would be the unhelpful answer. Partly of course it's the nature of [ancient] Greek religion in that it doesn't set up a list of moral rules in the way say, modern religions of the book do. Also in a way, there isn't a clear division between religious behaviour and expected behaviour. The Gods *are* involved. I think one of the things that happens is that there are all of these stories about the Gods going around in disguise to see who actually offers them xenia, which is kind of emphasising that this is an expectation: that the stranger who turns up at your door might actually be Zeus in disguise. Also I think there are implications that people who don't follow this – who break the rules, who mistreat guests or don't welcome people in – it is bad behaviour, and that includes the sense that this is the sort of thing that if the

Gods noticed, they would be unhappy about.

So then do you think religion was the main motivation for people to obey xenia? Or do you think there was another cause? That it would be reciprocated and useful for everyone?

I don't know whether it's that clearly articulated for most people. It is what you are supposed to do, and you do it because it is what you are supposed to do. So there is a sort of religious element to it, that if you break the norms of behaviour there is the possibility that you'll get punished for that. There is a social element, there is probably yes, the expectation of reciprocity. I can imagine that more elaborate theories get worked out by people who actually write about it, but in terms of it as an expected form of behaviour, we've got the examples of Odysseus wandering around and receiving xenia. And there isn't a strong sense at all in the Odyssey that people are consciously thinking through their reasons for doing it, it's simply this is what you do when a stranger turns up.

You've spoken about literary examples of Xenia in Homer and elsewhere, do you think those examples are in anyway similar to how it would have worked in reality? Would people be literally taking in strangers they had never met?

It's a very good question, and I don't know. The implication of the stories of entertaining the Gods unawares, is that this is normal behaviour. It seems very strange to us because it's certainly not the

sort of thing which we would do. It may be that this is the sort of thing that maybe the elite do more.

Do you think then that there was a political element, perhaps, in elites taking in other elites?

Yes, you suspect it is. We do get a sense that within Greece, aristocratic networks go outside the polis. That Greek aristocrats in one city have quite a lot in common with Greek aristocrats in another city. There are certainly - this isn't the sort of 'the stranger' aspect of xenia - but certainly there are ties of hospitality that go back generations. To put it another way, you break the expectations, then that could certainly have nasty political consequences.

Do you think that there's any sort of equivalent to xenia today? Or has that sort of idea disappeared?

I don't think it's disappeared completely. I don't think there's very much of it. In a lot of ways, particularly in the last couple of decades, you look at Europe and it seems to be becoming more and more tribal, more the idea is that you should be generous only to your own people. All of the debates around migration and refugees, there is a more religious or consciously humanitarian argument for accepting refugees. So I think there are people who believe in, not quite xenia, but believe in welcoming strangers as a moral obligation however it's grounded. But it's certainly not a universal expectation. If anything, that sort of attitude seems to be regarded as rather strange, and even as hostile. In a sense, that if you are welcoming

these people in, then actually you are an enemy to your own people. Equally there is this sort of phrase that gets banded about, a kind of 'rootless cosmopolitan'. There is this sort of very negative image of people who seem to be able to feel at home in different countries, and who have, a little bit like the Greek aristocracy you could say, who have more in common with people like them in other countries. That is, in the popular discourse, regarded with suspicion. So mostly I think the modern world is very hostile to xenia.

You spoke about morality motivating people to offer hospitality, do you think morality would be the main motivation for people nowadays?

Yes, as I say, it's not necessarily religious morality, you can have a secular morality that would likewise argue that there is an obligation to look after people, welcome people, that if you see someone in need you should help them. But yes, there are other motives, but I think that is the primary one.

Going back to xenia and hospitality in ancient times, do you think it was much of a public concept? In that it wasn't just one person within a community inviting someone privately into their home, you'd have a communal decision, communal hospitality?

Possibly, I haven't the faintest idea to be perfectly honest.

Do you think it's a private concept nowadays? Or public?

Nowadays I think it is more public. Certainly if we're thinking in terms of the treatment of refugees, then the expectation that this is a role taken on by the state in the broadest sense. Again you get the sort of comments on Twitter that "if you're so keen on having refugees then why aren't you putting them up in your bedroom". But that's not a serious argument, that it should be a private obligation. I think there are examples of people taking this on as a private obligation, it tends to be much less, much smaller scale generosity than welcoming someone into your home as a guest in most cases.

Do you think there is any element of reciprocity in hospitality nowadays and accepting people in?

Not commonly. I think there can be in certain specialised circumstances, but mostly the reciprocity comes where there is a relationship, so it's not where you're dealing with a complete stranger, it is much more when there is someone you know to a certain extent or where you have some sort of contact with them. You give them hospitality and then there would be a certain expectation that they would reciprocate.

Martin Pitts

Senior Lecturer in Roman Archaeology, Department of Classics & Ancient History, University of Exeter

In your opinion, was xenia a religious concept in the ancient world?

I don't think so; not in the way we would think about religion in the modern world. In the part of the Roman World I specialise in, I don't know how widespread those religious ideas would have been. It would be more of a cultural phenomenon. Although, in that sense, you can't really separate religion and culture as you can in the modern world.

Do you think that ancient authors give an idealistic portrayal of xenia that differs from how it was practiced in reality?

I think to a certain degree, these things are ideal constructs. However, there is no reason to suspect there wasn't an accommodating attitude. I can't think of examples where you would get the same degree of hostility towards people on the move as you would today.

Would you say that the concept of xenia was more present among the elites?

I believe so. People who are moving tend to be of a high status. I can't think of many examples of low status people who are

recorded in inscriptions, as it was the wealthy who had the means to create these monuments.

**To what extent do you think this kind of hospitality exists today?
Are people any more or less hospitable nowadays?**

I think it definitely exists today. Different religious groups provide this, migrants are staying in all parts of the world, being a refugee is being seen as something undesirable. One of the issues of the modern world is that there is a perception that we're living in a very overcrowded world. In the urban centres, people are more used to meeting people from different backgrounds. Maybe there is a more negative perception in the countryside that there is no room for others. But I don't think the ancient world was an idealistic society where everyone was welcome.

Do you think that similarities can be drawn between the ancient and modern world when acting hospitably towards strangers/people in need?

I think there can be, I think it does exist quite a lot, but doesn't necessarily get reported quite as much. In England, there are lots of events created for the benefit of migrants, as well as things like food-banks. I think most people want to feel that they want to help; even more so when you meet people face-to-face. Different languages, however, may potentially feel alienating to some people. I think there is a general concept that exists but perhaps isn't always put first.

Drawing on what you said about the group movements, would you say that in the ancient world, hospitality was offered more on an individual basis, rather than as a group activity in the modern world?

You can still experience this as an individual thing. To me, Exeter is quite a homogenous city. I used to live in Bradford, which has a much higher proportion of people with Southeast Asian descent. I think that people in Exeter, even those who are against migration, think less on an individual level and don't worry so much about this big, imagined world of migration.

Do you think fear plays a part in all this?

Yes, I think fear is a big problem.

Why do you think we have lost that moral responsibility to help strangers in need?

A smaller portion of the UK population is a part of a religious community. It used to be the case that most people would go to church on a Sunday, listening to the New Testament wisdom about helping your neighbour and helping people in need. In addition to that, technology has also created communities that are much larger but less connected in an intimate way as you would imagine they would have been in the past.

You said that large communities tend to be less interconnected. Do you feel there is a more intimate connection within smaller communities?

People in smaller and local communities tend to demonstrate other forms of hospitality. Admittedly, fewer people do these things nowadays, but it definitely exists in communities such as groups of colleagues, local parent groups or even small neighbourhoods. I think there is a universal idea that people like to help each other.

Do you think there is a sense of reciprocity within these groups?

Yes and no. Even though reciprocity is often there, I don't think that's the main reason for acting hospitably. I think the assumption of reciprocity is secondary.

In the ancient world, the established guest-friendships would last through generations and the sense of reciprocity was present even after long periods of time. Do you think there are any parallels of this in the modern world?

I think something like that does exist in the modern world. Growing up with au-pairs, my family has established links with their families, has kept contact over time, and we do things for each other. Although this is a different kind of system as the structure of the society is obviously very different than in the ancient world, there are these cross-generational ties that maybe go back to its original moment of offering hospitality. As a child, not only was I looked after by au-pairs,

but I also had an opportunity to visit their families in Yugoslavia. Although I didn't perceive this as a form of a guest-friendship, the more I think about it, the more I think it fits within the concept.

What do you think is the major factor that motivates people to provide hospitality?

I think there is a certain expectation that governments and other state institutions should take that responsibility on behalf of individuals as it's easier to organise. However, I think there are still other, perhaps smaller and more organic groups.

A JOURNEY TO XENIWHERE

Thomas Southgate

In discussing what we could put forward towards the Campus in Camps project, we were encouraged to look at our own interests, and see how they might help develop our looking into the concept of Xenia. Being an avid hiker, I was encouraged to undergo a walk as a practical part of our project, in particular, being inspired by Saleh Khannah's walk along the ancient aqueduct of Arroub in the 'Relation' edition of Campus in Camps booklets.

For Saleh, 'The experience of walking and searching for these ruins is something uncommon in our times and this is important for me. It is a way for me to build my own knowledge and learn through practice'. This demonstrates one of the issues we had to work out when planning our walk, as our goal was to build on our knowledge through practice, yet being situated in the County of Devon, the focus of our walk could not be on ruins. Ultimately, knowing that we had little experience in current migration events ourselves, we decided to reach out to local refugee support groups, and host a walk as a way of trying to offer our own hospitality, along the lines of the theme of Xenia we were studying, as well as to hear what our guests would have to say on the project.

Branscombe to Beer

We started our journey by taking the bus from Exeter to the seaside town of Branscombe. Our group numbered around 20 people, a mixture of those working on the project, University professors, and volunteers from local support groups. Having given out an initial survey on our journey to Branscombe, we arrived around midday, finding that the weather was exceptionally sunny and warm, as opposed to the cold and the rain which we had been receiving for so long. We stayed in the town of Branscombe for some time, taking the time to talk, both with each other, and with the locals of Branscombe, getting some advice of where to go once we reached our destination of Beer.

The walk to the beach was a short one, but pleasant, and having gotten to the beach, once again we stopped to appreciate the conditions of the area. I was happy to see everyone got along so well, and that our guests seemed comfortable, having brought family and friends with them. As we travelled up the coastline, we stopped by the great yellow cliffs for lunch, and made a cairn to mark our progress. The journey took us over the cliff face, up a long and winding path towards the top. During this part I had the pleasure of speaking with Dr. Suaad Genem-George on her writing, as well as on her work with local projects such as the Exeter Respect festival, and the statue of the universal Pilgrim. I was impressed with how passionate she was about her work, and before meeting her, had not realised the scale the refugee support projects within Exeter.

After some time walking along the top of the cliff, we reached our destination, the town of Beer, where we rested together for some

time, before leaving once more for Exeter. Though the walk was short, it was a great opportunity to meet new people, as well as to get people from outside of the project involved in it.



David Holland, *The Universal Pilgrim*, sculpture, Exeter, 2015

The Universal Language of Nature

As we reached the top of the cliff on our walk from Branscombe to Beer, we remarked that the stunning sight looking down from the cliff face would be something people from all around the world could relate to. To this, one of our guests remarked that nature has a universal language, an idea I would like to expand upon.

In many outdoors oriented activities, people find ways to communicate that transcend language, and allow them to help each other out when in need, regardless of background. On many walking paths, trail signs may be found, such as rectangular marks upon trees, or cairns of stone to mark paths, much like the one we made during our own walk, with the names of each participant chalked upon the stone. On the sea too, we may see this universal communication through maritime signals flags.

In terms of the relation between this, and the concept of Xenia we are looking at, one of the questions we must ask is, does Xenia still exist today? Such universal outdoors signals are not the same as Xenia, they do not offer hospitality, or even necessarily an encounter between two parties. However, there are interesting similarities. Both practices represent a form of unrecorded code of ethics towards our fellow man, as in both cases, we attempt to help our guest, suppliant, or fellow traveller, regardless of their origin or their background. Trail signs represent the need, and the desire, for us to help one another out when faced with adverse conditions, such as becoming lost on our journey.



Liminal Space

Another way to look at nature's role may be as a liminal space. Liminal space, deriving from the Latin word 'Limen', meaning threshold, is an area of great significance to the concept of Xenia. It is where we stand at a threshold between one destination and another. To the hospitable practice of Xenia, the liminal space between home and place of refuge represents the area in which there is no guest nor host, roles which no matter what their good intention, leave those involved on unequal terms.

Following our walk, we asked ourselves if we felt there was a guest and a host during the walk, and decided that there was no such role. On this journey between two places, we were all wanderers, standing on the threshold between what we considered home.

Photographs of the walk by the participants





MOVING PLACES

MODERN DIALOGUE

Tom Murrie

The quiet places in nature have always held the imaginations of people.
I often find myself moved by what could be considered lonely places,
But for me they bring home the enormity of what has gone before.
I like to think of how many others have found this very private place,
The open glade deep in a dense forest say, and have enjoyed its same
sanctuary.

Now I know I am not the first to think like this; but then that is exactly
my point.

One afternoon, quite recently this happened,
I was walking along a pebbled beach in the company of a friend of mine,
And I thought it a good opportunity to share these thoughts.
Truly it is through reasoned discussion that we can come
to better understand
our own feelings.

“Beautiful, isn’t it?” I said to my companion,
Hoping this conveyed the entirety of the sentiment I have just described.

“Beautiful. Yes indeed”, they replied, taking me by the arm.

“When you look at nature, walking along this beach,
You are sharing something with people who have lived five hundred years
ago, or more.

For the land may have changed a little in that time, but barely noticeably.
While if you think of all the people who’ve come here in that time,
And seen the same view, and yet are now gone,
Then you can connect with those people.
You can imagine how they felt when they stood in this spot,
Because you know how you feel when you stand here and look at
the same
view.

So you can begin to understand someone you had thought separate and
distant from you.”

My friend’s speech moved me to imagine my own home.
It has always held a special place in my heart,
Not just because of its beauty,
But because of the memories of family and friends.
Is this inevitable?
Will people always tend to have a stronger association with the land
in which
they grew up?
Is it possible to consider yourself to have a home without an
attachment to a
physical place?

“Do you have a home?” I asked my friend,

“No, I have no home.

In reality we never settle anywhere with enough certainty to call it ‘home’,
Everyone is always travelling.”

“Travelling where?”

“From nature back to nature.

No matter where you try to stop and plant your home,
You will end up returning to the ground and joining nature again.
Which should not be feared, this is natural.”

“But what then do you think is ‘home’ that people think of?”

“Home is where your heart is.”

“Your chest?”

“Your home.”

“But surely that is a circular argument?

How can you know where your home is if you don’t know
where your heart
is?”

“Everybody knows where theirs is.

It is in you, of course, you take it with you wherever you go.

Is it the piece of land you were born in?

Or is it the comfort you felt there?

Is it where you have lived?

Or is it where you know you have friends to make you feel safe?

Everywhere you go has the possibility to be your home

because home is the

memories you associate with a place,

Much more so than the length of time you’ve spent in the space.

It is essential for people to keep moving.

Everywhere can be your home,

And you can make anywhere someone’s home if you only welcome them
into it.”

“But what if you do not belong in that place?

How can you then welcome someone into it?”

“There is no where you don’t belong.

To deny a place to someone else is unnatural,

And certainly to deny a place to ourselves is not in our nature.”

“But what if you yourself don’t consider the place you are in to be ‘home’?

Surely you need to be settled to have something to offer
to someone looking
for a ‘home’?”

“You may think yourself a stranger to the area;

But, if I am new there too, I don’t know that –

To me I might think you as settled here as anyone else I pass
on the street.

And you always have something to offer: a smile is a form of welcome.

If I am looking for welcome,

And I pass you,

And you smile at me,

I will feel like you are accepting me into your home.

I do not need to be assured that you think of this as your home.

Then again if I then speak to you and discover that you think of
yourself as a

stranger here,

That won't lessen the power of your acceptance.

For I will remember this place as a place I was welcomed,

And as, I've already said, home is our memories of where we were
accepted."

"But what if the stranger is in need of more?

How does a person know what to offer, and who to offer it to?

Even if they have a home they are willing to share."

"There is a tradition where I come from that

You welcome any stranger who turns up at your door,

And let them stay for as long as they want.

You don't ask them any questions at first, not even their name,

It would be very shameful to ask a guest for their name when they are on
your doorstep.

No you should house them and invite them to dinner.

Then if they intend to stay after three days,

Then it is acceptable to ask them who they are and what they are doing.

But you should still give them hospitality."

"This, I think, brings us back to our beginning,

For we are following thoughts that have always held people's imagination

And they're still just as frustrating.

Ancient playwrights would send their characters to places such as this,

And have them debate the blessed relationship between host and guest;
A performance of the complexity of reality.

Hospitality without condition, akin to that which you just described,

Entertained the audiences of Homer.

So too must they have known the struggle to reconcile this 'ideal' in reality,

Amongst a community more so than among individuals.

The sentiment of hospitality has always been emotional,

But in the meeting of communities,

It becomes easier to distance ourselves from emotions that would
direct our

actions among individuals.

The antiquity of these sentiments is testimony to the timelessness,

Not of the ideal,

But of the discussion of the problem;

A familiarity of emotion from where we can reach empathy."

What does it matter if the distance is measured in miles or years?

If I can relate to someone separated from myself by centuries,

Surely I can find common ground among my neighbours?

The ideas in this dialogue come from discussions held on the 18th and 19th of February. Special thanks to Souad Ranad Fadel who joined us on our walk and whose talks with me formed the basis of this dialogue. Thanks too goes to Alexander Petkov who helped me write this dialogue.

MOVING PLACES

ANCIENT DIALOGUE

Tom Murrie

The passage which follows is a remarkable section from Cicero's *De Legibus*, likely written in the mid-first century BC. It consists of an imaginary discussion of perfect laws between himself (Marcus Tullius Cicero), his brother Quintus Tullius Cicero, and their friend Titus Pomponius Atticus as they walk through his family estate.

[I.] Atticus: As we have now had a sufficiently long walk, and you are about to begin a new part of the discussion, shall we not leave this place and go to the island in the Fibrenus (for I believe that is the name of the other river), and sit there while we finish the conversation?

Marcus: By all means; for that island is a favourite haunt of mine for meditation, writing and reading.

Atticus: Indeed I cannot get enough of this place, especially as I have come at this season of the year, and I scorn luxurious country-places, marble walks and panelled ceilings. Take those artificial streams which some of our friends call "Niles" or "Euripi" – who, after seeing what we have before us, would not laugh at them? And so, just as you, a moment ago, in your discussion of law and justice, traced everything back to

Nature, in the same way Nature is absolutely supreme in the things that men seek for the recreation and delight of the soul. Hence I used to be surprised (for I had the idea that there was nothing in this vicinity except rocks and mountains, and both your speeches and poems encouraged me in that opinion) – I was surprised, I say, that you enjoyed this place so much; now, on the other hand, I wonder that you ever prefer to go elsewhere, when you leave Rome.

Marcus: Indeed, whenever it is possible for me to be out of town for several days, especially at this time of the year, I do come to this lovely and healthful spot; it is rarely possible, however. But I suppose that the place gives me additional pleasure on account of a circumstance which cannot have the same effect on you.

Atticus: What circumstance is that?

Marcus: To tell you the truth, this is really my own fatherland, and that of my brother, for we are descended from a very ancient family of this district; here are our ancestral sacred rites and the origin of our race; here are many memorials of our forefathers. What more need I say? Yonder you see our homestead as it is now—rebuilt and extended by my father's care; for, as he was an invalid, he spent most of his life in study here. Nay, it was on this very spot, I would have you know, that I was born, while my grandfather was alive and when the homestead, according to the old custom, was small, like that of Curius in the Sabine country. For this reason a lingering attachment for the place abides in my mind and heart, and causes me perhaps to feel a greater pleasure in it; and indeed, as you

remember, that exceedingly wise man is said to have refused immortality that he might see Ithaca once more.

[II.] Atticus: I think you certainly have good reason for preferring to come here and for loving this place. Even I myself, to tell you the truth, have now become more attached to the homestead yonder and to this whole countryside from the fact that it is the place of your origin and birth; for we are affected in some mysterious way by places about which cluster memories of those whom we love and admire. Even in our beloved Athens, it is not so much the stately buildings and the exquisite works of ancient art which delight me, as the recollection of its peerless men—where they each used to live, to sit, and to carry on their discussions; and I even love to gaze upon their tombs. Therefore in the future I shall be even fonder of this spot because you were born here.

Marcus: I am glad, then, that I have shown you what I may call my cradle.

Atticus: And I am very glad to have become acquainted with it. But what did you really mean by the statement you made a while ago, that this place, by which I understand you to refer to Arpinum, is your own fatherland? Have you then two fatherlands? Or is our common fatherland the only one? Perhaps you think that the wise Cato's fatherland was not Rome but Tusculum?

Marcus: Surely I think that he and all natives of Italian towns have two fatherlands, one by nature and the other by citizenship. Cato, for example, though born in Tusculum, received citizenship in Rome, and so, as he was a Tusculan by birth and a Roman by citizenship, had one

fatherland which was the place of his birth, and another by law; just as the people of your beloved Attica, before Theseus commanded them all to leave the country and move into the city (the astu, as it is called), were at the same time citizens of their own towns and of Attica, so we consider both the place where we were born our fatherland, and also the city into which we have been adopted. But that fatherland must stand first in our affection in which the name of Republic signifies the common citizenship of all of us. For her it is our duty to die, to her to give ourselves entirely, to place on her altar, and, as it were, to dedicate to her service, all that we possess. But the fatherland which was our parent is not much less dear to us than the one which adopted us. Thus I shall never deny that my fatherland is here, though my other fatherland is greater and includes this one within it.

This section from Aeschylus' tragic play, *Suppliants*, written in the first half of the fifth century BC follows a group of women who have fled arranged marriages in Egypt, pursued by their would-be suitors. They arrive on the shore of Argos and supplicate King Pelasgus for protection. It presents a moral dilemma between protecting suppliants and protecting the citizens of the city.

*"Yes, may Right, god of suppliants,
Aiding Zeus who protects men's hearth, see no harm come from our flight!
And you, though old in wisdom, yet learn from one
Later in birth: if you respect a suppliant
You shall not be poor in life: the god's temper incline
To accepting a pure man's offerings."*

*“You are not suppliants of any hearth of mine, I tell you!
If the city be polluted as a community, let the people make it their
United concern to work out remedies. I will not myself guarantee
A promise in advance, but only after sharing these things
with all Citizens.”*

*“You are the City, and you the people’s voice,
Since you preside, you are immune from judgement,
And you govern the altar, the land’s hearth,
Through your single nod of assent;
Enthroned in your single rule you execute
Every matter – so guard yourself against pollution!”*

*“Let pollution be for my enemies;
But I cannot help you without harm!
But again, it is not sensible to dishonour these pleas of yours.
I am at a loss, and fear has hold of my mind,
Of action as well as inaction and taking a chance.*

*The judgement is not easy; do not choose me as the judge!
I said earlier, too, I would not do this,
Not even though I have the power,
So that people may never say,
Should anything not for the better happen,
‘By honouring outsiders you destroyed the city.’”*

References

Aeschylus, *Suppliants*, in Christopher Collard (trans.), Aeschylus’
Persians and Other Plays,
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BEING A HOST FOR FUN AND LACK OF PROFIT

Josh Rotchelle

The vast majority of work involved in the making of this dictionary (as well as the work leading up to it) has been focused on the “guest” half of the host-guest relationship, and when the host has been mentioned, it has almost never been in the context of the host enjoying the process of hosting. However, just because that issue has been minimally covered does not mean it does not exist! Ask anyone who invites their friends around for dinner: having people over can be fun. Even if the focus is usually on entertaining the guests, the host can often passively enjoy the experience without any explicit effort from the guest aside from just turning up and enjoying the fun, without any real gain or profit involved.

The phenomenon of the host enjoying hosting is one I’m very familiar with, on account of being a regular “host for fun” myself – I have friends around for dinner over guitars and terrible films on a regular basis. During the course of the crafting of this dictionary, in fact, I had a large portion of those participating in its creation around for dinner. This wasn’t done as any type of formal experiment (in fact, I just suggested it off-handedly at the end of one seminar), and it wasn’t intended to function as any form of research or guidance in the making of the dictionary – I just did it for fun, and that was that.

The reason I mention this is that while it is very easy to become trapped in the scholarly view of looking at guests and hosts and pouring over meanings and definitions, it’s important to just throw all that out the window for a little while and actually do some hosting sometimes. It’s more fun than it looks.

However, I would be doing a disservice to any reader of this dictionary by recommending that and then giving no pointers on how to host successfully. Having friends over isn’t (or shouldn’t be!) any particularly trying process, but there are a few things worth knowing to get it just right the next time you want to have people over. As such, here’s a few pointers...



Hosting for Dummies

This can be a slightly tricky subject to approach because there are many different kinds of hosting to consider, and different occasions may call for different considerations – for example, the hosting requirements for a formal dinner and those for watching the races over a beer or twelve are unlikely to be the same. Still, there are a few universal concerns:

- **If serving food, cover all the bases.** This is the first tip primarily because if this step is not taken carefully, you can really screw up someone's day. Serving peanut-butter-and-jam sandwiches to someone with a peanut allergy, for instance, is not a good look – make sure you're aware of anyone in your group of guests who has a food allergy, and be sure to provide something they can chow down on too. The same applies to those with dietary preferences (that is to say, don't serve steak to vegetarians).
- **Have some good music going in the background.** Conversations ebb and flow, and having a few tunes going in the background takes some of the burden of filling the room's silence off of your guests. Make sure you choose the right music for your crowd, of course – not everyone is a raving Meshuggah fan.
- **Make sure your hosting area will be clear.** Picture the scene: you've beautifully orchestrated a dinner, with several fine courses and the wine to match, and all the guests are having a lovely time, when all of a sudden there's a ring at the door. It's the plumber, who then spends the next half-hour noisily clanking around under your kitchen sink, because you forgot that you were getting your

leaky tap fixed today. Avoid this situation!

- **Let your guests know what to expect.** Depending on the scenario, they might already know – invite your friends over to watch the hockey together, and they'll probably expect sitting around on a couch, munching snacks and proclaiming the supreme incompetence of the referee without you really needing to explain all that in advance. If there's any chance of ambiguity, however, make sure you let folks know in advance, so that nobody turns up overdressed or underprepared. By the same token...
- **Let your guests know what you expect.** In many cases, you might well expect nothing at all of your guests, but if you do want them to bring or contribute something, it's a good idea to clue them in before the event. This can be as simple as appending "BYOB" to the invitation.
- **Hang back and keep an eye on things.** Unless you happen to be the evening's entertainment or something, as the host of a given event it's generally a good idea to hold back a little and keep an eye on the situation, just in case any problems arise. This can take many different forms, but as an example, don't go so overboard on the drink that you will fail to notice that Dave is about to puke all over your carpet and could really use a hand getting to the toilet. On the other hand, it could be as simple as not getting so engrossed in conversation that you don't notice the table could use a few extra crackers to go with the cheese. This is not to say you can't join in the fun at all, of course!

Keep all that in mind, and you should have no trouble being some kind of hosting maestro. Happy hosting!

AGE BARRIERS

Laura Ely

“Do you want to colour with me?”

A simple question, but a question is all that it took.
All that it took
to open a discourse
to invite an understanding
to breakdown a barrier.

An invitation extended
Absolute.
No ulterior
Nothing to offer, nothing to ask for.
Powerless to reciprocate, yet
Powerful through openness.

“I’m going to crown the cairn.”
Assertive, determined,
She took the helm
Steering the day’s journey to her delight.

“What is she doing?”

As I sketched, I sensed
She was inquisitive, intrigued, questioning.
I marvelled at her marvelling at the world around her.
So much to explore
Nothing holding her back
Without or within.

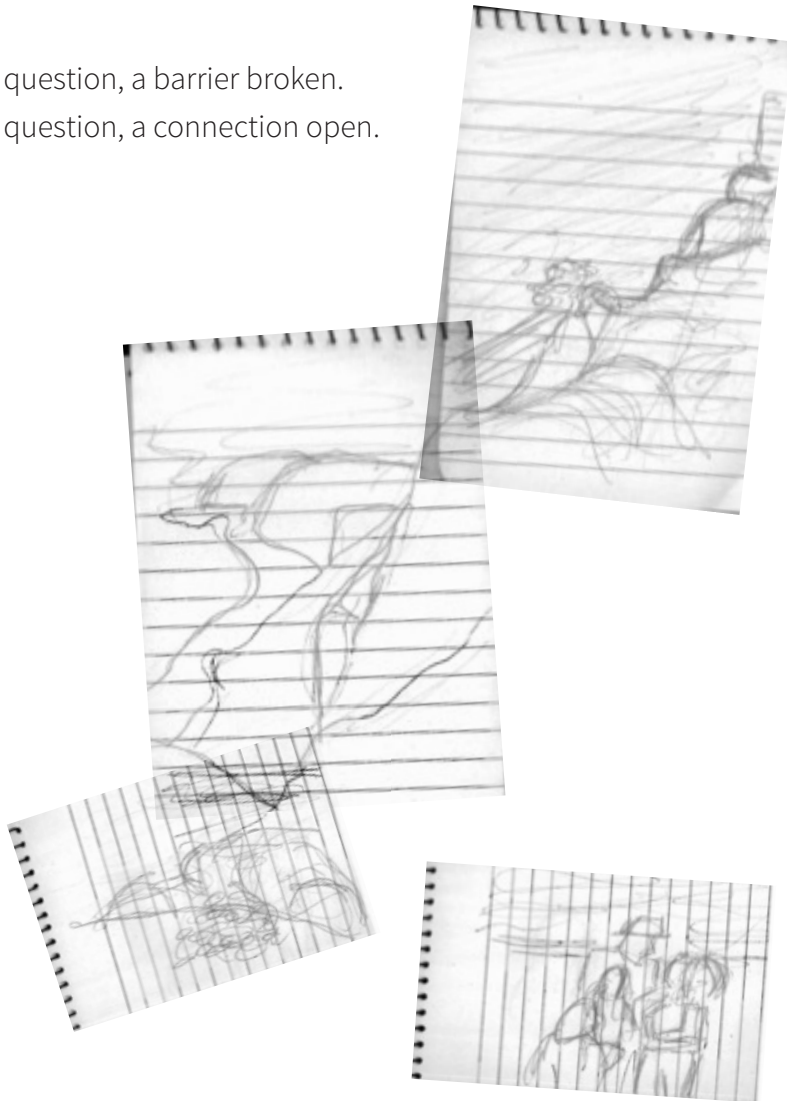
I was alarmed, amazed, astounded.
Alarmed by her candour
Amazed by her wonder
Astounded by her.

Half my age, half my inhibitions.
Half my age, twice my confidence.
Half my age, boundless assurance.

The sincerity of youth transcends time
Both real and mythical.
Perhaps there is something to be said
In Homer’s tale of Nausicaa
Welcoming a wandering hero where others would not.
At the end of his Odyssey,
Lost, weary, alone,
Thanks to a child, he returns home.

On our journey, she brought us together
With a question.
And that's all it takes.
A question.

With a question, a barrier broken.
With a question, a connection open.



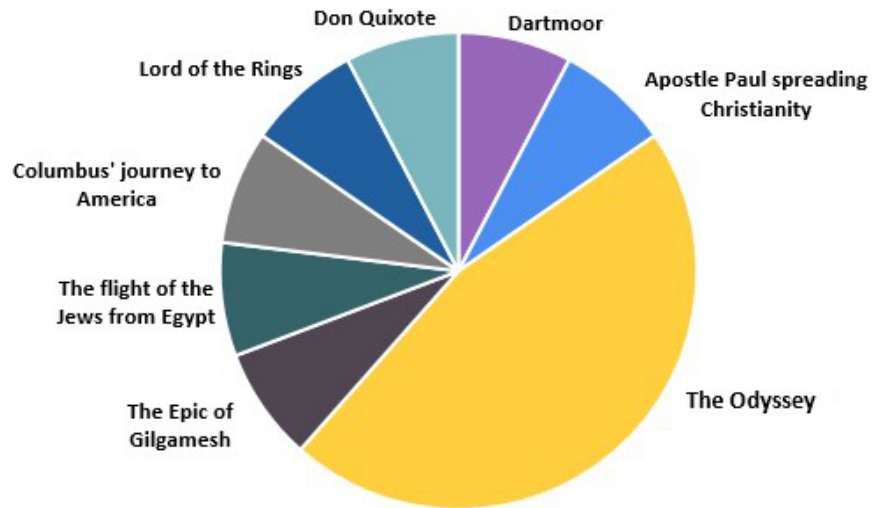
SURVEY RESULTS FROM THE WALK

Jana Axamitová

On February 18, 2017, we organised a coastal walk between Branscombe and Beer in Devon. Our aim was to explore how a shared experience of people, who have not all necessarily met before, can shape their views on some key terms we use to define xenia. The participants were asked to answer a series of questions before and after taking the journey. Their answers allowed us to compare how a shared journey through an open space, allowing a free discussion, can shape one's perception on the practice of xenia in modern society.

Most of the journey participants came to Exeter in pursuit of their work or their studies at the university, others were brought to Devon through their friends and family.

3. What is the most famous literary or historical journey you know?



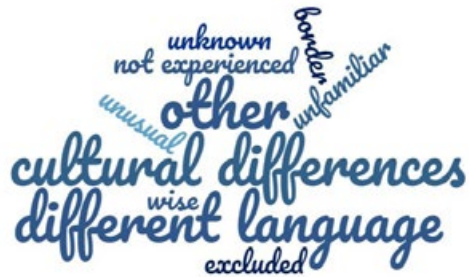
- #### 4. What does 'home' mean to you?

After the journey



5. What does 'foreign' mean to you?

Before the journey



After the journey



6. What makes a good welcome? Can you give an example of when you have been welcomed hospitably?



- 'I spent some time living with a Maori community on a Marae and was immediately treated as one of the tribe. Every time someone new came onto the Marae, we'd welcome them with a full powhiri (welcoming ceremony) whether there was one or two hundred of them.'
- 'Arriving in a Romanian town to Goulash and beer.'
- 'When I was in Jordan with my friends, I met a woman at the mosque and she invited us all to dinner (even me, a person whom she had never met). They were very friendly and kept inviting us round again even though they were refugees and had little money.'
- 'I arrived in New Zealand and was taken in by a family.'
- 'I once went to the Philippines and I was welcomed with a local dance and a drink.'
- 'In many university societies I found people to be very accepting and conscious of the fact that people did not at first know anyone.'
- 'When staying with friends in Kazakhstan, they gave up a piece of floor with blankets, cooked a special meal, invited friends, and exchanged stories.'
- 'Every time I've been offered both a communal and an intimate space.'
- 'When we ran out of water on The Duke of Edinburgh, a nearby family welcomed us into their home and gave us food and water.'

7. What does 'Xenia' mean to you?



8. Do you think people now are more or less welcoming than in ancient times? Do you think the concept of Xenia exists today?

Here, the perceptions on welcoming appear to diverge. While one group believed that people in antiquity were more welcoming towards strangers, others argued that it is impossible to assess this without having to grossly generalise. Finally, some people argued that, although in a less formal way than in the ancient times, the modern society displays greater signs of welcoming than the antiquity.

Albeit their opinions diverge on the particulars, all the survey participants believe that the ancient concept of xenia is still present in the society today. Some highlighted the informal, less codified way, in which xenia is being practiced in the modern society, some emphasised its different forms in different cultures. Overall, the survey shows that, to a greater or lesser extent, the ancient practice of xenia is still present in the twenty-first century.

THE ANCHOR

Will Knox

Last summer my family and I went sailing in Greece. My role on the boat was being in charge of dropping the anchor when approaching a bay. When we stopped moving, being attached to the land was always a great relief: you could stop worrying about the journey and relax. For me, a good welcome is where you are made to feel relaxed and are able to forget about your worries. The question of whether or not someone can feel safe and comfortable without being able to attach themselves to a fixed location with which to identify themselves, seems to be an important question at a time when mass movements of people has become an important topic in current political discourse.

The journey to Branscombe beach had been a long process of planning and discussion. By the time we had gathered a group of like-minded, hospitable individuals we set off along the country path. When we reached the beach I did not expect my first sight to be an enormous, 13,500-kilogram anchor. This anchor had belonged to MSC Napoli, which was beached on the Branscombe coast on the 18th of January 2007, having become distressed in storm Kyrill. The crew had to abandon ship and Royal Navy helicopters picked them up leaving the ship, containing many potentially hazardous substances, to be

towed. The damage to the boat was worse than initially thought and a decision was made to beach it off Branscombe. The bay's status as a protected marine reserve on the Jurassic coast of England made this a particularly controversial decision.

Much of the ship's cargo was recovered along Branscombe beach with individuals salvaging what they could from the containers. It struck me upon researching this event that the lack of personal attachment and lack of crew could have affected the way the local people of Branscombe and the surrounding villages acted. They were taking what things of value they could find such as BMW motorbikes, perfumes and car parts, rather than respecting the fact that someone somewhere owned these objects. The UK laws on salvage states that any finders of a wreck are required to declare their finds to a Receiver of Wreck, but many failed to do this. Subsequently the police had to close off the beach.

Due to the nature of our expedition, I considered the level of hospitality that the local people had shown in this situation. Many stories we have studied this term have been about people requesting hospitality, but does showing respect to another person's possessions constitute hospitality too? The story of Polyphemus is perhaps a unique question in this case because Odysseus' men start taking food and resources from Polyphemus' cave without permission. The opportunism many of the local people showed seems quite inhospitable for me because they were taking advantage of another's misfortune.

This ship had been built in South Korea, and had even been run aground before when travelling from Malaysia to Indonesia, but on that occasion it had been recovered and repaired. The final beaching on Branscombe occurred on a journey between Belgium and Portugal. I considered the parts of the world this boat had seen and its interactions with so many different ports and people. The anchor was all that remained from a ship that had been on such a long journey and experienced so many crews and people.

The anchor itself as the object the shipping company chose to donate struck me: it is the object, which connects a ship to land, the transient to the concrete, and stops a boat from moving. I considered how little the shape of the anchor has changed from the ancient times, which seems fitting with its use as reference to an unchanging reliable person in the English language. The anchor represents the MSC Napoli's permanence upon Branscombe beach long after it has been salvaged for scrap parts and its goods recovered and dispersed.

At the end of our coastal journey, in Beer, we finished at the local Public House aptly named 'The Anchor' in which we could discuss the journey we had just experienced together.



Jonathan Billinger, *Branscombe Anchor*, Branscombe, 2008 (CC BY-SA 2.0)

THE PATH TO 'XENIWHERE'

Rebecca Ford

Paths met, converged, strengthened,
Crossing the threshold of unfamiliarity,
Guest, host, unified in greetings,
Together we began.

Exploring the surroundings, welcomed as one,
A blacksmith's workshop rooted in the landscape,
Tracing footsteps through the archives of history,
A shared experience spurring our journey.

An anchor marks the sanctuary of the beach,
Having once settled travellers to foreign shores,
Now silently observes those who arrive,
Seeking the refuge of the coast.

Spirited dialogues filled our ascent,
Paths and stories weaving through the cliffs,
The shore below embraced by the sea,
Connecting us with the world beyond.

Then our paths diverged once again,
Augmented with memories and broadened perspectives,
Hospitality realised through a shared journey,
Along the path to xeniwhere.

Des chemins rencontrés, convergés, fortifiés,
ἄλλος ἄλλον ξενουμενοι,
Ospite, ospitante, uniti nei saluti,
Вместе мы начали.

viciniam explorantes, accepti una omnes,
L'atelier d'un forgeron enraciné dans le paysage,
κατα των αρχαιων ιχνων οδευοντες των προ ημων,
تُحَفِّزُ تجربة مشتركة رحلتنا

Якорь отмечает святилище пляжа,
quae olim peregrinatores ad litora haec aliena conlocavit,
maintenant observe silencieusement ceux qui arrivent,
προς την ἄκτην προσφευγοντας.

صعودنا يتكون من حوارات متحمسة
Дорожки и рассказы блуждают между скалами,
litus infra mare amplexum est,
Nous reliant au monde au-delà.

ἐνταῦθα δὲ ἀπεχωρίζοντο αὐθις ἀπ' ἀλλήλων αἱ ὁδοί,
تحسنت طرقنا بالذاكرة و منظورات واسعة
Ospitalità realizzata attraverso un viaggio condiviso,
Lungo la via per xeniwhere.

POSTCARDS OF A BETTER TIME?

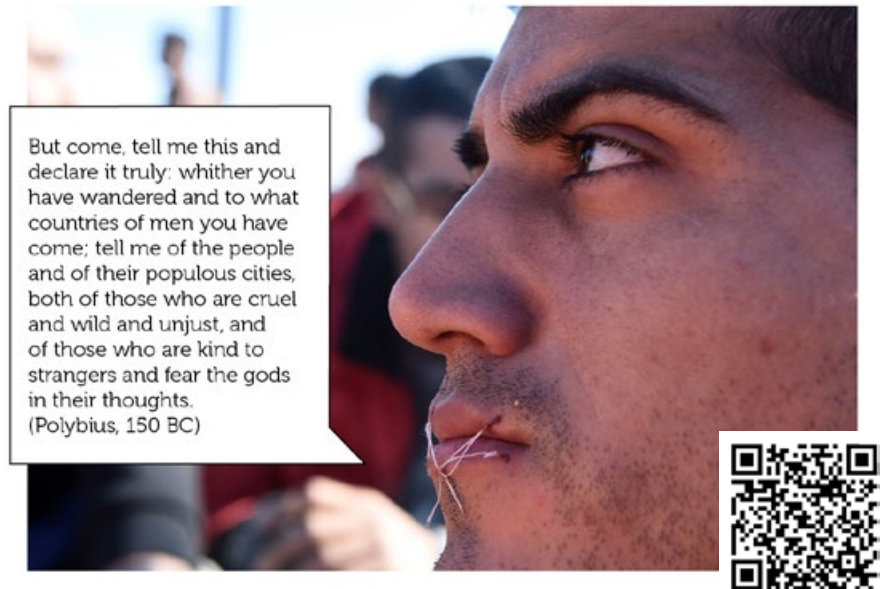
Jasper Barnes

As a reminder of the walk to all who attended, we designed and created postcards to show the apparent change in attitudes towards Xenia between the ancient world of our studies, and the modern world that we inhabit.

These we have given out, and will continue to give out in the hope of increasing awareness of Xenia, and hoping that it will make it more present in a contemporary society.

The style of these postcards was inspired by an Instagram artist named April Eileen Henry whose work can be found on the 'Texts from your existentialist' Instagram account.¹

¹ — Henry, Eileen. (@textsfromyourexistentialist), <https://www.instagram.com/textsfromyourexistentialist/>





A POST-FACTUAL WORLD: HYPOCRISY AND HOSPITALITY

David Rhimes

With an increase in the mediatisation and a surge towards more extreme politics, both left and right, the hypocrisy of western civilization becomes more evident. Altruism on a state level is coming under greater scrutiny from both sides of the political spectrum and this creates a difficult scenario for those in power to deal with. For the government, the liberal agenda of the left must be counterbalanced by the desires of an increasingly nationalistic population and attempt to both be humane yet preserving of the prevalent culture. Following on here are some of the headlines that highlight how contradictory the motions of the government versus various organisations can be. Naturally these are not necessarily the voices of the people, however, consistent lack of understanding from both sides and an increasingly militant media may be forcing people to appear more radical than they intend to be. Xenia, the ancient art of hospitality, may long have ceased however our care and compassion still lives on in parts of our own humanity.

“The EU wishes to force Switzerland to take refugees” - 20 Minute

“Migrant crisis: EU 'must accept 200,000 refugees', UN says” - BBC

“Switzerland wishes to integrate the refugees through work programs” - 20 Minute

“Swiss village chooses to pay £200,000 fine instead of accepting 10 refugees as 'they won't fit in' ” - The Telegraph

“UK sending Syrians back to countries where they were beaten and abused” - The Guardian

DISCLOSURES

Diego Segatto

The present exploration brings with it several questions formulated by the students of Ancient Journeys. I submitted the inquiry to four guides I rely on, who are involved directly, practically and daily with refugeehood and migration.

Their names are transfigured into a fictional antiquity to bridge diverse geographies, ages and points of view. The flux of shifting insights shapes a small *templum* to begin the interrogation of contemporary hospitality from within.



Giuseppe Maria Mitelli, *Sinon as a captive before the walls of Troy*, engraving, Bologna, 1663

Do you, or have you ever, witnessed a 'culture shock' when working with people who are moving into/through a new place/environment? For example, do some individuals find it difficult to experience social situations that they may not have experienced before in their home place?

Sinon, hospitality operator: We are speaking about encounters which, as an exchange, bring diversity and questions to deal with in team work and, even if they are cultural issues, have to be resolved on a technical and practical level. Many difficult situations brought me numerous questions but also funny moments, not necessarily lived with anguish... many of them regarding religious issues, above all about magic... but mainly on gender issues, on the role of women... great discussions although very difficult to tackle. The most displacing moments are when, on a personal and almost naïve level, I engage with great sympathy with someone only to discover their absurd ideas on women, ideas that for our culture are even extremely violent. In these cases I feel on the right side, but yet I have to deal with a certain sensitiveness, due to a great complexity. It won't be an hour and a half of dialectic to convince a person how to change their mind but, more importantly, it's about learning in the field to be non-judgemental: even when someone is claiming some "bestiality", or something problematic about children's education, beatings... bestialities! Never judge. Never offend. Nor will I feel offended from such exclamations as "you are not a real man" or something heavier. This is a very technical approach that preserves me from a "state of shock", it's a sort of "right distance" that is fundamental, above all if

dealing with this lasts for 8-9 hours a day. Empathy and technicality are not contradictory to me. Now I work more on a one-to-one level, but I have also an experience of welcome services with multitudes, for many hours a day. There is something you can see in all jobs called “aid relationships”, like medics or lawyers for example, which is the preservation of self-health and self-integrity in order to do it and keep on doing it. So when I speak about the “right distance” it’s not about suspending empathy. I mean empathy as that leap towards the other’s personal issues and feelings, maybe dealing with sadness, through codes that are all of yours and not necessarily welcomed... never forgetting that dealing with aid hospitality means to face *the others* more than just *one other*, from several parts of the world, different cultures and education levels. Empathy is fundamental to understand problems even when people don’t want to make you understand... fair enough, but you can still perceive “alarm bells”. The very hard thing is trying to solve these problems showing a proximity, considering also the clarity you have to keep in order to do it. It’s more or less like those latex gloves worn in first aid training: the first thing you learn is that if you don’t have them, you stand still and don’t touch the body, even if the person is seriously wounded. It’s hard, but you adapt, with experience but also through strong (I mean very strong) traumas. All the operators have this awareness. Of course it’s a goal sought after training, because nobody becomes a machine! Sadness, violence, sympathy, rudeness, joy, the one and the many... so many different cases... and you introject all of this and bring it home, to your companion, to your parents, to your friends: you have to learn, otherwise you don’t do it.

Themis, criminal Lawyer assisting migrants: Yes, it happened several times, while listening to migrant and refugee stories, when facing other cultures often completely different from mine in terms of values and perceptions. Most of the people I support come from Africa and particularly from the sub-Saharan area, where death is lived in a completely different way and this was truly displacing for me in the beginning. When asking an asylum seeker “how did your father or your mother die... because of what?” and s/he answers “I don’t know...”, well... the next question coming into my mind is “why don’t you know?”. For us it’s a basic thing to know why somebody died, even more so when that person is close: we want to know and investigate, we want doctors’ explanations, why did it happened in one way or another. I feel like in Africa dying is part of life and when it happens... it just happens, there is no need to ask too many questions: just dead, that’s it! No one will go to the doctor asking if it was a disease, which kind of disease, why it could not be diagnosed before. The second thing I would mention is related to women and sex, in particular rape. It’s perceived in a dramatic way, of course, but it’s nevertheless a very common crime, so common that when women speak about it they speak almost as if it was a banal crime, like somebody stole my wallet on the bus, definitely much less stigmatized than in Italy. For sure, women in Africa are more vulnerable and exposed to this kind of aggression than the women in western countries. It’s not easy to get at the sense of what people are feeling after they experienced the African route, then landed in Sicily, then again conducted towards Bologna... sometimes they wait some 2 years or more before being listened to by the Commission. Also because I’m a lawyer, not

a welcome operator nor a social worker who have the right tools and expertise to get such details. I have a juridical approach which is based on the person's history, on specific declarations. I've been documenting this situation myself, because one of the problems, in order to obtain the residency permit, is to be believable, but if you go into court with a strong emotive detachment, above all if you have little or no documentation that such facts happened, the judge can perceive your detachment as a lack of credibility. So, documents from UNHCR are very helpful on how to tackle such encounters... advising the courts about the possibility that these people could be silent on these arguments, maybe for cultural reasons.

Menander, international cooperation consultant: If by 'culture shock' we mean a sort of cognitive and psychological dissonance, it concerns virtually countless daily facts. It's a matter of registering these facts, decoding them and seeing what they tell us, because in dissonance it's not a matter of "right and wrong" or "true and false"... rather we move into another dimension of expectations and perceptions, digested dialogues and de-codified meanings, which are often beyond the simple verbal communication. This brings to my mind the term you have chosen, *xenia*, and its correlatives in other languages and not only in the Mediterranean cultural space, used to call the *guest*, sometimes the *host* and also the *stranger*, the *alien*, the *friend* and, in Latin, also the *enemy* (if we accept that *hospes* is related to *hostis*). It refers to a basic information problem which is "I don't know the person who is coming": who are your parents, who is your grandfather, from which village are you coming, and so forth. So according

to me the welcoming rituals are an elaborate and historically robust informal institutional solution to a process of understanding under the constraint of a security predicament, because you could be a potential enemy. So we should avoid a literal reading of classical sources as "wow... once upon a time people were so welcoming, traditional cultures were so open!" toward the refugee and the foreigner, while we are so mean, so selfish.

Another example is how hospitality is organized in traditional houses in Afghanistan, in the countryside. Welcoming is a very important thing that involves even the honour of the family. Most family compounds in the rural areas are shaped like rectangles, with boundary walls like a small fortress, responding to the lack of general security, and they have a guestroom strategically placed near the main gate. So the stranger is welcomed as a guest within the family compound, but confined in the guestroom, never in contact with the most private area, especially where the women are. The host will welcome the guest, entertain him and treat him with the best food and accommodation he can afford. Normally it is the task of the younger boys in the household to assist the guest while also, crucially, carrying out an important information-gathering task, like "how this person behaves", "is s/he polite"... I even read some ethnographic accounts of foreign travellers who could not walk around, even outside the compound, if not chaperoned all the time by their young hosts. This highlights the ambivalence of hospitality, where the initial extension of trust is sacralised and ritualised, but combined with forms of control, information gathering looking for further signals of trustworthiness. You can realise this also in the connection between the semantic and the

practical side of the word hospitality. There are many examples in literature or history where a whole party of guests is slaughtered by the hosts, and vice versa during a feast. Hosting of the foreigner implies this kind of lingering security predicament, and perhaps that is one of the reasons why s/he is put under the protection of the gods.

Antigone, policy advisor on asylum migration: I can't deal with a negative or strong definition of 'culture shock', but many times migrants changed my perspective. For many years I worked with cultural mediators, particularly in the health sector, before that I also taught Italian to foreigners. I'll tell you about an episode that I use a lot, even when I lecture about these past activities to health operators. These people are professionals encountering many relational difficulties with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, inside a severely malfunctioning system. One thing in particular that sends the women operators haywire, is the alleged submission of the Muslim woman to man. Some Pakistani boys came with their sister to the Italian school for migrants which I was coordinating, to register her, on the condition that the teacher was a woman, and that during the class there were to be no men. This led to a very difficult negotiation. When they left I immediately thought "Poor her! What a stressful male presence she has around! That's suffocating and controlling!". Then she became our student so we became familiar, also due to my habit of finishing work late at night and going back home alone, by bike in the dark. Some months later she revealed to me that initially she thought about me "Poor her! Such an unlucky woman without any brother, father or husband picking her up nor taking care of her!". This was a

very healthy overturning, above all of the militant feminist logic... the reason I was feeling sorry for her was in fact an asset to her, while the thing I was feeling proud about my autonomy, for her was a condition of solitude, sadness and isolation. We had many laughs together about this! This made me reflect very much. But on a daily basis, while differences emerge from any gesture, I wouldn't speak about destabilising shocks, even encountering those peculiar beliefs of the people coming from Sub-Saharan and Western Africa.

As an individual, which do you think would be easier to work with: a large crowd of many hundreds/thousands of people who are willing to work alongside you, OR just one individual who, however, is stubborn and unwilling to adapt to new situations when they should?

Sinon: I don't think we are talking about two problems at all, it's very objective. I challenge this question in the way it relates to numbers: it's not something impossible to manage, even more if related to the number of inhabitants in Italy or Europe. In all the world there are more or less 65 million refugees for political, humanitarian or environmental reasons. Maybe we can negotiate a little bit on how many were forced to leave... I consider also those who want a different life, but let's stay close to the hardest push factors that are (still) present inside the Geneva Convention about asylum seeking. Lebanon has 4 million inhabitants with 1 million refugees, a flux of 180 thousand people that cross the Mediterranean not mentioning

the Eastern route... it's not that huge a flux considering the 500 million people living in Europe population or the almost 70 million in Italy. Thinking about the world described by the Ancient Journeys class... hospitality reminds me of an odd comparison with the practices of today: have a meal, a cover, let's make a medical check and then we see if you can stay or not.

Themis: I do prefer working with many people ready to... allow me, to "integrate" themselves, to follow the steps, to respect the procedures, like to fill in the papers, to wait in a welcoming centre, to submit the request for asylum, to follow some Italian classes... all this simplifies my work a lot and it's much more useful to them. Of course not all the people are like this and it's right that differences emerge: somebody has, for example, a stronger personality and disengages from the welcome-circuit... there are many, in truth. With Italian people of course the job is much simpler because of a common language, while with refugees and migrants the first obstacle to manage is exactly language, despite the mediators. Consider that when refugees arrive here they are exhausted and with little patience to understand why they have to face so many other difficulties. So in sum, working with a group of people pursuing the same goal, which is regularization through all these steps, is preferable. In fact most of my time is spent with refugees! Some days ago I spent 4 hours just making people understand what a *judicial hearing* means, how to behave in front of the judge, to remove the hat, to say "good morning", to say good-bye when leaving... I never do this with an Italian, there is no need. It happens that I'm much more patient with asylum seekers,

it's an impulsive factor, patience is much more needed here. Imagine: some of them even greet you by saying "god bless you!" and it's not the best thing when the judge is an atheist (*laughs*).

Menander: If we are talking about establishing a human relationship I can only think working with another individual. A crowd implies a massive coordination problem, unless institutional and organizational procedures have been previously initiated. On an individual level each person is a universe unto her/himself, "stubbornness" included. Of course, on a matter of scale, if we follow the sweeping generalisations of many media narratives, we are also forced to see everything as dark and difficult. But if we focus on individuals, although keeping them somehow at arms length, and activate some empathy-building devices it's a different scenario. I remember when last year the mainstream media was quite favourable in spreading a positive image of refugees coming from Syria, highlighting how many of them were doctors, dentists, electricians, teachers, craftsmen, etc, the message was "these people had difficulties, they were forced to move, but they are very much like you!". Furthermore, if you move onto a personal level, it's random because you are dealing with another individual and her/his idiosyncrasy, things become quite unpredictable. Well we have to remember that we don't "have" to become friends with everyone, it could be wrong to make it a sort of moral demand: beyond tolerance we could and perhaps should pursue a level of civility. Then there are institutional requirements that demand understanding and adaptations that the people on the move are much better at getting

and in assimilating rather than cultural critics, columnists or opinion-leaders. Even if it's not something we can generalise about: are we talking about dress-codes or law? Although unfortunately more and more dimensions of everyday life are being legally codified leaving little space for adaptation. In the end, direct dialogue is the only way of engagement I can see. But how to cope with "scale"? It's a short sighted attitude not recognizing the difference between a few and a multitude. If we accept the best way is direct engagement, dialogue, etc... it requires a lot of time and resources, not so effective if in the short term you have to face the arrival of a million of people in a few months in a relatively small place. The issues of "scale" should not be underestimated and I'm afraid that sometimes, above all in the refugees' freedom of movement camp, it's completely ignored. In Belgium for example there are 10 million inhabitants and it makes a difference if 1.000 or 50.000 or 500 000 refugees arrive. There is a point when you reach a limit in the carrying capacity because it's not just a matter of will but of resources too, not only financial but human, social workers for example. Some colleagues of mine successfully practiced in the social housing estates of Wien with a structured pattern of communication using direct dialogue, but it took time and resources to set up, in a particular environment.

Antigone: Absolutely the first one! Which is also the most frequent situation I find myself in, a very NGO-style way to work – you need to be adaptable. Rigidity is not an option... beyond the very specific context which you are inhabiting, I would say. More so if you are working on migration and asylum, which means to work with

continuous fluxes of change by any standards. You know the constant in the history of humankind is that people, nationalities, methods of arrival, admission modalities, laws and above all... praxes, change. In the Italian context we work with the Ministry of the Interior, so with police headquarters and prefectures: none of these behave in a similar way! Adaptation and a lot of irony are fundamental. Of course working with a multitude can be tiresome due to fragmenting and dispersing efforts... maybe working with small groups, in a situation of permanent crisis and evolution, due to the way I am, would make it easier to work. But if this means stubbornness or lack of adaptation... no way! This happens to my colleagues, to those working on participation on a local or national level. A very tiresome endeavour because people show up en masse, languages are different, even when the goal is the same the ways to achieve it differ. It's not easy to find a synthesis.

Do you think that such a crisis as we have occurring today would be easier to deal with in the past, hundreds or even thousands of years ago (there are less useful technologies but perhaps more flexible border controls and less fixed legal issues), OR is it easier to cope with it today (better technologies and resources but fixed laws regarding mobility that can make things tricky)?

Sinon: From which point of view? The controller or the citizen? It's really a wide question as it proposes a big jump by comparing between a system of rituals and praxes, more or less cultural

and less technological, and the world of today. In the middle we experience the rise of several novelties, conceptual and practical, above all the National States and the borders. With borders, in the way they developed into a control grid and not just a wall, I mean a set of mechanisms (truly mechanic I would say) that, in reality, don't succeed in their gigantic effort to contain, control, register. A bureaucracy (also made of weapons, jails...) constantly in pursuit: the flux of people, but above all the individuals, challenge these apparatuses in a very strong way and, paradoxically, from a position of strength in the sense that this machine is always pursuing, always behind. Sometimes I see people at the border and they have a strength expressed in many ways that the machines can't get at all. On the other hand, I confess I'm quite sceptical about "welcoming the stranger" from the point of view of a community, as I perceived, experienced or seen in the town where I grew up, a small place among the mountains. You can be very attentive and responsive to her/his needs, but it's still about welcoming the "stranger" until s/he stays a "stranger". But what happens if this person wants to stay? Maybe not in your house of course, but in town, or close... because she/he fell in love with someone, or just because the environment is nice and affordable. So I find this kind of hospitality quite ambiguous and I don't think it's the right way to welcome because it's unable to capture the strength of somebody's escape and its consequences. Of course the *others* are "strangers" in the sense they are not from the place, different for several aspects, but can't we say the same for genetic pools? There are so many differences... I can claim I'm more akin to an African rather than my neighbour! Who is not different

from one another? Quite a few of these people leave their countries with the idea to see how Europe is and consider the idea of going back. In most cases they are escaping and, for several reasons, they want to stay here. So back to this problematic word, "stranger"... I wonder if in the ancient world there was a similar nuance: the arrival of people that want to live with us! Maybe they want to be hosted, why not, with very primary needs, drink, eat, a roof and... work. The majority wants to work not for the sake of it, but in order to earn some money, even if some people I met come from places where there is still a dignity derived from work (which I don't believe in...) recalling a dimension we also experienced along time ago: the factory, the pride... the absence or work sometimes cause even neurosis and pathologies. Not good at all, but indeed reversing the prejudice of people unwilling to work! The problem is there are no jobs and what I see sometimes is of big sadness, as these people are deprived of identity, beyond a very practical problem which is bringing home money, in the country of origin. To me, it's very ugly to see this, because we are talking about "sad passions" but also because it refers to an immense problem in our societies, much beyond "safety" and "threat"... it's about equality, dignity and recognition. Moreover... how can we deal with the criminalisation of aid? Beyond the absurdity it causes also a lot of traumas because it's not nice being un-able to offer a meal, added to the bigger trauma suffered by those in need.

Themis: In the first stance, I disagree with the actual European and Italian law: it's absurd that during a war it's impossible to create a

humanitarian corridor, to issue a visa for humanitarian reasons! It seems to me a war crime... like what is happening with Syria. Since the “humanitarian visa” doesn’t exist, you can only ask for a visa for work, study, to join a family member or tourism. Well... work is even difficult for Italians, for studies it’s very rare, for the family it is an articulate process... what remains is only tourism and with many requirements: income, insurance, bills, bank guarantees... how can anyone have all of this, in such a desperate situation? So, beyond asylum seeking, legal efforts have to be made if people are bombed, or being less rigid in issuing tourism visas. It’s surely a shortcut but we have to allow people to escape from warzones! I know I’m quite radical, but entrance should never be controlled, anybody should be allowed to move freely. It’s possible, with no chaos. We have to consider also the places where there are no wars but maybe a war has just finished, or an unstable situation is undermining peoples’ survival. Even the so called “economic migrants”: among all these people arriving in Italy, some of them scale the long path to citizenship... just a few stay in Italy! The majority want to become Italian citizen to go away and some of them to go back to their country... maybe because there they succeed in building some savings, build their house and there it is more possible and more sustainable to live their life, and after all, to support their country’s development. They don’t like to move away from their countries, from the place they are born in and grew up in... but for need! If there were no regulations as such, illegal migrants, visas... there would be less problems for all. Tell me, why can I easily move to any African country and they cannot do the same to come here?

Still it’s hard for me to think about the past times... I can just think about invasions or colonizations... but in general it could be different now... think: if I had a problem, to move to another place or country and try to make a living, sharing what I am and negotiating with the inhabitants. Too simple? Well, all the borders, technology and protocols did not solve the problem: all devices that complicated and worsened people’s lives. People keep on arriving and dying during the crossing, while terrorism is spreading and striking also in the heart of Europe. Doesn’t sound to me like a solution!

Menander: To confront with the past we would need an expert historian with good data, and the further you go into the past the more difficult it is to have good data. From my anecdotal sense the sheer scale of people’s movements we are facing today are quite unprecedented in the history of mankind. Perhaps they compare with the *wolkswanderungen* at the end of the Roman Empire but it’s really difficult to make comparisons across so many centuries. It makes perhaps more sense to compare our current “globalisation” with the previous era of relatively open markets and freedom of movement of goods, capital and labour at the end of the 19th century up until the beginning of the First World War. In that period 3 millions of Italians migrated to Argentina, of which 1 million and a half went back. It’s a huge number overall but we are talking about a process that lasted something like 50 years. The same is true for emigration to the U.S.A. until the First World War. The number of legal migrants to the US in recent years, if I remember it correctly, has even surpassed the total annual arrivals – around and above one million people per year, but

we should check these figures – at the height of the “first globalisation” Or again, concerning borders’ history, are we comparing with a feudal Europe, with monarchies, or with Nation States? Let’s admit there were no borders: travelling was much more expensive, difficult, insecure... in terms of money and hardship. It should be an analysis made with a humble spirit from both sides, the historical and the contemporary. Paradoxically travelling has never been so cheap and easy as today on the global scale, but still many thousands die while trying to cross the Mediterranean. Let’s take the Syrian case, which until 5 years ago was beyond our mental map: just a fraction of the population is moving towards Europe, while half of the pre-war population remained inside Syria, often internally displaced, or in nearby countries like Lebanon or Jordan or Turkey. If I can draw a parallel with the Afghan war and refugee crisis since the ‘80s there is probably the same pattern: the richer a family, the further would they be able to go. “Rich” not only in a financial sense but considering a broad set of assets like education, connections, friends or relatives already living in other countries. So by and large the poorer Afghans barely managed to scamper beyond the border and stayed in refugee camps in Pakistan, while the richer ones resettled to Australia, Germany, The Netherlands or United States. If the same is going on also in Syria then from the European perspective we are just seeing a small part of what is going on and perhaps the poorest and most vulnerable refugees are still in refugee camps in or around Syria. It is a good reason to calm down and consider with reflection, about what we can do without being disappointed too much about ourselves. And also ask some uneasy questions about how to use scarce resources: would it better to assist 10 thousand

refugees in a camp in Jordan, say, or with the same amount of resources, one thousand refugees in Italy or Germany? It’s not easy! Now, the borders have never been so open and so closed at the same time. Some historical borders have disappeared and others are as hard as fortresses¹. Combining the relative openness of borders and the transport infrastructure on the global scale, perhaps it has never been so easy to move around the planet for such large numbers of people in history. But not for all.

For war refugees one wonders why is it not possible for them to apply for asylum or humanitarian protection before reaching EU soil and risking their lives in the process. Sometimes this is done quietly without much fanfare (although we are talking about small numbers). The case of a Syrian family who applied in the Belgian embassy in Lebanon and was denied humanitarian protection recently arrived all the way to the European Court of Justice that eventually upheld the denial saying that providing humanitarian visas was an option that member states could resort to but not an obligation. Then remote protocols are more open to corruption, like the Italian consul in Erbil who was arrested for accepting bribes to provide visas.

Antigone: This is a gigantic issue. First of all we should refer to a “humanitarian crisis” on a global level and try to approach it in a technical way. Yes, movements and displacement of people recall a crisis and what will make the system collapse, if it’s not collapsing already, due to the rigidity of borders. I can’t talk about the past, where

1 — http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Reports/EUR_050012014__Fortress_Europe_complete_web_EN.pdf

surely the technological component was not so sophisticated and the grids were softer, although not necessarily better in reality. On the one hand we have movements of people that won't stop, on the other hand we have borders that can be impenetrable or permeable according to the political opportunity of the moment. Take the Italian case, despite the complex apparatuses deployed by actors such as Frontex, when movement of people is allowed people pass: from Sicily moving forward to the peninsula (now with more difficulties, but the situation will change again), from Como, from Ventimiglia... despite the physical possibility to block them, there is a margin which is political. What I'm truly scared of, regarding the European Union, is the inappropriateness of the response: there is no such a thing as a "number crisis", we are perfectly able to manage these numbers, I always get very annoyed about this. Those in crisis are those arriving, who are furthermore put into a deeper crisis by our political incapacity, in a continent of about 505 million people. I'm really afraid that what is at stake are not the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), like the Dublin agreement, but Schengen, which is the basis of European identity. The free movement of people was argued about much earlier than the Arab Spring or than the appearance of these changes. The European context is becoming panic-stricken, not farsighted at all, addressed to the electorate belly, a herald of the problems that are to come. The issue of border control is a serious one: some of the technologies are funded by the Official Development Assistance (ODA), arguably a serious ethical problem, these technologies are not the ones deciding how to open or close borders, but rather political opportunities. Look at the departures from Egypt to Italy, shifting in

accordance with the tense diplomatic relations connected to the Regeni case². Or look at the agreement with Libya ratified to radically decrease peoples' departures, instead however even more people are arriving. Then, the technological control of bodies is a very significant issue but, in reality, to "check on bodies" European institutions did not hesitate to use much more primitive means, like paying the Janjaweed troops³ (internationally recognized as war criminals) to prevent people crossing the Sudan border. So what are we talking about? Paradoxically, while human mobility increases and the political response is unable to cope with this challenge, we are going towards nineteenth-century behaviour, a sort of Nation-State approach that will not withstand the reality check. Let's not hide: the new Africa Fund⁴ of Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Trust Fund launched at La Valletta⁵ in November 2015 is the way Europe is trying to move outside its borders, the body check, practically washing its hands of what will happen next. We all know the 6 billion euros promised to Erdogan, partially already paid, has been used to build detention centres at the Syrian border from where, as Amnesty International testifies⁶, people are sent back to Syria.

2 — <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/25/giulio-regeni-death-italy-egypt-libya-cambridge-student>

3 — <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/features/darfur/fiveyearson/report4.html>

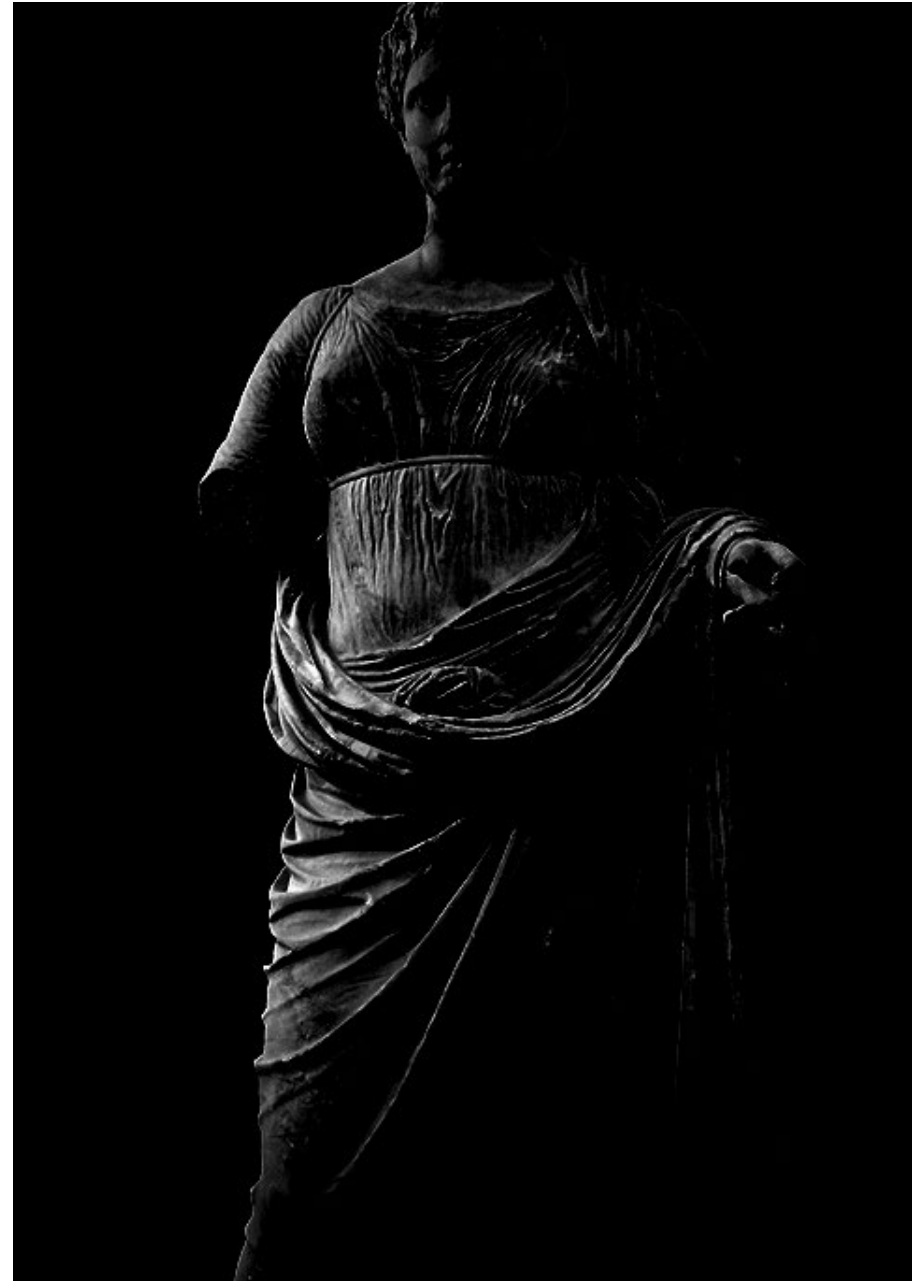
4 — http://www.esteri.it/mae/en/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/2017/02/cooperazione-il-decreto-fondo-per.html

5 — http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/africa/eu-emergency-trust-fund-africa_en

6 — <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2016/04/turkey-illegal-mass-returns-of-syrian-refugees-expose-fatal-flaws-in-eu-turkey-deal/>

How can people encourage their governments to improve the help for refugees?

Sinon: There is no end to improvement. Again, in reality we are not speaking about such big numbers, nevertheless for a country like Italy for example, that never experienced until recently such an important phenomenon and problem, we see something changing in the cities. To claim it's a demographic change is an exaggeration but it's possible to experience differences. An example. Among several friends working in hospitality, but also among those who don't, there is a new knowledge under development: about things nobody had an idea before. For example "what does it mean *bambara*?"... "oh yes! It's the most used term in Mali!". And this is quickly becoming common knowledge, as we all learned what *punk* and *rock and roll* are. Second point: these people are in reality feeding us. I have a permanent contract and many friends of mine found a job as well in the field of hospitality; I honestly doubt we could have found such a stable and, in some ways, even beautiful jobs without the phenomenon we are talking about. In my opinion national labour organisations haven't yet valued how much Italy has gained so far in terms of employment. Consequently... consumption: all these people have a life, they go home, they go to the bar, have leisure time and so on. But, above all, I value the new common knowledge that has been forming, many little things like "which language they speak over there?", "how are Senegalese people compared to Nigerians?"... let's be honest: before we had no idea what Africa was and now there are people, mostly young people, who are more experienced or, even



Chairestratos, *Themis*, sculpture, Rhamnous, c. 300 BC.

better, come from there. Or what Islam is in extent, while before we heard just brutal opinions. Middle-East and Africa definitely entered our daily chats and vocabulary. We have, consequently, a double form of enrichment.

So we are talking about a political issue, beyond pietas or ideology, towards a sensitization and a wealth that are growing. But something has to be done on a political level. Welcoming is political and will be more and more political in the future. The European Commission level is very complex and distant, so to improve policies sometimes could mean to erase them. How? There are elections, talking about it, to write about it, to protest and so on... this enrichment can be claimed and so policies can be changed or improved with *joy*, and I use *joy* in the most explicit sense, which is on a political level.

Themis: If there were any politicians able to tackle the issue, without following consent! Migrants are largely exploited for electoral purposes... think about Lega Nord or Le Pen. When people build barricades to prevent refugees from arriving there it's a big problem related to ignorance, but I look to the long term: new generations are growing, they are multicultural and used to experiencing differences from the start. So I think the first thing is stop following political leaders that use explicitly provocative rhetoric and even demand the punishment of those speeches inciting discriminating habits. I mean to do it with sanctions, if necessary, both on a political level by being removed from political positions and on a penal level, as I see some behaviours as incitements to hatred between the social classes and racism. There should be less tolerance for things like

these. What can we do now concretely? Do our best in our small way, by showing other sides to reality, sensitise people on specific issues, exchange views with our neighbours, maybe without confrontations. Or subscribe to an association, or write, like open letters to newspapers... in any case it's important to manifest our resentment toward such behaviours, because if we leave our astonishment all the time only on the inside, within the four walls of our houses, it's like replaying the song to ourselves.

Menander: First of all the public sphere should be detoxed from all the rumours we are experiencing. There is a vicious agenda behind the demagogic right-wing discourse, beyond the difficulties we have been speaking of so far. But moralising and lecturing doesn't help much here, especially when those doing the lecturing and moralising about welcoming the refugees are perceived by their target audience as highly educated and well-off professionals with comprehensive private health insurances and whose children go to public schools that do not shoulder their fair share of the burden. When I was doing social work in the 1990s when Roma refugees from the former Yugoslavia arrived in Bologna there was a resettlement plan coordinated by government officials (we're talking about 250 people in an urban area of 500 thousand). During heated public information meetings the local residents of the areas where the shelters were going to be opened expressed a variety of point of views, from open, blank racist hostility to more general worries about the unknown, but the recurring criticism was that not a single shelter was going to be opened in the better off neighbourhoods of the city. If you

build shelters just in a lower-class area, you are reinforcing zoning or ghettos: this is very clever just from the point of view of elite control... people will focus on conflicts related to beliefs, religion or cultural differences rather than building class solidarities.

Antigone: Who are the “people”? The few who know what’s going on are those operating in the field, who are obliged to study the dossiers? Or those who for political or individual sensibilities, hide when something is going wrong. So the first step is to widen the audience and change the narrative of the *stranger*, an aspect that is still admittedly on the level of the “Athens and Sparta age” and the easiest leverage with which to manipulate the electorate. We have become delirious... in complete chaos fed by numerous media, intentionally or stupidly, even by respectable newspapers like La Repubblica or La Stampa, not just extreme right-wing sheets. Going back to the “audience”, the question is are the “people” a significant, critical mass or the same handful of people from NGOs and those few who are politicised. Then we should clarify the rhetoric that states “let’s help them in their countries!”: Italy for example is among the last countries in aid policies for public development, meaning that our country is not respecting a series of obligations by withholding money that should be directed to such a task; what’s more – according to OSCE, countries in northern Europe are using the constrained funds for aid development for in-donor costs⁷ (Italy, Sweden, Netherlands to name a few...). Regulations on this matter

7 — <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/apr/13/aid-budgets-hosting-refugees-oecd-figures>

are not so harsh, but this is clearly a dishonest trend that has grown over the years, deviating resources from the public aid development funds. To tell you the truth the first impact of these funds, when used properly for on-site education, infrastructures, services, have many times the opposite effect by increasing the migratory flows, since no aid policy can overturn so quickly the status-quo: for example, transforming Nigeria into Netherlands, so in the mid-term we witness more and more people choosing to move away. While the real, true desperate people, or those who just feel good don’t move at all, there is an intermediate range of people with a new better income looking for new perspectives elsewhere. Not to mention western post-colonial heritage, alive and kicking through white-washing procedures: our countries still want to exploit African or Middle-East resources, and in so doing support governments which are far from being democratic, dressed up as humanitarian or development agreements like the Khartoum process⁸... or the recent agreement between Italy and Sudan while the President of Sudan has two warrants from the International Criminal Court! The aid funds are used to patch huge wounds and what disgusts me even more is the explicit, direct intention emerging from the papers: “I give you the money if you keep the migrants. And if you don’t keep the migrants I don’t only withhold the money but I fine you!”. A vulgarity that beforehand was diplomatically hidden, now it is shamelessly exposed.

8 — <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/analysis-fears-development-may-be-used-bargaining-tool-after-eu-migration-summit-1513078836>



Roman copy of the Imperial era after a Greek original, *Bust of Menander*, sculpture, Rome, c. 300 BC.

So maybe there are two very simple and clear ideas that we could ask people to address their governments. One is the inescapability of the present, for there is no way to stop this phenomenon, despite any new wall, so we should calm down and maintain a practical attitude, trying to manage it instead of being subjected. The second is the disastrous demographic ageing that is going to affect our welfare system: with the increasing number of non-productive people, tax payers will decrease reducing also the possibility to fund (and on the contrary, taking) for example, public education, public health system or retirement benefits. We can be saved only by migrants in the end, so let's stop considering them as just poor victims, recipients for volunteering, or usurpers and let's start looking at them as resources. These are sensitive arguments: even considering South of Italy, for example, it seems that unemployment is specifically defined by certain sectors where there are empty work places still to be filled. Job creation, sustainability, welfare, new families are enormous issues, but this is the reality and data can just confirm and we can only end full circle into widening the audience.

There is a great deal of fear surrounding movements of large groups of people, so what can we do to inform society about the situation and alleviate this suspicion?

Sinon: Fear is an important and legitimate issue, because it can be experienced but also used and manipulated. My suggestion could be something like: “are you afraid? Come with me, I will show you what reality is”. So we have a duty which is to accompany people in their understanding and knowledge. When fear is manipulated it unleashes many reactions, like violence. Again, a very political issue where peculiar territories can soften the level of fear. Bologna has its historical newspaper that plays on fear, unleashing a lot of anxieties. I like to imagine many parades in the city to confront this trend.

Themis: An extraordinary power relies on communication: good journalism using precise information and data, avoiding the use of inflaming titles to grab the attention would be a good start. This is valuable also for any other media, even if it's a method which is hard to control. Also, in this case it would not be wrong to sanction the foolishness that is, many times, delivered by various media: what about engaging the Association of journalists to de-qualify, sanction or suspend those journalist, editors or directors intentionally spreading manipulative information? A good practice is represented by the Progrè⁹ association, devoted to debunking false myths on migrants: it's a model of loyal information with precise data, because

9 — <http://www.progre.eu/>

someone can spread very bad information even using such data, isn't that so? It's manipulation and disloyalty to claim an invasion if, for example, 1000 migrants landed in Lampedusa, while in the previous years the figures were the same but nobody was interested. It would be more correct to state that “the trend hasn't changed, also this year 1000 migrants arrived...”, just as an example of course.

Menander: As I said, we are talking about something unprecedented... some research has been developed in the U.S. by Robert Putnam, which says something like let's be careful... if we accept a model of high mobility and high diversity (for a moment out of the bigger issue of forced displacements) also on a local level, with a continuous shake-up, it could work even over a long term, but they observed how people may lose the ability to build relations, to trust and cooperate, arguing that if people have more cultural differences they trust less, they cooperate less. He uses the expression: “people hunker down”. Of course the U.S. context is different, and the legacy of slavery and the broader racial issue may have an impact that is not present in Europe (yet). Nevertheless the continuous shake-up of the social fabric, due to economic reasons for example, can cause a problem in the quality of cooperation among individuals which is serious. The problem becomes very serious when we start to combine high ethnic diversity with high income inequality. But, again, it's an issue related to the unprecedented “scale” of the phenomenon that we should at least acknowledge in order to face it pragmatically, without any ready-made solutions in the pocket. On the contrary, in the highly toxic political and media environment we

are immersed, if we go for a competition for who shouts louder, the “voice of reason” tends to be overwhelmed. But for this reason to work it has to become embodied in a political project, with a strong redistributive component, moralising alone does not help, it’s even counterproductive.

There are broader questions about the consequences of migration in general. In this sense Paul Collier wrote a courageous book for a liberal economist, asking troubling questions. For example what are the economic and political consequences of migration on the sending societies. If we accept that economic migrations are always somehow “forced” by dysfunctional systems (lack of jobs and opportunities, rentier economies, corruption etc.), does the migration of the young, talented, energetic and often better educated than the average, have any impact on changing this system? I have a hunch for example that there might be some connection between the Tunisian revolution in 2011 and the fact that migrations from North Africa to Europe had become more difficult in the previous decade, with the coming into force of bilateral re-admission treaties. But this is an open question. And again difficult for whom? Is it easier to migrate for those with more resources?

Antigone: Maybe playing a game, with the neighbours, with the family... I did in my surroundings, with allegedly well informed people by asking “which country in the world has the biggest number of refugees? And the European one?” and the biggest absurdities came out. In my brief experience as researcher I learned that “data matters”, in order to enable people in understanding for

real: beyond one’s perception, numbers tell another story and as a matter of fact we are not surrounded by moving masses! Sure, if you get stuck in front of the TV looking at landings in Augusta, Palermo, Pozzallo, the very powerful images of the Balkan route with all these people walking through the fields you think “the world is coming to us!”: it’s not like this, and it’s very difficult to communicate in an efficient way. We should start at school, and make the children understand how to properly use real data, to re-set our perceptions... maybe the Lebanese are right in panicking as one in four people there is a refugee, but not us as we don’t have in Italy 25 millions refugees! Another good thing to do would be to start from people’s stories, as there are several reasons people are escaping, not necessarily all due to devastation by wars but nevertheless very hardships like poverty, land-grabbing, desertification, climate change... very complicated stories that, if told with good narratives, could explain the reasons of so many departures, avoiding the mistake of connecting everything to conflicts. Conflicts are easy to understand, the rest much less so, and this is true for the majority of the fugitives. I’m not so optimistic that this information will have a massive effect but at least it could widen the audience we were talking about, even just to push away the demented dichotomy between refugee, asylum seeker and economic migrant. These are distinctions Europe created to discriminate the legal entrants for work reasons, so those who come have no other way but to apply for asylum, creating mass confusion, and devaluing the concept of asylum. But these people are just the subjects of a distortion we only created as part of the false myths, like the stranger coming to steal

jobs, land and women... a myth of the Middle-Ages, we are not going to be set free, but at least to work a little bit.

Are there any ancient examples of a mass exodus in the way we have now, which you can immediately think of, with a similar view of integration and perhaps a similar drive? Or has our society forced out a new type of refugee?

Sinon: For sure there are new kinds of exodus, because they face all the novelties the ancient world didn't experience. Probably motivations aren't that different, wars and environmental disasters above all. Of course I think about the Jewish people... when I was in Palestine a guide told me about all the clashes with the local communities at the time of the Philistines... but Palestine in particular was crossed by several exoduses. The ancient world experienced also weaponized exodus, like Alexander the Great, Ghengis Khan, groups moving burning what they encountered, in this sense it could be different from nowadays. But mankind always moved, individually or collectively... I think it never stopped, in truth. Isn't it? Who knows how people arrived in Easter Island. I can't help to think, more recently, about the British in America, Australia and New Zealand, the Portuguese in the Western Indies or the French in Africa. Colonizers that stayed there in the end. Very different aims, no doubt they arrived as colonizer empires, but with a big movement of people nevertheless, with huge fluxes. Now we are not coping with invaders at all, even if in some cases they are shown as such...

Themis: I'm not an expert on ancient issues at all... but being myself from Calabria I can tell you that it is a land from where people have gone away since forever. Much more recently in 1900 I look to all those people that moved to Latin America, or even Switzerland, for economic reasons. But without a doubt, wars are a constant push factor, from the ancient times to the present...

Menander: Let's take the migration of the Lombards who are from Saxony, along the Elbe river to Pannonia and Hungary, than through the eastern Alps to northern Italy, hence giving the name to the region, Lombardia. Someone could argue about this but it seems to be the last great movement of people that significantly changed the composition of the Italian population. We are not speaking about some groups leaving but entire families, an entire population of a few hundred thousand to change their place of abode over several years. The global population was much smaller and the space available was larger but if we take into account density and speed of movement, what we are facing now is unprecedented. And if it is not well... this is the life we have the chance to live! As the saying goes "the past is a different country... they do things differently there" so it's very tricky to make analogies between past and present, it can even backfire or even have unintended consequences.

Antigone: Contemporaneity has produced some good outcomes since the Geneva Convention, legislative tools conceived to protect refugees, although these tools are no longer moving with the times. Contemporaneity also provokes displacements on an ever larger

scale that is in many cases planned, on the basis of expectations projected toward new destinations, initiated in the countries of origin. For example the Albanians during the '80s and '90s were very much influenced by the Italian music Festival of Sanremo, thinking that the TV programme broadcasted the representation of what Italy was. Or, rather it is the creation of false myths through social media: people coming from the Sub-Saharan area arrive with a huge amount of information, from word-of-mouth, from websites, from social networks. This of course makes things easier but often also complicates, because they arrive with a preconceived framework that collapses at the moment of landing. They find themselves in a completely different situation from what they imagined. All this is reinforced many times by those who, after a successful inclusion, tend to give a sugar-coated version of their experience. This is, I think, very different from the past: the creation of myths and expectations that are doomed to be disappointing for most. Quite frequently it happens that people, after landing in Greece or Sicily ask "am I in Germany?"... "sorry no, you are in Pozzallo in the Ragusa province...". Or I remember an Egyptian guy whose smartphone fell in the sink: he panicked completely, not able to communicate with the family but, above all, losing his entire network of virtual/real relations. An enormous chaos with an enormous quantity of information is a destabilising short-circuit. I can hardly think about this in the past. It could be an opportunity in terms of both integration and spreading the right information.

Who should be responsible for the welfare of refugees? The local community or the state? Who succeeds in making people feel most welcome?

Sinon: First of all it depends if you trust or not the idea of the State. Personally, I'm losing it while in the past I was much more a staunch communist, almost Leninist. I believed in the capacity of the State to tackle things that a community cannot: if you think about a community that works beautifully inside but without doors, it's a dead community. All of us should be responsible, considering the State in the form we have been received and that a community is not reliable as an absolute: there are good and bad communities. But, personally, I don't trust communities to grant everybody dignity and respond to their needs. So we should find a balanced State that sometimes advocates the duty of hospitality. In Italy we witnessed examples, like in Gorino¹⁰, a very ambiguous phenomenon. I did not want to blame those people who built barricades against the arrival of refugees, it's a very complex dynamic... it was very ugly to see the extremely offensive slogans addressed at the inhabitants, practically mirroring the brutality of the barricades and the speeches. This complexity is also echoed in the idea of "the good community", so you can't just say "beasts! You are not Christians!" to the inhabitants of a small village in the middle of the swampland. The State tried to impose, rightly, the placement of refugees but in a very impractical and brutal way

¹⁰ — <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/gorino-goro-italy-refugees-migrants-crisis-women-and-children-blocked-ferrara-a7380566.html>

and, in the end, it disengaged completely! A very bad but also very interesting story that should deserve to be a book, a reportage, a case-history. Even Alfano (Interior Minister at the time) claimed “these people are not Italians!”... Look who’s talking! The one that deported 40 Sudanese people to Sudan... So this story is a great answer, with a question, to your question.

Themis: According to me, local communities. And when they don’t welcome they should be coerced and supervised by the State because not everybody is able to give hospitality, it is something that needs a path of preparation starting from schools. We should try to avoid those cases where refugees find barricades or laxity without any attention beyond a meal and a bed: hospitality is something else. People living in the territory are fundamental also because if a person feels welcomed, s/he will feel less pushed to break the rules: if you find an honest job, you can take care of yourself, you can send money to the family you left, you don’t feel the need to access the illegal channels, which are so skilful at attracting desperate people, above all the migrants.

Menander: First of all we should question why this has to be considered a “burden”, how long should assistance be kept up before people become self-sufficient, at least up to a point. In Italy for example the financial cost, if fully born by the State, and the way the welcome machine works, is highly dysfunctional. People wait one year or even more without any possibility to work and with little chance for the asylum request to be recognized for those applicants

coming from West African countries. More and more people are choosing the asylum seeking route because the economic migration route is closed... it’s a dysfunctional substitution because they can’t work until papers are accepted, while the State is supporting them economically. More, voluntary arrangements are not enough: we can’t sort refugees only where they are welcomed because it’s not enough. The best way could be to shorten the application period and the process of recognition, after which a person can start study, work and take care of her/himself as soon as possible. Then again the “scale” problem... if I’m not wrong the great majority of the asylum seekers are not recognized as political refugees... it’s a failing system! I don’t see the voluntary welcome by villages or communities as the ultimate solution. On the other hand I think that when there are economic incentives by the State to prepare or build shelters things work smoothly. In the end there is not a single rule that applies to all cases.

Antigone: Both. The local community is truly fundamental but it’s critical if you don’t involve it. 20% of the people in Italy are welcomed through SPRAR projects¹¹ realised by empowering local communities and city councils who are leading a chain of local associations, cooperatives and so forth with governmental money. 80% of people are hosted in Extraordinary Reception Centres, that can be anything and its opposite: from ordinary flats with services similar to SPRAR (cultural mediation, Italian classes, etc.) to places similar to detention centres. Why? Because they are managed directly

11 — <http://www.sprar.it/english>

via prefectures by the Ministry of the Interior. What does it mean? The 80% of refugees are distributed directly between the prefectures and the managing staff of the Special Welcoming Centres, without any involvement of the local communities, nor the city councils nor the Regions. This is an indefensible mistake, causing the notorious barricades against the refugees: beyond the visceral reactions it's a real problem. A system that is rhetorically horizontal is, in reality, pretty much vertical, managed directly by the State, without any involvement of the local dimension despite the joint conferences with ANCI (the national association of city councils) and the declarations addressed to reinforce SPRAR. Without considering any involvement or responsibility of the local institutions, whether the city council or the neighbourhood, inclusion is not possible. In my experiences integration is, in fact, easier in small villages: we manage several in Tuscany and even if the first impact is truly strong, the satisfaction is greater at the end of the process above all if operators are skilled. The local community needs evidence of reliability, here I will give you an example. In one of these communities, we realized we overcame the local, initial suspicions when the refugees, impressive tall African guys, were involved in the walking-bus service¹² by the elderly volunteers association: the community entrusted the refugees with their children, with the endorsement by the old inhabitants... it was so incredible it was reported in the newspapers! This is much easier in a village, while in the city I see my colleagues struggling to gain trust with the barber, the cashier, the baker in order to grant a minimum

recognition for the refugees. Considering that in Italy, of the 8000 city councils, just 400 subscribed, since SPRAR is on a volunteer basis, I start thinking subscribing to SPRAR should be mandatory in order to have a more proportioned sorting of people around the country, with the effect of softening the alarm level felt by the population. According to some constitutional lawyers this obligation is even required by the Italian Constitution... but this is too sensitive to be exposed to the electorate, of course! Coming full circle, well-being can be obtained only through proximity relations.

What are your ideas of 'home' and how would you define the term?

Sinon: For me "home" means "rest". And rest means a lot of things like safety, in the sense of safety of affections, that it won't be demolished... to rest!

Themis: The place where I was born and grew up in the family, immersed in nature. An innocent part of life. Well I guess that people forced to move from their homes can also perceive quite the opposite, as it is a place impossible to live in anymore. But I also think that there is a strong sense of belonging related to a birth factor or a beautiful image nested in their minds. Personally, I struggle to feel really deeply at home outside of my place of origin, Calabria. The rest, the far away, is more the "house" for the adult life, related to responsibilities but definitely not the carefreeness nor the comfort I feel when I go back.

12 — https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walking_bus

Menander: For me home has to do with roots, density of relationships, human and symbolic... where I feel some kind of rootedness with traditional things like family, culture, language, places, references, etc... with a higher density in the place where you spend more time, like during childhood. But roots do not have to be strictly localised. Keeping with the botanical metaphor, there are plants that develop aerial roots from out of the soil and then just after a time those roots connect to the ground giving an expanded sense of rootedness. So it's not just a matter of volition but a matter of time too... a subjective time of course, so for example I may develop a higher density of relationships in one place after one year rather than after spending 4 years in another place.

Antigone: Home is where I feel good, where I can nurture my personality, my potential and my relations. Or on the contrary where I have the possibility to hide when I need to. I felt at home in many places actually...

What is the biggest difficulty in integrating into a society?
Language? Social preconceptions?

Sinon: Though to say... are we talking about people aged 14? 18? 50? Individuals? Families? From Sierra Leone? Gambia? Niger? Mali? For every one is different, even being deterministic according to language, country or religion... it's so different! Even on a practical level. For example a person coming from Pakistan has already a

web of relations, often a large one that can even be an obstacle to integration, that a guy from Gambia doesn't have. The latter maybe goes to a disco, dressed like us, finding a local girlfriend. There is always a common grammar... yes language can be the first obstacle but in need it takes little to learn it in reality. It's so diverse and rarely is this diversity considered. All this is also a discourse about *integration*, a very ambiguous word. I see how much the people arriving are held responsible for integration, with a weight that nearly achieves a sense of guilt: if the "new" people don't show commitment and passion to integration, they will be declassified as B series asylum seekers. You can see this in the last Italian legislative decree or last speeches about volunteer work, or giving back to society by working for free... all played in the realm of morality and guilt. So it happens that often *integration* becomes a very strong "subjectification bludgeon". Despite this, there are thousands experiencing volunteer work, in all the country. I even saw an Al-Jazeera documentary on my small town of origin, presenting refugees, in uniform, sweeping and cleaning the streets as a good practice! We have to consider that sometimes people don't want to integrate themselves! Even more so those who come with a local web of relations. Maybe they want to follow their religious network, or an economic network... why they should care about *integration*? It becomes a problem if we think about ghettoization, like in France for example, no? It's not an easy argument that becomes difficult because of policies even if, it's true, they are getting worse and worse. At the same time we can't say "integration, such a beautiful thing!". I don't believe in a fancy multiculturalism, it's rather a big chaos and I firmly believe in living

together in the most absolute way, not differentiating nor segregating. There are many things really problematic for me about some habits or beliefs from people arriving from other places, but I tell you that when it comes, for example, to religion I'm a rabid anticlerical with everyone. Starting from the Italians! No difference. Coming full circle, it's a big mess and policies are part of this.

Themis: Language is an important barrier initially, considering that in Italy apparently people don't fall in love with learning different languages... even with English we have some difficulties to the point that, instead of learning English to communicate better, we force immigrants to learn Italian. Some of them are really talented in learning quickly, even those that never studied not even in Africa. This is important because of the prejudices that are still influencing people's perception: if a black person stops an inhabitant to ask for any information, the latter many times thinks they are about to be harassed, for help, for money or to buy something... it's quite common. If it's a white person who comes close, the game changes. If migrants know the language, they can create an opportunity for an encounter themselves, even just asking for information.

Menander: To me mastering the language is paramount to rooting in a place. Integration is a two way process, a part depends on me, another is in the eye of the beholder: no matter how I learn by heart the local constitution or how well I speak, I have to face a kind of perspective. So I have to keep an eye on what I can do. I don't expect my neighbours to *like* me, it is always interesting to get to know each

other. Consequently I value very much those intermediate bodies or horizontal places where people can meet, dialogue, discover common problems and eventually get along. This is more than tolerance, here in Belgium they call it *samenleven* – living together, civic sphere – and can bring to cooperation, which is the start of any political project rooted in society, as opposed to a political product sold through some marketing strategy.

Antigone: The level of services we are providing to refugees, in order to integrate, is weak. We only pretend to teach Italian, if compared to the Scandinavians where people are committed to 30 hours a week of language classes. I know some migrants are still struggling with Italian, even after a year-long programme, considering that once at home s/he will speak the native language, or English, or French. I also know some of them are unmotivated because, once the refugee status is obtained, they want to leave for another country. We should also consider the emotive exertion of those who arrived passing from Libya: those coming from there, in the best case, were beaten with a stick for weeks... there are stories I can barely repeat. So you can imagine the depressing approach of some people, obstacles to performative activities like learning a new language, new habits – like what is a supermarket – to get inside of it, to put vegetables on the scale: all this seems so banal, but if you have never seen it in your life it demands a big mental and emotive energy. From banal, it becomes heroic if you arrive deprived of such energies, so an adequate psychological support should be granted, first of all. These people experienced a hell that compressed their potential. Again, providing

these kinds of services with efficiency should be an intentional investment considering these people, hopefully, will obtain the status and will be autonomous as soon as possible, “giving back” (even if I don’t like this expression at all) the favour. We do our best but we also see the worst, like people “parked” in inhuman places staring at the wall, often minors, burnt-out people literally dumped in our territories. Lastly, prejudices are and will be part of our history and we’ll never eradicate them completely. . . we need participative modalities, like local assemblies, new ideas other than the third sector and, above all, the local governments. If we intend to meet people’s fear and cope with it, we have the opportunity not merely to mediate among conflicting ways of being, but more importantly to take into consideration all the forms of poverty afflicting a place. I hardly see any administration willing to open serious debates on this.

Do you expect large cities or smaller towns/ villages to be more welcoming to refugees?

Sinon: You should ask refugees where they want to go. I know some of them would prefer definitely to live in a village, others don’t even think about that!

Themis: The small villages, is where there are very good examples of integration. Of course we are talking about only a few people to deal with, because we have to consider proportion and ratios. First we have to understand the context and then send a proportional number of people. I want to believe that in the small villages people

are already used to integrating and sharing, in a different ways than the city. In the city I perceive much more individualism. In the South of Italy for example, among the bad examples of rural work exploitation, there are also great examples like in Riace¹³, where the whole town was revitalized. In other places the soil has been prepared for welcome. As I engage with criminality, I think in small villages the contact with crime is less probable, while in the city, at the moment that a person exits from the circuit designed by authorities, the path becomes much more risky. Even in a city like Bologna, which is not that huge, drug dealing is an easy option. Cities have a stronger market for “crime freelancers”. I’m not saying there is no criminality in villages, but rather that it can be controlled more easily.

Menander: If we talk about a recognisable agency in doing the welcoming, I hardly imagine that a metropolis like London can have a discernible single agency. While in a small town there are meetings in the house council with people raising hands and where they can directly decide whether to welcome or not for example, a family of refugees. So it’s difficult to compare the two if we focus on agency. In the small place it’s easier to recognize the decision process while in the city there are undetected processes. But if we look at the outcome only, there are perhaps many more migrants and refugees in large cities because it’s a more open environment with more economic opportunities.

13 — <http://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-37289713>

Antigone: I can add another example of a village near Pistoia where we located some young people from Africa. Initially the inhabitants hardly reacted, imagining just a gang of drug dealers. After a while the refugees, farmers in their countries of origin, started cultivating some plots of land by themselves, in an area where a very special potato with protected designation of origin is cultivated. After a while there was such a bond between the refugees and the elderly native farmers that, when the refugees had to leave, the latter driven to tears declared they found their successors, after being abandoned by their sons and youngsters. In the city this is more difficult unless we work on neighbouring, inside condominiums... but again it's a case by case: for a guy coming from Lagos, Florence is a small village, while for a group coming from a small village in Senegal, San Casciano could seem like a metropolis.

What can be done, especially by the media, in order to educate or to reassure people?

Sinon: Again, what are we talking about when we talk about media? We saw very well with the American elections... where do people get their information? TV? Internet? Where do they shape their opinions? Maybe they make their mind by reading 10, 20 comments on facebook. If we want to talk about the classic media like TV, radio and newspaper, sometimes when I read above all the local news the first exclamation that comes into my mind is "you are a gang of irresponsible people!". How can journalists follow just the print

sales by reporting imprecise, unfounded, manipulated facts or their ignorant, weak political view with such a false awareness? They depict people, they use words and expressions so foggy, like "that clandestine made this and that". Responsibility. This is what I stand for.

Themis: As I said, to provide accurate and trustworthy information.

Menander: I'm afraid that the Brexit and Trump phenomena signal a kind of backlash against mainstream media, even if they are public broadcasting services. It seems that people don't want to be educated that much about what to do and what to think or at least do not trust the "educators" anymore. I'm even more sceptical about the current configuration of the corporate social media landscape that functions like eco-chambers among like-minded audiences. Traditional media and digital social networks are not the only sources of information and education... we need a "healthy diet" of sources and crucially also direct "un-mediated" discussion.

Antigone: To say that media should inform and not reassure, we have a serious problem in Italy as spotted by *Carta di Roma observatory*¹⁴: the level of the debate and the (mis)use of refugees issues in the media is widely embarrassing. Media means many thing: the news and the in-depth analysis mixed with programs for housewives, to build the perfect monster-self... it's very difficult. Being an independent journalist seems already difficult. Media

14 — <http://www.cartadiroma.org/who-we-are/>

should involve itself more with different experts, who are rarely introduced in debates, not just the same gurus... we are numerous people conducting serious work both on the academic and on the practical dimension. Then I go back to data, to use numbers, to make comparisons with other countries, to show trends over the years, to pay attention to the usage of images... the bombing of images with boats just pass the vision of a boarding attack, directly to our homes. Then, to pay more attention to people's stories so the narrative of the privileged refugees draining resources can leave room for the reality check of those almost detained and largely unprotected. Abroad it seems quite different, while reading The Guardian or some French press I can find more objectivity in comparison to the Italian media, where emotiveness is always exaggerated: the "assault", the "wave"... all expressions building on a negative impact. What happened with Bosnia or Rwanda should make us reflect on this.



Fusion Theatre adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*, theatre play, 2017.



XENIA

Collective Dictionary

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