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**Migrant Hospitalities  
in the Mediterranean**  
Encounters with Alterity  
in Birth and Death

*Edited by*  
**Vanessa Grotti**  
**Marc Brightman**

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## Migrant Hospitalities in the Mediterranean

“This *tour de force* of transversal analysis, comparison, and reflection exposes the double bind of hospitality from the gestures of comprehension in an Athenian public hospital’s maternity ward, through mortuary practices and commemorative discourses for dead strangers and drowned kin, to the ritualistic institutionalization of minimal hospitality in Lampedusa. By leaving no assumption unexamined, Grotti, Brightman and their collaborators have made the anthropology of hospitality, the ethnography of the ongoing migration dynamics in the Mediterranean, and transregional scalar processes shine in each other’s light.”

—Naor Ben-Yehoyada, *Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Columbia University, USA*

“*Migrant Hospitalities in the Mediterranean* hosts the reader across various locations of migrants’ routes and encounters. This set of ethnographically-thick accounts of migrants’ reception or rejection at Europe’s southern threshold offers a fresh view on hospitality by approaching migration as a passage from ‘death to a new life’. The volume invites us to rethink and rearticulate decades-long debates on migrations and hospitality, given a substantial increase in recent migrations in the region and their humanitarian consequences.”

—Nataša Gregorič Bon, *Assistant Professor, Institute of Anthropological and Spatial Studies, Research Centre SAZU, Slovenia*

“This book addresses the pressing need for more research on hospitality and hospitality practices, a need that has become more pronounced now, at the end of a decade characterised by increasingly polarised debates on irregular migration and border control. Anthropology is an excellent avenue for this, and indeed this book builds on the work of other anthropologists revisiting the concept of hospitality in recent years. The book is a welcome addition, both for its conceptually sophisticated approaches to the concept of hospitality and for its empirically rich, ethnographically grounded case studies of migrant hospitalities in the Mediterranean.”

—Daniela DeBono, *Associate Professor of International Migration and Ethnic Relations, Malmö University, Sweden*

Vanessa Grotti • Marc Brightman  
Editors

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# Introduction: Mediterranean Migrant Hospitalities

*Vanessa Grotti and Marc Brightman*

**Abstract** This book takes some of the insights of the anthropology of hospitality to illuminate ethnographic accounts of migrant reception in various parts of the Mediterranean. Anthropology has revisited the concept of hospitality in recent years, drawing on the insights of ethnographers of the Mediterranean, who ground the idea and practice of hospitality in concrete ethnographic settings and challenge the ways in which the casual usage of Derridean or Kantian notions of hospitality can blur the boundaries between social scales and between metaphor and practice. Host-guest relations are multiplied through pregnancy and childbirth, and new forms emerge with the need to offer mortuary practices for dead strangers. The volume does not attempt to define a distinctive Mediterranean hospitality, but explores the potential of the concept of hospitality to illuminate the spatial and scalar dimensions of morality and politics in Mediterranean migrant reception.

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The second decade of the twenty-first century will be remembered in the Mediterranean perhaps above all for the human consequences of the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya in 2011 and the civil war in Syria, which began in the same year. Libya could no longer employ its numerous sub-Saharan African migrant workers and lacked the means and political motivation to prevent them from embarking on the voyage across the sea to Europe. Meanwhile large numbers of refugees fled the Syrian conflict and sought safety in Europe. These may be the principal reasons for the great increase in the numbers of migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea from 2011 to 2020, though the causes are many and complex, and here is not the place to review them. Indeed, we are not concerned here with the 'push' and 'pull' factors of migration, with attempting to explain the 'problem' of migration or to offer 'solutions'. Migration is a part of the human condition, and more historically contingent and in need of explanation are the existence of hard borders, the problems of global inequality, and their relationship towards the spread of what Karl Polanyi (2001[1944]) called 'market society'—but this is not our aim. At the heart of the subject of this book is the recognition that the large number of migrant arrivals on the European shores of the Mediterranean, especially Italy, Greece, and Spain, amplified contrasting responses among the populations who found themselves hosts, willing or not. The more migrants arrived, the more some local people proclaimed that they were welcome, on the grounds of moral duty and common humanity, while others called just as loudly for their expulsion, denouncing them as a threat to social order. More recently the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 has further exacerbated this latter reaction, as the sanitary crisis combines fear of contagion from strangers with justification for restrictions on movement—history shows that such fears conflating social order with hygiene have been associated with epidemics since the expansion of maritime commerce in the middle ages (Bashford 2007; Snowden 2019). On different scales, local people, local and regional institutions, and states have found themselves playing the role of hosts, willing or unwilling, while arriving migrants were placed in the equally ambivalent

role of suppliant guests—in most cases frustrating their search for dignified and autonomous livelihoods.

As legislative and administrative knots tightened and European border infrastructure grew, conditions continued to worsen in Libya, Syria, and numerous sending countries; sea crossings became ever more perilous, their organization being driven ever more deeply into the unscrupulous hands of organized crime, and deaths at sea multiplied scandalously. Over the same period, women began to make up a growing proportion of the migrants attempting the crossing. Sexual exploitation, of more and less violent varieties, afflicts the lives of female migrants without fail, especially in Libya, and it is largely for this reason that many women arrive in southern Italy from North Africa either pregnant or with a small baby (Grotti et al. 2018). The women who arrive in Greece from Syria are more often accompanied by their husband or family, but they also often arrive pregnant or become pregnant during the interminable waits in refugee camps and detention centers.

Death and new life have thus dominated the circumstances of migrant arrivals in recent years at the southern threshold of Europe, whose inhabitants have found themselves compelled to play the role of host. The image of the threshold is doubly significant. Firstly the threshold is a key symbol in rites of passage, and as Michael Herzfeld underlines in his closing contribution to the book, the perilous crossings of the Mediterranean are rites of passage, in which persons symbolically die and are reborn (a notion that many of our own informants explicitly referred to). Secondly, hospitality symbolically begins with the crossing of a threshold, as the outsider becomes a guest by entering the host's home. But what happens when these different kinds of threshold become intermingled and confused? When dead strangers must become guests, and when shelter must be given for the birth of strangers? The social and political sciences have invested a great deal in the study of migration in the Mediterranean in this period, including a significant amount to the problem of mass migrant death, rather less to birth. However they have largely done so as a part of the migration industry that flourishes in European borderlands, with short-term and highly structured field research contributing to bureaucratically organized large research programs. Without the slower, more intimate, long-term field research that is the hallmark of social and cultural anthropology, these approaches have shed little light upon the ways in which migrant hospitality is lived by those involved and what it means to them. The ethnography of migration and of migrant reception, of birth and

death, brings its own considerable challenges—to name just a few, there are those of multiple languages and cultural backgrounds of interlocutors, and the shifting nature of a mobile population in the spaces of hospitality. Despite these difficulties, we have attempted to bring some grounded insights to certain aspects of Mediterranean migration and hospitality.

Hospitality entered the anthropological lexicon in the Mediterranean, so when the problem of hospitality has been brought to the center of the world's attention so decisively as it was in the 2010s by the migrant arrivals and deaths that occurred in the region, it seems worthwhile to offer an ethnographic response. Anthropology has revisited the concept of hospitality in recent years, embracing it for its compatibility with long-standing disciplinary concerns such as exchange and reciprocity, kinship and alterity, ritual and social order (Ben-Yehoyada 2015; Candea and da Col 2012). The practices and policies of hospitality and hostility to migrants raise moral, ethical, and political questions that are 'both pressing for the here and now and timeless' (Berg and Fiddian-Quasmiyeh 2018: 2), a point worth underlining given the ongoing migrant reception crisis in the Mediterranean. Indeed, as Roth and Salas have noted, 'woven into the fabric of modern research is the perception that crises are revelatory, that it is through the extreme that the normal is revealed' (2001: 1). The anthropology of hospitality has drawn upon the insights of ethnographers of the Mediterranean, especially Julian Pitt-Rivers (2012 [1968]) and Michael Herzfeld (1987), and some of the most influential discussions of hospitality such as those of Derrida or Benveniste draw upon the region's classical heritage (though Shryock has offered a corrective to Kant's disparaging portrayal of Bedouins as bad hosts [2008]). The anthropology of hospitality has grounded the concept in concrete ethnographic settings, and anthropologists have criticized the ways in which discussions of hospitality in other disciplines such as philosophy and political science have tended to occlude distinctions and interplay between social scales and to blur differences between metaphor and practice. A certain 'scalar slipperiness' (Herzfeld 2012) is inherent to the practice of hospitality itself, but the cultural modes and social effects of such scale shifting require ethnographic scrutiny.

The most widely emphasized feature of hospitality is its moral ambivalence, first highlighted by Pitt-Rivers (2012) and later encapsulated by Derrida with his term 'hostipitality' (2000a): guests may be welcomed and given the wherewithal of life for a period of time, but they remain at the mercy of hosts, their rights are limited, and their status is rigorously

distinguished from that of hosts in a clearly asymmetric relationship. External factors can all too easily tip the balance between welcome and hostility: Chiara Quagliariello shows in her chapter how the spread of the political discourses of the far right and the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic have recently led to powerfully destructive symbolic anti-migrant gestures in the largely hospitable island of Lampedusa. As with the Homeric story of the Cyclops, the archetypal case of a bad host and bad guests, hospitality can all too easily turn sour. Mette Berg and Elena Fiddian-Quasmiyeh have criticized ‘fatalistic’ invocations of this ambivalence. The remedy they propose is an ethnographic attentiveness to the ‘messiness of everyday life and its potential for care, generosity and recognition’ (2018: 1), but the ‘messiness of everyday life’ is not alone sufficient to unpack ‘hostipitality’. The neologism is in part a conflation of distinct meanings in time and place and of different scalar dynamics. In a text with which Derrida was certainly familiar, Emile Benveniste wrote that ‘the primitive notion conveyed by *hostis* is that of equality by compensation: a *hostis* is one who repays my gift with counter-gift’. He goes on to say that ‘the classical meaning “enemy” must have developed when reciprocal relations between clans were succeeded by the exclusive relations of *civitas* to *civitas*’ (Benveniste 2016: 61). Accordingly, the concept of hospitality changed over time: “stranger, enemy, guest” are global notions of a somewhat vague character, and they demand precision by interpretation in their historical and social contexts’ (2016: 66). This is not to deny the ambivalence of hospitality that Pitt-Rivers and, later, Derrida emphasized, but rather to suggest that its welcoming and hostile facets may be subject to separate instantiations, be embodied in separate actors, or be effected at distinct scales of action.

As Berg and Fiddian-Quasmiyeh note, the inherent conditionality of hospitality is underpinned by the fact that the host ‘always already’ has the power to delimit the space or place offered to the other and the ‘resulting hierarchies and tensions towards “new arrivals” have often been presented not only as common, but also potentially as inescapable’ (2018: 3). But this power to delimit the space or place of hospitality is continually contested by actors on different scales—the domestic house may be opened for the stranger, but the role of host in migrant reception is more often taken by local NGOs or local authorities; however the dependence of these upon central state funding cycles, and the state’s ownership of infrastructure used as spaces of hospitality, reinforces the central government’s claims to the prerogatives of the host. Meanwhile the tensions and

hierarchies inherent to hospitality are rendered inescapable by the impossibility of reciprocity, which arises from migrant guests' lack of access to higher scales of action.

The emergence of these different scales of action can be said to have taken place with the emergence of the city state, as Isayev points out: the *xenia* of Homeric society, 'when asylum was sought at household thresholds', gave way to the city state, 'when giving refuge became the prerogative of the community as a whole' (2018: 7). As Benveniste wrote, 'when an ancient society becomes a nation, the relations between man and man, clan and clan, are abolished. All that persists is the distinction between what is inside and outside the civitas' (2018[1969]: 68). In the ancient world, hospitality depended on the 'extent of preceding connections and relationships with the hosts', and unknown strangers who were not part of these networks relied on supplication—*hiketeia*—to gain refuge. Such suppliants (evoked in Aeschylus' play of the same name) may have had no means of providing reciprocal hospitality and had, at best, only services (such as military support) to offer in their place. In the fifth-century BC Athens, the *metic*, or resident alien, 'had certain privileges and duties but without citizenship' (Isayev 2018: 9).

This form of hospitality at the level of the state and the field of citizenship was systematically described by Kant, who wrote that 'the law of world citizenship shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality' (1957[1795]: 20)—his point being that the rights of a guest in a foreign state are limited and temporary, giving the philosophical grounding for various forms of 'resident alien' to be formalized, such as refugees, resident workers, and so on. As Shryock points out, 'the development of legal fictions such as "the citizen", an essential component of Kant's "free republic", is perhaps the most radical generator of bad hosts and bad guests ever devised, largely because it uses the notion of equality to patch up the incompleteness of the spaces in which hospitality is performed' (2012: S30). He asks: how does one care for people outside the domestic space? Candeia joins Rosello (2001) and Shryock (2008) in criticizing the 'metaphorical extensions of the logic of hospitality to larger entities... particularly in [public] debates around immigration' (Candeia 2012: S43): in these debates, Rosello argues that 'the vision of the immigrant as a guest is a metaphor that has forgotten that it is a metaphor' (2001: 3). Candeia highlights the use of 'a certain type of scale-free philosophical abstraction, imported from post-structuralist philosophy... figures such as Levinas's "other", Carl Schmidt and Giorgio Agamben's "Sovereign", Slavoj Žižek's

explorations of “the neighbour”, and of course the Host and the Guest of Derridean fame’ are not ‘straightforwardly explanatory’; Derrida’s ‘interpretive acrobatics’ (Shryock 2008) [do not] ‘shed light on the actual relationships, tensions, and ethnographic complications of hospitality’ (2012: S45; cf. Shryock 2008: 406 n.4).

And yet, the anthropology of hospitality after Derrida has often followed the successful strategy of taking Derrida’s insights into the paradoxical nature of hospitality and re-grounding them in ethnography (Shryock 2008; cf. contributions to Candea and Da Col 2012). Julian Pitt-Rivers led the way to a concrete, situated approach to hospitality, showing its inherent ambiguities and tensions and outlining features of Mediterranean hospitality such as its peculiar modes of reciprocity (the ancient *xenia* [Herzfeld 1987]) (Pitt-Rivers 2012[1968]). The possibility or expectation of reciprocity is assumed to be present, even if this requires a certain fiction, and the reciprocal exchange of hospitality is frequently played on in a variety of ways, sometimes in a subtle ritual sequence (Herzfeld 1987). In other cases, such as migrant reception (where the host, as municipality, reception center, or even the state itself, belongs to a different social scale than the guest), the implicit absence of the possibility of reciprocity may highlight and reinforce power asymmetries. These beg the question of whether reciprocity itself may exist on some other level, as it does on Crete according to Herzfeld, where ‘the *materially nonreciprocal* exchange is recast as an *ethically and virtually reciprocal* one’ (1987: 80). As the Spanish beggar says on receiving alms in Pitt-Rivers’ seminal account, ‘may God repay you’ because, he implies ‘I cannot’ (2012[1968]: 509). Benveniste also connects hospitality with sacrifice, noting that the word ‘*hostia*, is connected with the same family [as *hostis*, *hospis*]: its real sense is “the victim which serves to appease the anger of the gods”, hence it denotes a compensatory offering’ (Benveniste 2016: 66). Indeed, *hostia* is defined elsewhere as ‘a sacrifice of atonement’ (Lieber 1841), suggesting antecedents for the ritual aspects of the hosting of the dead that we discuss in our chapter. Conversely, the scalar interplay between asymmetric concrete host-guest relations and an abstract egalitarian plane implying potential reciprocity can permit domestic acts of hospitality, in which migrants become hosts, to work in small ways to subvert these power asymmetries.

Migrant hospitality presents ample potential for transcultural slippages, equivocations, and, at best, mutual misunderstandings—the expectations of guests are frequently misaligned with those of hosts and vice versa, or



used as justifications for being ‘bad’ hosts or guests, sometimes providing even deeper potential for tension than the misalignments of interests in a shared cultural context (Shryock 2012). Herzfeld has given a vivid illustration of the way in which hospitality may be used as a veiled act of aggression or trickery: ‘The most extreme play on the theme of reciprocity is found when, as sometimes happens, animal-thieves invite their victims or the police to join them at a feast: all unaware. The guests then eat the stolen meat! This is structurally analogous to giving asylum to one’s blood enemy. It confers superiority to the host in two registers simultaneously: it marks his respect for the sacred laws of hospitality, while placing his foe, however superior politically, at his mercy’ (Herzfeld 1987: 79). In reflecting on the roles of migrant reception centers as hosts and migrants as guests, it is tempting to see a scale-shifting reflection of this scenario: former colonial powers who have plundered African and Asian countries receive migrant ‘guests’ from these countries and offer them (minimal) food and shelter, knowing all the while that their hospitality is simultaneously a display of wealth acquired at the expense of their guests. Given Kant’s scathing comments on colonialism in the context of his discussion of hospitality—he describes the European colonizers as bad guests who carry ‘inhospitable actions’ to ‘terrifying lengths’ (1957: 21)—there is a compelling moral argument to make for a debt of hospitality owed by Europeans to denizens of former colonies. Discussing the relationship between migration and memory, Glynn and Kleist have noted how different actors ‘cite contrasting memories of the past to argue for the inclusion or exclusion of new immigrants’ (2012: 6). However, those who host migrants do not show a great deal of awareness of the colonial past, and when migrant reception awakens their historical consciousness, it more often evokes memories of the atrocities committed under fascism against local populations such as the Jews, Roma, or political dissidents. When people do draw parallels between the past colonization of other lands and the present migrant arrivals, the former is remembered as the popular exodus to settler colonies such as Argentina or the USA, rather than the scramble for Africa, and so the parallel is depoliticized.

The interplay between scale, scales of memory, and scales of governance is a constant in these essays—local mayors and local populations are often in favor of migrant reception, while the central state is hostile. Quagliariello shows in her contribution how over time migrant hospitality evolved in Lampedusa from being primarily domestic, with migrants hosted in the homes of local people, to being gradually taken over by the state, as

officially sanctioned structures were set up, and domestic hospitality came to be outlawed. Malakasis shows in her chapter how hospitals (whose name testifies to their historic role as structures of hospitality) operate on a scale that is neither that of the state nor that of the domestic setting.

This tension between scales is complemented by a cross-cutting tension between relations of hospitality and rights-based approaches, which arises from the contrast between the asymmetric nature of relations between hosts and guests and the egalitarian universalism that underpins human rights discourse. In our own research, we have noted that while some migrant ‘guests’ see their position partially through the lens of expectations of domestic forms of hospitality, tinged with the unrealizable implication of future reciprocity, some migrants’ ‘hosts’, as humanitarian workers, are partly motivated by convictions of social justice in the face of global social and economic inequality. Nevertheless, exploring migrant reception as hospitality allows us to get past the universalizing analytical strategy of humanitarian reason, to try to make sense of the culturally nuanced and variable modalities of host-guest relations. For example, following Marsden’s (2012) use of Copeman’s notion of the ‘virtues of utility’, we may observe the ways in which emergency workers are spurred to action by a desire to help others, suspending moral judgments on the individuals whose lives they try to save. Here, rather than adhering to an articulated moral code, their actions are first useful and only then rationalized as moral. Conversely as hospitality moves up scales, what start out as humanitarian acts may become justified as demographically and economically useful, as the social integration of migrants (transforming hospitality into assimilation) is justified on the grounds of low national birth ratios and the depopulation of the countryside—this move may be thought of as appealing instead to the ‘utility of virtue’. Hospitality itself dissolves through the process of ‘integration’, as guest and host become assimilated to each other, though their difference can be re-awakened by nativist rhetoric, which casts immigrant minorities as the unwanted guests of hostile hosts.

Rights-based approaches can be understood in terms of kinship. Migrant hospitality tends to be discussed in the mode of humanitarian reason, which evokes the ‘global fraternity’ of humanitarianism. In so doing, it risks occluding cultural differences and particularities and historical relationships between different peoples. The universalism of the idiom of global fraternity has been questioned from the point of view of Amazonian ethnology by Carlos Fausto, who notes that Derrida’s

“spheres of amicability” determined by social distance are hard to define in Amazonia. The other and the stranger are not coterminous; unlike in Amazonia, the ‘Euro-American notion of friendship does not imply a constitutive otherness; it tends towards fraternity rather than enmity’ (2012: 198). In Amazonia, instead, the friend is ‘an affine, an other, the nearest enemy, the prey closest at hand’ (2012: 205). Not only in Amazonia however but also in the Mediterranean ‘cousinage’ rather than fraternity has played a role in articulating relationships between different peoples from opposite shores of the sea (Ben-Yehoyada 2017; cf. Quagliariello this volume).

A further angle of ethnographic exegesis is suggested by Derrida’s emphasis on Kant’s insistence that hospitality is not a matter of philanthropy, but of right (2000b: 3). For migrant reception workers to be characterized as ‘humanitarian’ suggests a philanthropic moral impetus, but often they are indeed acting on convictions of rights; here there may be a convergence with the position of refugees, who do not become guests because they expect charity, but because they believe they have the right to asylum. Yet the idea of a ‘law of hospitality’, an expression applied in different ways by Pitt-Rivers and Kant, is challenged by Derrida when he exposes hospitality as a double bind: ‘on the one hand I should respect the singularity of the Other and not ask him or her that he respect or keep intact my own space or my own culture ... [but on the other]... I have to accept if I offer unconditional hospitality that the Other may ruin my own space or impose his or her own culture or his or her own language... That’s why it [hospitality] has to be negotiated at every instant, and the decision for hospitality has to be invented at every second with all the risks involved, and it is very risky’ (1997, in Shryock 2008: 410). The contributions to this volume give accounts of the risky negotiations navigating the double bind of hospitality.

Malakasis’ contribution focuses on pregnant migrants and on the clinic as a space of care, sovereignty, and everyday life. In this context she explores the guest-host dynamics between state-employed healthcare personnel and migrants. In her treatment of scale, she asks whether the hierarchical character of hospitality is indeed compatible with a rights-based framework, and she demonstrates that here hospitality and rights are complementary rather than opposed. Hospitality is framed bureaucratically (not domestically) in the hospital setting, but this does not mean that it is a ‘unitary host’ any more than the state. The nation-state, Malakasis argues, consists of ‘diverse hosts...positioned vis-à-vis migrants either as

individuals or as representatives of collectives or entities such as the public maternity clinic', and, in most settings, it is 'hard to disentangle' the administrative and the interpersonal.

Quagliariello's contribution offers a rich description of the changing of an iconic space of migrant hospitality over time. She provides a critical appraisal of the image of the Lampedusan or Mediterranean 'culture of hospitality' and of the purported link between supposed moral values and propensities to hospitality, by showing how practices of and attitudes towards hospitality are historically contingent. Relations with the other take on different forms according to different actors, whether ordinary families or NGO or state migrant reception actors, echoing Malakasis' distinctions between 'diverse hosts'. Over time, practices of domestic hospitality became de-legitimized, and new social divisions were produced, along lines of scale (between local and national or international actors) and between those in favor of or against state forms of migrant reception. This can be understood in terms of historically and spatially contingent expressions of domestic 'caring for others' and state 'managing others'.

Our own contribution considers the treatment of the remains of migrants who have died while attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea and how this treatment can be interpreted in terms of hospitality. These human remains are often unidentified, and their treatment involves a series of forensic processes, as well as burial in municipal cemeteries. We explore how on different scales of action the mortuary practices evoke other kinds of memorialization, and forensics and burial become ritual processes for restoring connections to other people and restoring personhood while provoking affective resonances with Italy's fascist and colonial past.

In this book we attempt to use the anthropology of hospitality to illuminate ethnographic accounts of migrant reception in the Mediterranean. 'The Mediterranean is back', as Naor Ben-Yehoyada has argued (2015: 184), in large part because 'the problem of how to deal with strangers' (Pitt-Rivers 1977: 94) has become central to the international news cycle and European politics awash with images and discourses about migration. While all of our contributions evoke the classic ambivalence of (hostile) hospitality (Derrida 2000a), they also analyze how it shifts across scales, for instance, as local actions are made to stand for—or to confound—national or regional ideologies or identities, the ritual enactment of ideals of hospitality, and petty expressions of hostility to these actions. The negotiation of the double bind of hospitality emerges clearly, as, for instance, when semi-hostile institutional regimes of minimal hospitality, exercising

biopolitical control, are met with a proliferation of minute acts of political and domestic resurgence. The hosting of migrants indeed may be ‘constitutive of the social order’, as Navaro-Yashin writes, a form of the ‘domestication of the abject’ (2009: 6).

If Pitt-Rivers’ work led the concept of hospitality in anthropology to be associated with the Mediterranean, Herzfeld later argued that despite its usefulness as a more descriptive and less sweeping term than honor (the concept most strongly associated with Mediterranean anthropology), we should take care not to view hospitality as the ‘principal definiens of Mediterranean society’, but rather to let it contribute to ‘a more critical inspection of the notion of “Mediterranean society” itself’ (1987: 88). These essays make no attempt to define a distinctive Mediterranean hospitality, but instead seek more modestly to explore the potential of the concept of hospitality to illuminate the spatial and scalar dimensions of morality and politics in Mediterranean migrant reception.

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## *Caring for Others, Managing Migrants:* Local and Institutional Hospitality in Lampedusa (Italy)

*Chiara Quagliariello*

**Abstract** In my chapter I analyze, first, the social elements explaining the hospitable, and not hostile, attitude Lampedusa inhabitants have shown over the years toward migrant people. I argue hospitality cannot be understood as a cultural element or an intrinsic characteristic of the Mediterranean identity. This attitude is mostly linked to historical dynamics and structural factors that characterize this Italian borderland. As the concept of reciprocity suggests, the fact that Lampedusa has historically been a place of emigration to Sicily and other Italian or Northern Africa regions led to a sort of identification with migrant people. At the same time, foreign migrants have always been temporary guests on this island. This situation facilitated, I suggest, the perception of migrants as non-dangerous visitors, unable to change the social landscape. Secondly, I explore the negative effects the transition in the perception of migrants from guests to take care to people the Italian state is entitled to manage has produced on the island. The replacement of a local model of hospitality based on informal

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practices and spontaneous places with an institutional model characterized by bureaucratic procedures and militarized sites led to a forced separation between local and migrant people.

**Keywords** Anthropology of the Mediterranean • Border economy • Border infrastructures • Hospitality policies • Migration crisis

## INTRODUCTION

Lampedusa, the southernmost Italian territory, is one of the symbols of hospitality offered to migrants<sup>1</sup> traveling from the African continent to Europe via the Mediterranean. Although this island of 6000 inhabitants has become famous because of the recent migration crisis (Lendaro 2016), the arrival of migrant people in this territory started a long time ago. More specifically, the history of hospitality offered to migrants in this Italian borderland can be divided into three phases (Cuttitta 2012). The first phase occurred in the 1990s. The number of migrants who arrived in Lampedusa at this stage was rather small, and the local population was one of the main providers of care to the new arrivals. In the second phase (2000–2010), the number of migrants received on the island increased as well as the presence of the state, national and international humanitarian organizations. A migrant reception center was introduced during this period, and a shift was made from an informal hospitality model run by the local population to a formal hospitality model controlled by the state. The third phase began around 2010. The number of foreigners who arrived on the island continued to increase, as did the presence of national and international hospitality authorities and hospitality professionals (Friese 2012; Hart et al. 2010).

The current migration crisis can be described as a fourth stage in this chronology. According to national and international laws and migration policies, most search and rescue operations carried out by the Italian state and international NGOs moved from Lampedusa to Sicily and other southern Italian regions from 2015. At the same time, restrictive border policies led to an increasingly limited number of arrivals in Lampedusa, as well as other areas. According to the International Organization for Migration, between 2017 and 2018, migrant arrivals decreased from 119,369 people to 23,371 people in Italy. Despite these trends showing to what extent migrant people are ‘unwelcome’ in Italy and Europe, the

island of Lampedusa continues to be portrayed in national and international medias and political arenas as a *hospitable land* (Cuttitta 2012).

This essay focuses on the hospitality model that Lampedusa's inhabitants historically applied to migrants who arrived in this Italian borderland. Drawing on the critiques Michael Herzfeld (1984, 1987) addressed in the 1980s to Julian Pitt-Rivers (1977) and other anthropologists (Davis 1977) who proposed to understand the Mediterranean area as a cultural area, I will argue that Lampedusans' behavior does not find an explanation in one's innate attitude to generosity as a typical value of Mediterranean populations. In continuity with the analyses of other anthropologists such as Maria Minicuci (2003) and Dionigi Albera (2006) on this topic, I will show how the choice to take care of the Other cannot be taken as evidence of a putative welcoming culture trait characteristic of the Mediterranean. The moral principles suggested by the Catholic religion moreover only partially influence this caring behavior. I suggest that other historical and sociocultural elements play a more significant role in Lampedusans' historical attitude for the inclusion of foreigners. The overarching aim will be to contribute, then, to the deconstruction of the understanding of openness and hospitality as cultural Mediterranean patterns, instead of considering them as the result of local histories of encounter with people coming from elsewhere. The following paragraphs will show that, despite these observations, a part of Lampedusa's population still claims hospitality as a local virtue or even as an expression of their local culture. At the same time, the chapter aims to analyze how the hospitality models offered to foreigners have changed over time. Building on political anthropology, border studies and migrations studies literature (Friese 2011; Boudou 2012; Ben-Yehoyada 2015, 2017) I will explore some of the consequences that arise from this process in the island of Lampedusa.

## DATA AND METHODS

This chapter is based on ethnographic research on the island of Lampedusa between July 2016 and January 2017. The research work was funded and realized within the ERC EU Border Care project, directed by Professor Vanessa Grotti. The principal method I used was participant observation during the migrants' arrivals at the harbor of Lampedusa and their transfer to the reception center as well as in the spaces of Lampedusa's daily life, such as streets, squares, shops and churches. This approach allowed me to examine in depth the interactions between the local and migrant

populations in the public arena. It also made it possible to ‘map’ hospitable and inhospitable spaces in Lampedusa: for example, I could analyze in which part of the island migrant people live today compared to local populations, where migrant people’s presence was allowed (such as the church, squares or bars) and where they were excluded (such as on beaches). During my stay in Lampedusa, I had long discussions with local inhabitants I spent most of my time with in public and domestic spaces. The choice of being hosted for seven months within a Lampedusan family allowed me to analyze in detail local daily life and the feelings Lampedusan population share toward migrants. The family I lived with introduced me to their neighbors’ and friends’ networks allowing me access, through a ‘snowball mechanism’, to other representatives of local population, namely people of different ages, social backgrounds and political ideals. The relationship of trust I built up helped me to undertake interviews (20 in total) about hospitality practices and discourses. I also carried out interviews with representatives of the Italian coastguard (3 interviews), representatives of the Italian police who are entitled to control migrants’ behaviors on the island (2 interviews) and representatives of NGOs and humanitarian associations present on the island (5 interviews). Interviews with the local population involved people from different generations, aged between 27 and 73 years at the time of the interview. Some of these people were engaged in hospitality practices offered to migrants since the 1990s; others were working at the migrant reception center introduced by the state or collaborating with the humanitarian organizations on the island. Interviews with local people allowed me to reconstruct the evolution of hospitality models over time but also the relationship between these models, which I summarized through the categories of ‘caring’ and ‘managing’ migrant people. Consistent with Didier Fassin’s theorization of the care and management of foreigners as contemporary form of governmentality of immigration and borders (Fassin 2011), ‘caring’ corresponds to a humanized model and ‘managing’ to a militarized model. Interviews with representatives of the Italian coast guard, Italian police and humanitarian associations allowed me to explore further these two mutually reinforcing and complementary models. These interviews will not be quoted extensively in this chapter, which focuses on the hospitality practices and discourses of people from Lampedusa.

The interviews I conducted with local people were carried out in Italian, and translations into English are my own. In order to respect the anonymity of the subjects who took part in the research, the names that appear in the chapter are all fictitious.

## CARING FOR OTHERS: ENCOUNTERS WITH MIGRANT PEOPLE AS ‘WELCOMED GUESTS’

Lampedusan people have always been used to encountering strangers. Before the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the island was ‘settled’ and abandoned successively by different peoples, such as the Arabs, the British (including people from Malta), the Spanish and the Sicilians (including people from the islands of Pantelleria and Ustica). Because of its location in the central Mediterranean, the island and its harbor have also historically functioned as a ‘safe haven’, where populations from Southern Europe and North Africa could rest during fishing and trading activities across the Mediterranean (Faranda 2015).

Encounters with people who migrated from the African continent, and who were trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe, started to come into the institutional orbit of the Italian state during the 1990s (Cuttitta 2015). What do Lampedusa’s inhabitants remember about these arrivals? What were the most common reactions? Although the analyses that will follow cannot be generalized to the entire population of the island which is far from presenting homogeneous positions, the prevailing feelings that emerged from the interviews I made with older generations are curiosity and openness toward foreigners. Carmela, a 71-year-old housewife, who has been committed to welcoming migrants since the 1990s, emphasizes that

Many of us were attracted by these people who came from distant places. We didn’t even know where their countries were situated in Africa. For many years Lampedusa has been isolated from the rest of the world. The fact of seeing foreigners coming to our island was a surprise. Some of us wondered how this was possible; then we realized these people were fleeing from Africa to seek a better life in Europe.

Mario, a 67-year-old mathematics teacher at the elementary school of Lampedusa, has the same opinion:

It does not seem to me people rejected or were afraid of these foreigners. Many of us had never seen people with black skin before. It was a discovery! The different color of the skin does not scare us. On the contrary, it made us ‘curious’ toward these people.

Although this attitude toward ‘foreigners’ (literally ‘stranieri’) could be defined as orientalist (Said 1978), the reaction to these feelings of curiosity has mostly been to transform the stranger into a guest to take care of. This approach emerges in an emblematic way from the commitment local inhabitants I spoke with expressed toward newcomers. The choice to cook for them or bring them food, the decision of many families to offer them clothes and shoes, the collection of money to allow them to speak with their families via payphones and the request to transform vacant buildings (such as those around the old airport) into ‘useful spaces’ where foreigners could sleep are some examples of local hospitality offered to migrants. In some cases, the form of ‘hosting’ islanders guaranteed to these outsiders consisted of inviting them to eat or shower in their homes. Some families even chose to shelter them in their homes, where they spend time together as if with members of their own family. Alessia, a 68-year-old housewife, describes how sharing her domestic space with foreigners was an experience that allowed her to feel useful to people in need:

Although we did not speak the same language, it was not difficult to understand each other. After all, we are all human beings, and we all have the same needs. With my family [she has three children] we hosted a woman from Liberia the first time, a couple from Ivory Coast a second time, and two boys from Senegal a third time. We have a guest room, which was usually free, so we could offer them a bed and some comfort.

For his part, Claudio, a 66-year-old baker, emphasizes how the openness toward foreigners did not have to do with Catholic values of benevolence and charity, but it was an expression of a wider human commitment:

The amazing thing was that even the poorest families who do not regularly go to church made themselves available to help foreigners. For several years there was a mobilization of the community for migrants’ reception. If one family did not have enough clothes to offer, another offered them in its place; if a neighbor could not cook, another neighbor prepared meals, etc. For people who were very Catholic, maybe this was part of religion, but for those like me who do not have a strong relationship with faith it was above all a matter of humanity.

Curiosity, compassion, solidarity and altruism are some of the feelings that explain, then, the attitude Lampedusa’s inhabitants I met and spent time with displayed to migrant people who have been treated and

understood as ‘welcomed guests’ during the 1990s. These efforts Lampedusans made to receive foreigners can be summarized under the category of *domestic hospitality*, namely an inclusive and informal model of care offered to migrant people. As my interviewees pointed out, at the time this practice was extended to all migrants who arrived on the island, without any distinction based on age, gender or nationality of origin. The term that Lampedusans used to refer to all categories of migrants was ‘Turks’ (‘Turchi’). This category, which carried the sense of ‘those with a darker skin’, neutralizes all differences related to ethnic or geographical origin among the migrants themselves. At the same time, it served to underline a distinction between *us*—the islanders—and *them*—people who are marked by the color of their skin as not being part of local population.

### *Temporary Hospitality Practices: Historical, Social and Structural Factors*

In line with previous arguments made by anthropologists (Albera et al. 2001) who challenge a number of essentialisms still existing in characterizations of Mediterranean populations as ‘noble savages’ or ‘pre-modern people’ (Ellingson 2001), my research underlines how Lampedusa’s tradition of caring for foreigners is far from justifying any assertions that Lampedusa’s inhabitants are inherently ‘good people’, or people who are ‘generous by nature’ and have ‘hospitality in their blood’. Likewise, a religious reading of the domestic hospitality model as described so far would only partially explain the openness showed toward the newcomers (Molz and Gibson 2007). I identified other structural factors, which strongly contribute to the welcoming attitude toward strangers of the Lampedusans I encountered. These factors, I argue, are closely linked to the local history of Lampedusa and its population. At the same time, they also have to do with the short duration of migrants’ stay on the island.

A first factor to be mentioned is the paradoxical lack of a native population in Lampedusa. As I highlighted above, the inhabitants who settled the island in the past centuries came from nearby islands (i.e. Malta and Pantelleria), Sicily, Southern Europe and North Africa. Matteo, a 64-year-old archaeologist, describes the mixed identity of the Lampedusa population as an element that aids openness toward foreigners. In his opinion, the mixing of identities over time has made Lampedusa’s inhabitants accustomed to welcoming people who are not part of their territory:

If you ask people “who here is from Lampedusa?”, they will tell you that there are some families who have been living on the island for several generations and other families came later on the island. In reality none of these families is originally from Lampedusa, [so] in a sense we are all immigrants here.

If the process of mixing identities was, then, a crucial component for the demographic growth of this territory, another element to be considered is the historical familiarity of Lampedusa’s population with the emigration process. Departures from Lampedusa to northern Italian regions started in the 1960s and became more and more frequent during the 1970s and the 1980s. This phenomenon can be described as part of the more general emigration flows from southern to northern Italy during the same period (De Vejeli 2010). These departures from Lampedusa usually had an economic purpose, namely to find a job and improve one’s financial position. Hence, emigration flows mostly concerned men, especially young men. In most cases, the working lives of these young men were lived outside the island, while their social and family life was based in Lampedusa. Through visits to their families, emigrants generally maintained a relationship with their homeland; in many cases, they married women from the island and had children with them. For their part, women emigrated less than men if their husbands worked outside the island. Consistent with a gender system historically based on a separation between productive and reproductive work, women used to stay in Lampedusa, where they would take care of their own family and their in-laws. The emigration phenomenon decreased after 1990, when new employment opportunities arrived in Lampedusa thanks to the spread of the tourism industry. Despite this, today a number of families have relatives who emigrated, and departures to northern Italy continue to involve new generations on the island. These experiences of emigration often lead to a feeling of closeness with the foreigners who arrive on the island. As emerged in interviews with younger generations, migrants’ experiences are considered not so far from their own experiences of displacement to other Italian regions or abroad. Some people, for instance, emphasized their understanding of difficulties related to living away from one’s family. Feelings of identification with foreign migrants were stressed in many cases. Giovanna, a 42-year-old housewife whose brothers emigrated to Rimini (Emilia Romagna), points out that the way in which she interacts with migrants in Lampedusa is how she would like people from Lampedusa to be treated elsewhere:

What these people are living is what we have experienced too. In my family many people left Lampedusa to go and work in the North. It would have been nice for local people to treat them genuinely. I identify my family story with the one of these people. I am sure the first reception counts a lot towards feeling well accepted in a place far from home.

Sonia, a 47-year-old cook in a restaurant in Lampedusa, whose two children left the island to work in a factory in Ancona (Marche), shares this view. Like Giovanna, based on the experiences within her family, she also has a feeling of proximity toward migrant people:

Every time I saw these boys who arrive in Lampedusa I thought of my children. After all, it's the same thing; my sons left home for Ancona, these people left their families to come to Italy. Sometimes I have invited them to my house for lunch. Many families in Ancona have been kind and helpful with my sons; I try to do the same here with the newcomers.

The similarities between local people's experiences of migration and those of foreign migrants are thus felt to be more important than the differences, and this contributes to Lampedusa islanders' attitude of openness toward foreigners.

The historical connection Lampedusa inhabitants had with Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Libya is also called upon to explain their willingness to welcome strangers, as Lampedusan people were welcomed elsewhere. Until the 1960s, fishing and trade in the Mediterranean were the main economic activities in Lampedusa. The latter was often carried out in partnership with people from North Africa (Ben-Yehoyada 2015, 2017). Taking place within the relational matrix that Naor Ben-Yehoyada defines as a sea of cousinage (Ben-Yehoyada 2017), these collaborations took a variety of forms. Lampedusan fishermen sometimes hired sailors from North Africa or Lampedusan people worked as sailors for North African fishermen. Another example of collaboration was the seasonal work Lampedusan people carried out in North African countries, for example, repairing boats in shipyards. Pasquale, a 71-year-old retired fisherman, underlines the frequency of circulation of people from one side to another of the Mediterranean in the past, as in practice there were no international borders:



The matter of knowing the maximum number of miles [from the coast] you can navigate in the Mediterranean didn't exist before. We went to them [in North African countries] and they [people from North African countries] came to us without any problem. I lived in Morocco and Libya for work. The Mediterranean was an extremely interconnected area for fishing, and we felt very close to African people.

Tonino, 69 years old, who belongs to a family of fishermen, highlights how he and his brother migrated three times to Tunisia for work. Consistent with Ben-Yehoyada's characterization of the Mediterranean Sea as a transnational region (Ben-Yehoyada 2017), Tonino describes the Mediterranean as a place of circulation and exchange with other populations. According to these fishermen, contemporary management of migratory flows represents a change for the worse compared to the freedom of displacements in the Mediterranean as they lived it in the past.

In addition to the factors mentioned so far, the awareness that migrant people are transitory presences on the island also contributes to the attitudes shown toward them. Consistent with the national law on migration and border controls (law 40/1998), the island of Lampedusa has been understood, since the 1990s, as a place of transit where a first reception to foreigners is provided and some initial administrative procedures take place immediately upon landing. Typically, migrant people who disembarked in Lampedusa were moved elsewhere for the remaining procedures, after only a few days or weeks. These displacements usually occurred via maritime transfers, organized for this purpose by the Italian state. In most cases, migrants are taken to reception centers in Sicily or elsewhere in Italy. Consistent with the features of the law of hospitality theories (Pitt-Rivers 2012; Derrida 1997), the certainty that migrants do not stay long on the island encourages citizens to be hospitable. Costanza, a 48-year-old teacher, explains how, for many citizens, the purpose is to offer care to foreigners before they leave for other destinations:

Since the beginning, migrants have left after coming to Lampedusa. There are no reasons not to help them during the time they spend in Lampedusa. Paradoxically, knowing that they will not live on the island, where they probably will never return, leads people to take care of them.

The idea Lampedusa is a place of transit, where migrants are not entitled to belong, also contributes to reducing the fear of a potential invasion

of their own territory by foreigners. Maurizio, a 43-year-old owner of a shop in one of the main commercial streets of the island, says:

Many people here tolerate migrants since they know they will leave soon. If this were not the case, I wouldn't be sure citizens would be so kind and hospitable to these foreigners. The fact that they will leave helps us not to feel in danger. Lampedusa's population is relatively small; if these people were to stay on the island, we would become the foreigners and they the locals.

The tolerance shown to foreigners therefore also depends on their status as temporary guests. The matter of long-term cohabitation with the foreigner, as well as issues related to the transformation of guests into citizens, is not part of the hospitality model guaranteed locally. An example of the feelings of intolerance Lampedusan people show toward foreigners who remain for longer on the island can be found in the crisis that occurred in 2011, when thousands of people fleeing Tunisia during the Arab Spring arrived in Lampedusa without being transferred elsewhere. At first, local populations reacted with openness, offering food and clothes to the newcomers. After a few weeks, however, uncertainty about when these foreigners would leave produced intolerance, which was fed by a feeling of being invaded. Faced with a number of guests that exceeded that of the local population (almost 10,000 Tunisians compared to 6000 local inhabitants), a number of citizens confronted the foreigners in defense of their own territory (Cuttitta 2012). Another example of intolerance arose in 2020, during the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic in Italy and worldwide. While the Italian territory was under a tight lockdown which entailed the closure of international borders and the prevention of any movements to other Italian regions, landings of migrants were recorded almost every day in Lampedusa. Uncertainty regarding the transfer of migrants elsewhere has led, also in this case, to a sentiment of invasion and danger, doubled by the fear of contagion. As a result, Lampedusa inhabitants organized themselves to protest against the arrival of migrant people during the Italian lockdown (March–May 2020). Despite this, local authorities claimed hospitality as a virtue Lampedusa islanders have shown in the past, an attitude the Italian state took advantage of, until it decided to take over the management of migrants.

## MANAGING MIGRANTS: SHIFTING TOWARD AN INSTITUTIONAL HOSPITALITY MODEL

In this part of the chapter, I will analyze how the reception practices offered to migrants have changed over time in Lampedusa. More specifically, the aim is to show how the *caring* tasks Lampedusa inhabitants performed have been replaced by other ways of *managing* migrants in more recent years. As I will underline, such a redefinition of the reception model goes with a number of innovations related to the organization of local territory, the right of action granted to local inhabitants and the relationship with foreign guests. I will focus on two main transformations that the shift from a domestic to an institutional hospitality model produced. The first concerns the spatial reconfiguration of the island. The definition of Lampedusa as a strategic location for the defense of Italian and European borders led to a growing presence of border infrastructures on the island during the 2000s (Anderson et al. 2003). This led to the introduction of militarized structures for the reception of migrant people that more recently acquired the status of EU migrant ‘hotspot’ (2014). The presence of these structures created new symbolic and spatial boundaries between the island’s citizens and foreigners (Brambilla 2015; Agier 2018). The migrant reception center is located in an almost uninhabited area of the island. This structure is therefore difficult for the local population to reach. The Italian army—first alone and then in collaboration with international agencies for European border control (i.e. Frontex since 2015)—runs this center, while access to this structure is forbidden to the local population. Unlike the spaces where the domestic hospitality model was performed, its location and organization show how one of the key elements of the institutional reception model is a spatial division between citizens and foreign migrants. Through the introduction of a military structure that has been described by various scholars as a biopolitical device similar to a prison (Gatta 2018), the goal was to keep the two populations separate. Although according to national law this way of managing migrants concerns the whole Italian territory, the small size of Lampedusa (20.2 square kilometers) makes the spatial separation between citizens and foreigners particularly stark (Proglio and Odasso 2018). Lucia, a 42-year-old beautician, underlines how, for citizens engaged in domestic hospitality practices, the introduction of a migrant reception system that excluded the local population was difficult to accept:

After the introduction of the reception center, it is as if migrants were received on another island. We know they are in Lampedusa, but we don't know anything about their life in the reception center. The area where they live is a military zone where we can't go. Now there are two territories in Lampedusa: the territory of the State and the territory of the island. The first is an autonomous area, with separate laws, where the citizens of the island have no right to go.

The feeling of having lost a part of the island's territory, which has been 'occupied' by the state, is commonly expressed by citizens who propose the closure of the reception center. Their criticisms of the hospitality model established by the state mainly focus on two themes. Firstly, they point to the lower quality of care offered to migrant people compared to what was provided in the past. Care in the framework of domestic hospitality is described as more humane in this regard. Secondly, they criticize the exclusion of local people from the institutional hospitality policies pursued by the state. As in international development efforts to formalize the economy through a shift from informal to formal money-making models, the transition from informal hospitality practices carried out by members of the local population to a formal hospitality mechanism controlled by the state led to a transformation of the human economy (Hart et al. 2010) connected to the reception of foreign migrants. The Italian state circumvented Lampedusan families in favor of professionals from outside the island as the principal actors in the migration industry and border economy (Friese 2012), leaving Lampedusa inhabitants to negotiate the preservation of a role in the reception of the foreign migrants who arrive in their own territory (Deleixhe 2016). As Sandra, a 38-year-old housewife, underlines, the high turnover of hospitality professionals working on the island (i.e. representatives of military bodies, humanitarian associations and NGOs) clashes with the permanent presence of locals whose ability to care for foreign migrants depends on collaboration with these external actors:

In recent years a number of professionals moved to the island to work with migrants. Even if their stay in Lampedusa is temporary, representatives of associations and NGOs are considered the experts in hospitality while ordinary citizens no longer have the chance to offer care to migrants.

Another development resulting from the rise of institutional hospitality model is the denial of some rights assigned in the past to the local population of Lampedusa. Specifically, some of the practices that were socially shared or even normalized on the island are progressively classified and judged as illegal by the Italian state. For example, citizens are prohibited from hosting foreigners in their homes, since according to institutional logic the only place deemed suitable for migrants' reception is the reception center mentioned above. The official ban on hosting foreigners at home is effective even when the number of migrants in the reception center exceeds the maximum number of people that can be accepted in this structure (around 300 people). Patrizia, a 39-year-old yoga teacher, defined this situation as paradoxical, noting that the reception center can consequently house more than a thousand migrants whose living conditions are inhumane. Another example is the limited freedom of movement of local citizens in their own island due to the transformation of a number of spaces into military zones under state control. Such areas include the harbor where foreign migrants disembark after the search and rescue operations carried out by the state and international NGOs in the Mediterranean. Like the area where the reception center is located, this space is fenced, strongly militarized and inaccessible for the local population. The restrictions to freedom of movement also concern the island's shoreline and coastal waters. The tension between the forms of help Lampedusan fishermen offered to foreign migrants and the rescue operations the Italian State is responsible for emerged in the shipwreck that occurred on October 3, 2013, a few miles from the coasts of Lampedusa. During this shipwreck, which has become one of the symbols of migrant tragedies in the Mediterranean, 368 migrants died and 20 were missing. Faced with hundreds of people dying at sea, local fishermen decided to intervene and saved 155 persons. This choice was strongly condemned by the Italian government, which accused them of promoting illegal immigration. Only a few of these fishermen succeeded in the legal process against the state: the rest of them were forced to pay a fine or even in some cases give up their boat license (Cutitta 2012, 2015).

### *Resistance and Adjustment to the Institutional Hospitality Model*

The rise of institutional hospitality model led to a growing division among the population of Lampedusa. As in the past, this can be explained by a tendency to take care of migrants according to individual social and

political positions. The internal differences among Lampedusa inhabitants align with their choices to resist against or adapt to the hospitality model promoted by the state (Boudou 2017). Based upon observations I carried out alongside the local population and long discussions I had with the latter, I analyze this choice of resistance, adjustment or commitment to the institutional hospitality model with respect to three areas: (1) rescue operations at the sea, (2) migrants' reception at home and (3) collaboration of local citizens with the reception center and/or humanitarian sector.

With regard to rescue operations in the Mediterranean, the main position held by local citizens (mainly fishermen) is to adapt to national and international rules. As Salvatore, a 69-year-old fisherman, points out, these rules became increasingly restrictive from 2013, and the penalties increasingly rigid. As a result, although such behavior is considered inhumane by many of them, the risks involved in providing aid to foreigners discourage fishermen from saving lives:

If we see a boat carrying migrants, we have to call the coastguard. If the latter does not arrive soon, the only thing we can do is to call again. We cannot help these people. According to the law this is a crime. Watching people dying without doing anything about it is not a crime? Apparently not! The state forces us to do so and we must think of our families; if we go to jail then who cares for them? The state?!

For his part, 73-year-old Nino, a retired fisherman, underlines how nowadays it is impossible to escape police and state surveillance and save migrants' lives secretly:

Coastguard and international radars are everywhere. Even at night we are under their supervision. It is impossible to do something without getting caught. There are the police at sea, there are the police on the island, how do you save migrants without being discovered? Where can you hide them in Lampedusa? Nowhere!

Most of my interlocutors choose to respect the prohibition against hosting migrants in their own homes. According to the migration laws now in force in Italy, the potential accusations that may arise from domestic hospitality include aiding illegal immigration and, in the case of minors, kidnapping. Despite these risks, some citizens I interviewed resist the state interdiction and continue to host migrants at home. An example is Matteo,

a 52-year-old post office clerk, who, at the weekend, is in the habit of inviting two or three migrants to his house for lunch:

In my opinion the most important thing to offer a foreigner is food. This will make him feel at home. Together with my wife, we have always welcomed people [migrants] to our home and we continue to do so. Of course, if the police arrive it could cause us problems. In reality everyone knows we are doing nothing wrong.

This attitude, asserting that offering a meal at home is not a crime, is only shared by a minority of people, however. The majority of my interlocutors instead take a position between respecting the prohibitions established by the state and the willingness to offer food to migrants. Hence, the main tendency is not to cook for migrant people but to pay for food for them in public spaces, such as bars or fast food restaurants on the island. Both solutions highlight the importance of commensality as a key element of hospitality (Sahlins 2008; Schemeil 2004). Sharing food, therefore, remains a way to welcome the stranger (Herzfeld 2005). At the same time, consistent with the rules established by the state, this practice has new forms today. Marcella summarizes as follows the fact that public spaces assume today the function initially held by domestic spaces in the relationship with a foreigner:

What we do today outside our houses is similar to what we did before inside the houses. In the past, many families cooked for migrants, now many families buy food for them at the supermarket or at the bar. It is always a matter of making sure that they are well fed.

Finally, citizens' collaboration with the reception center run by the state and/or the humanitarian sector engaged in migrant reception is an issue that produces many divisions. My familiarity with the local people suggests four categories into which I classify Lampedusan people's attitudes toward the choice to cooperate with the humanitarian sector or to resist against or adapt to the hospitality model promoted by the state.

The first can be defined as a *radical attitude*. People who share this attitude oppose both the hospitality model proposed by the state and the reception practices the humanitarian sector promotes. Echoing critiques of international development policies (Hart et al. 2010), they argue that both the state's presence and that of humanitarian organizations prevent

citizens from having an active role in relationships with foreign migrants. In their opinion, the state model of reception and NGO humanitarian interventions both lead to a professionalization of hospitality and the devaluation of local citizens. This position is shared by a minority of people who express far-left political opinions and who have a high level of education. These people I met and accompanied during their meetings and mobilization actions (i.e. protests against the militarization of the island) proclaim a ‘hospitality duty’ toward foreigners whom they would like to take care of autonomously.

The second position can be labeled as a *solidarity attitude*. As in the first case, people who hold this position oppose the hospitality policies promoted by the state and European military bodies (i.e. Frontex). Unlike the first group, however, they consider the role played by the humanitarian sector to be positive. In their view, this represents a valid alternative to the militarized reception model, and hence they collaborate with some of the associations and NGOs devoted to migrant people in Lampedusa. This form of collaboration led to the creation in 2015 of the Lampedusa Solidarity Forum (Forum Lampedusa Solidale), composed of local citizens and representatives of associations and NGOs, such as the Italian Red Cross and Mediterranean Hope. I regularly attended the meetings the members of the Lampedusa Solidarity Forum organize once a week, and I accompanied their various activities including offering food and hot drinks as migrants disembark at the port of Lampedusa; offering clothes and other necessities (soaps, towels and blankets) to migrants who live at the reception center; offering Wi-Fi access and other means of communication (e.g. SIMs) to allow migrants to get in touch with their families; the reconstruction of the migrants’ kinship network for the burial of people who died in the Mediterranean; and management of the Lampedusa cemetery area dedicated to migrants. Maria, a 54-year-old housewife, described these activities as a renewal of a number of practices of care that characterized the former domestic hospitality model which is still understood today as an example to follow and to be proud of. In most cases, people I encountered who hold this solidarity attitude have a high level of education, hold left-wing political opinions and are sometimes close to the values of Catholic Church.

The third position can be described as a *work-centered attitude*, which translates into collaborating with the institutional hospitality model. Those who express this attitude are hired on fixed-term contracts and they work at the migrants’ reception center. Giacomo, a 47-year-old plumber,



underlined how the tasks assigned to local inhabitants are lower in status than those performed by the military bodies and reception professionals who come from outside the island. Typically, women from Lampedusa work as cooks or cleaners within the reception center, while men are hired as drivers or plumbers. Although these people are often paid low wages after long delays, the possibility of earning money without having to look for work outside the island is considered positive. According to Giacomo:

It is better to work near home than to look for a job in Northern Italy. For me, working with migrants is even better than working with tourists as migrant arrivals occur throughout all months of the year.

At the same time, the tasks performed are consistent with the social profile of people who hold this work-centered attitude. Most belong to medium-low social strata and have a lower level of education than the first two groups. The political positioning also differs from the first two groups, since many of the people in this category hold right-wing beliefs. Such a positioning appears to favor a preference for joining the institutional reception model to support one's own economic needs rather than to fulfil a moral duty of solidarity. This attitude aligns with a tendency to judge different migrants as people more or less deserving of welcome. It emerged from the long discussions I had with people of this third group that one of the criteria for this judgment is the interviewees' view of the behavior of migrants within the reception center. Typically, those who oppose the rules of this institution are considered 'bad guests', while those who respect the rules are called 'good guests'. The archetype of the dangerous and unwanted guest is mostly identified with migrants from North Africa who have often organized protests and set fires in the reception center, while the docile and worthy guest is associated with sub-Saharan migrants who are less often involved in such episodes. Similarly, women and children are considered more vulnerable, less dangerous and more deserving guests than men. What emerges, then, is an idea of selective hospitality based on an assumed moral scale of merit.

The fourth position can be described as lying *between the second (solidarity) and third (work-centered) attitudes*. Most people in this group collaborate with both the humanitarian NGO and the institutional sectors. A number of them, for instance, work at the migrant reception center and are members of the Lampedusa Solidarity Forum. Like other Lampedusans employed in the migrant reception center, these people have a low level of

education and a low socio-economic profile. Unlike the workers described above (in the third category), however, these are closer to the leftist circles of the island. This difference emerges, for example, in the idea of universal hospitality that they seek to defend. For instance, in the opinion of Concetta, a 39-year-old cook, who is part of this fourth group, the commitment of local populations alongside the institutional and humanitarian sectors aims to improve the openness toward foreigners who arrive in Lampedusa, regardless of age, gender and nationality of origin.

These different positions (see table below) lead to conflicts within the local population, such as accusations made by those who collaborate with the humanitarian sector against those who work at the migrant reception center, who are considered to be benefitting from the migrants' plight, and rivalries between families that have been included or excluded from jobs at the reception center.

<i>Positioning of local population of Lampedusa</i>	<i>Collaboration with the state reception system</i>	<i>Collaboration with the humanitarian sector</i>
Radical attitude	–	–
Solidarity attitude	–	X
Work-centered attitude	X	–
Attitude between solidarity and work-centered approaches	X	X

Finally, a fifth attitude, which can be labeled as *anti-solidarity attitude*, clashes with the four positions described so far. This fifth attitude, which is strongly related to the growing attraction of anti-immigration parties (i.e. the Northern League party) in Lampedusa, demands the end of migrant arrivals on the island. According to people who share this position, unlike Northern Italian people, Lampedusa inhabitants had to cope with migrant arrivals for a longer time. In their opinion, it is now time to abandon the 'hospitable land brand' associated with Lampedusa in order to promote a new image of the island. Conflicts and accusations especially emerged regarding the relationship between immigration and tourism in Lampedusa: for those seeking a greater development of the tourism industry, the only foreigners who should be welcomed are tourists, while migrants' arrival is a problem that should be removed from the island; for those who are engaged in migrant hospitality, the growing presence of tourists over the last 20 years led to a model of society based on economic

profit, at the expense of solidarity and altruism; for those who work with both migrants and tourists, both are considered as sources of profit that can be managed together as complementary sectors of the local economy; finally, those who work neither with migrants nor with tourists tend to make nostalgic reference to a time before the tourism boom and migration crisis, when the prevailing hospitality model was the domestic one. These conflicts emerged clearly in the polarization of opinions during the last municipal elections (in 2017) where the left-wing mayor, who committed herself to an openness and solidarity attitude to migrants, was replaced with a right-wing mayor, engaged for the development of the tourism industry. The results of the European elections (in 2019) show, meanwhile, the growing political weight of the Northern League party in Lampedusa, which obtains the majority of votes (45.8%). Another example of conflicts within the local population can be found in the contrasting reactions to friction between the Italian government and international NGOs over allowing migrants rescued in the Mediterranean to enter the port of Lampedusa, for instance, the confrontation between the Italian Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini, and the Sea-Watch ship's Captain Carola Rackete, in June 2019. During the weeks migrants were stuck on Sea-Watch's ship, a few miles off Lampedusa's coast, people who share a solidarity attitude carried out sit-ins and protests to ask for the migrants' landing. In contrast, supporters of the Northern League party mobilized against the arrival of migrants on the island. More recently, the COVID-19 epidemic has also resulted in contrasting positions within the local population. On the one hand, the epidemic has become an opportunity to demand the departure of the military bodies and reception professionals who come from outside the island. On the other hand, the global health crisis was used to strengthen anti-immigration positions, up to the outbreak of local protests in June 2020, which resulted in the decision to 'close' the Gate of Europe, a monument that the Italian artist Mimmo Paladino introduced in 2008 to symbolize Lampedusa as a hospitable land (see Fig. 2.1).

Another episode that occurred during the protests of June 2020 was the setting alight of the so-called migrant boat 'cemetery', located on the opposite side of the port of Lampedusa where migrants' landings usually take place.<sup>2</sup> In the same way as the 'closure' of the Gate of Europe, the attempt to destroy this symbolic place shows the desire to revise the historical memory of this borderland, by erasing the monuments that celebrate the hospitality offered to migrants over the years.



**Fig. 2.1** Gate of Europe, before and after the symbolic closure on June 3, 2020. (Source: <http://www.mediterraneocronaca.it/2020/06/03/porta-deuropa-chiusa-a-lampedusa-sbarca-il-pessimo-gusto/>)

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter highlights how the tendency of Lampedusans to be hospitable to foreigners has nothing to do with the notion that hospitality is among the cultural values of the Mediterranean area. While it is true that Catholic moral principles of piety and solidarity partially explain their openness toward the outsider, the inclination to receive the foreigner derives much more from the history of this borderland, from the fact that the Mediterranean is a historically transnational region (Ben-Yehoyada 2017) and the island of Lampedusa a land of immigration and emigration. This situation, I argue, contributes to local populations' broad lack of difficulty in identifying with the foreigner and sympathy with the need to leave one's home to improve one's life. Finally, the openness of Lampedusa's inhabitants is nevertheless dependent upon the transitory nature of foreigners' stay on the island, confirming the law of hospitality as bounded in space and time (Pitt-Rivers 2012; Derrida 1997). As the Tunisian crisis of 2011 and the current global health crisis COVID-19 showed, foreigners

are welcomed and accepted on this island only as temporary guests. Despite this, some inhabitants of this island consider hospitality as a Lampedusan virtue to be proud of, claiming the local commitment to taking care of migrants over time. In parallel, I have tried to show how hospitality discourses and practices have changed in the last decades. State intervention and institutionalization of migrant reception produced spatial, social and symbolic distance between the local population and migrants. The shift in the representation of migrants, in the past considered as people to take care of and nowadays understood predominantly as a money-making opportunity, is emblematic of this process. A number of new tensions within the local population emerged, as a response to the various forms of hospitality the Italian state and the humanitarian sector have brought to Lampedusa in recent years. Additionally, although Lampedusan inhabitants continue to think of themselves as a particularly hospitable population, anti-immigration political positions are increasingly popular confirming even more to what extent openness toward foreigners does not find an explanation in a welcoming culture trait characteristic of the Mediterranean.

## NOTES

1. In this chapter I will use the general category of ‘migrants’ to refer to people who cross the Mediterranean and avoid distinguishing between asylum seekers and economic migrants. According to local terminology, this category doesn’t refer to Italian tourists and northern Italians who have settled in Lampedusa (i.e. artists, retired people) who are classified as ‘foreigners’ (*forestieri*).
2. Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/06/sicily-launches-inquiry-into-fire-in-migrant-boats-graveyard>; <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/bruciati-i-barconi-dei-migranti-lampedusa-rabbia-e-1868302.html>.

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# Guests and Hosts in an Athens Public Hospital: Hospitality as Lens for Analyzing Migrants' Health Care

*Cynthia Malakasis*

**Abstract** Based on six months of ethnographic research in the maternity clinic of a major Athens public hospital in 2017, this chapter employs the conceptual lens of “hospitality” to analyze relationships that formed around the care of pregnant migrants arriving in Greece since 2015. Permanent health-care personnel, mostly midwives, are the hosts; guests include migrant women, NGO workers that accompany them to the hospital, Greek Roma maternity patients, obstetrics residents, and the native ethnographer herself. The focus is on pregnant migrants; the other guests provide comparative fodder to flesh out the subjectivity of the hosts. Through an ethnographic reconstruction of the microcosm of the clinic as a space of care, sovereignty, and everyday life, the chapter takes on two theoretical issues: the problem of scale and the argument

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that the hierarchical character of hospitality is incompatible with a rights-based framework. Critiques to the use of the host-guest trope as a frame for the analysis of relations between migrants and receiving states and societies are well heeded. Yet I demonstrate that guest-host dynamics are very much operative in the interaction between state-employed, permanent health-care personnel and migrants. My analysis highlights the limits and capacities of hospitality's scalar transpositions, as well as the critical potential of hospitality as a lens that elucidates how legally guaranteed migrants' rights are accessed and granted in practice; hospitality and rights thus emerge as complementary rather than opposing structural and explanatory frameworks.

**Keywords** Hospitality • 2015 “refugee crisis” • Maternity care • Auto-ethnography • Greece

### INTRODUCTION: THE HOSPITALITY “ASSEMBLAGE”

I press the doorbell to the public maternity clinic's labor ward, paper cup of coffee at hand and writing materials, the tools of my trade, sticking out of the top of my purse. I am going to work, yet this is a workplace where, much like a guest, I have to be buzzed in. I enter the small antechamber and put on the disposable shoe covers and gown meant to prevent me from transferring any germs I have picked up from the outside world into this secluded space. Rendered safe, I push through the swinging doors into the ward's main area, a wide corridor with a central desk at its far end. Seated around the desk, the ward's permanent tenants, a team of midwives, monitor the labor of women visible through the open doors of the seven, one-bed labor<sup>1</sup> rooms lined around the main space. The pregnant women wear disposable, paper gowns similar to mine, except they are naked underneath, their bodies open to the gaze, hands, and instruments, to the inspection and intervention of obstetricians and midwives. Whether they resent or welcome, normalize, or are troubled by this exposure, I cannot say for certain. This is because the women whose birthing process I am observing are strangers—not only unacquainted with the clinic's permanent occupants but also foreign. They are people who do not speak Greek and therefore cannot communicate through words that I and

health-care professionals can understand whether their nakedness and overall surrender of control over their labor in this strange space makes them feel vulnerable to the health-care personnel or secure in their expert custody.

I am neither a health-care professional nor a pregnant woman who has come to give birth. And I am not foreign either; Greek myself, I am a “native” (Narayan 1993) anthropologist. It is June 2017, almost two years after Greece started receiving large numbers of people fleeing wars in the Middle East and South Asia. I am stationed at the maternity clinic of a major public hospital in Athens to conduct ethnographic fieldwork on the maternity care of migrants without a secure or long-term legal status and particularly on their interactions with health-care personnel. In this chapter, I will analyze these interactions but also the interactions of the clinic’s personnel with other members of the public, such as myself, through the conceptual lens of hospitality. Neither I nor the pregnant migrant women are guests in the clinic—at least not in the strict sense of the word, originating in and referring to domestic settings. Further, we are not here by the “hosts”’ gracious and ostensibly uncalculated generosity (Shryock 2008), but rather through administratively mediated arrangements. My presence has been approved by the hospital’s scientific council, after a formal application and upon the recommendation of the university clinic’s chief medical director. The women’s care in the public clinic is mandated by a clear and specific legal framework. Neither are health-care professionals hosts in the sense of unconditional sovereignty over the entity of reception that the term implies. Rather, they are people whose sovereignty over the physical, social, and professional space of the clinic hinges on contracts—albeit permanent—of employment, administrative rules, and numerous structural and symbolic hierarchies, which shape their subjectivities as “hosts.” Nevertheless, “the most essential elements in the hospitality assemblage are in place” (Shryock 2012: S24): the pregnant women and I have crossed thresholds into a space through specific protocols of entry, and we are received in specific areas of this space, reserved for people whose presence is supposed to be temporary. Further, hospitality’s central dialectic of danger and protection (Candea and Da Col 2012; Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977]; Shryock 2008, 2012) is operative: not only are the guests at the “mercy” (Candea and Da Col 2012: S5) of the hosts, but the latter deploy all sort of “prophylactic” (Candea and Da Col 2012: S3) defenses to make sure the strangers who have entered their

space can neither introduce dangerous elements nor tell defamatory stories after their departure (Shryock 2008, 2012).

### USING “HOSPITALITY” IN NON-DOMESTIC SETTINGS

Through an analysis of encounters in the public maternity clinic, I will demonstrate that hospitality may be used as an analytical lens in non-domestic settings where migrants interact with different segments of host states and societies, such as the public hospital. It may be used, despite the fact that there is no direct scalar correspondence either with the home, where the process of hospitality originates, or with the nation-state, where it has been transposed as a discursive trope to characterize the relationship of immigrants with receiving states and societies, albeit in significantly problematic ways. Major social and political theorists (Derrida 1998, 1999, 2000; Kant 2010 [1795]) have used hospitality to negotiate the problem of “the status of outsiders in political spaces shaped by domestic privilege” (Shryock 2012, S21). Yet more recent social-scientific literature has challenged the concept’s appropriateness for the analysis of relations between migrants and receiving states and societies (Candea and Da Col 2012; Rosello 2001; Shryock 2008, 2012). Critiques to the use of the host-guest trope as a frame for the analysis of relations beyond the household have two main conceptual foci: the issue of scale and the incompatibility between the hierarchical and voluntary character of hospitality and a legally binding framework that institutionalizes access to the physical space of a community and its resources and services as *rights*, rather than graciously voluntary concessions, for certain outsiders.

Scaling out from the household to the nation-state is far from a straightforward, unproblematic process (Candea and Da Col 2012; Rosello 2001). Rather than a unitary host, the nation consists of diverse hosts (Rosello 2001), positioned vis-à-vis migrants either as individuals or as representatives of collectives or entities, such as the public maternity clinic. Such entities still do not have a direct scalar correspondence with the home. What is more, they do not “zoom out” (Candea 2012, S42) directly into the nation-state either.

Entities such as the home and the nation-state, then, do not sit on a schema of neat, concentric circles (*cf.* Herzfeld 1987). Yet the metaphor of hospitality represents them as such, muting the complexities in processes of trespass and welcome (Candea 2012) shaped by the specificities of each environment—the moral prerogatives to receive strangers as

guests, the “jural” (Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977], 503) framework of reception, the “danger” (Shryock 2008; Candea and Da Col 2012) that these strangers-turned-guests represent, the “technolog[ies] of control” (Candea and Da Col 2012, S3) put in place in response, the host’s power over the guest but also the obligation to protect her (Lindholm 1982 in Candea 2012), and the contextually shaped dialectic of “friendship and violence” (Shryock 2012, S30) that characterizes the interaction.

The scalar shift is further “disturbing” (Shryock 2012, S28), because of the inherently hierarchical character of hospitality. Political subjects under a state’s jurisdiction should be able to interact with native people and institutions within a legally mandated framework of justice and equality. Domestic hosts and guests, on the other hand, may not interact as equals, even when their social status renders them such (Shryock 2012); further, guests do not enjoy the clarity and protection of a rights-specifying legal framework (Pitt-Rivers 2012[1977], 512).

Migrants, however, are political subjects, whose rights and obligations within any dealings with the host state, including its health system, are contractually regulated and administratively mediated (Rosello 2001; Shryock 2012). Positing migrants as guests, therefore, deprives them of a protective legal framework and blurs the distinction between discourses and practices of benevolent generosity and contractual obligations (Rosello 2001: 9; also, Candea and Da Col 2012 and Shryock 2008). The scalar shift further generates impossible standards for both states-hosts (or any concrete people or entities represented as metonymic for the state) and migrants-guests to reach (Candea 2012; Shryock 2012). The former are condemned as bad hosts, when they do not observe the ethical code supposedly followed by domestic hosts, abiding by a mandate of total openness, such as unconditional acceptance of guests’ cultural patterns. Guests, on the other hand, are castigated, when their visit and behavior do not abide by the spatiotemporal constraints and behavioral norms of hospitality. For migrants, however, the reticence in claiming access to space and resources and the expression of gratefulness mandated by domestic hospitality are “baffling” (Rosello 2001, 10), when their access to spaces and services is established contractually.

I understand and endorse the epistemological and normative criticism that hospitality has been deployed as “a scale-free abstraction” (Candea 2012, S35), muting the complexities in dynamics and relations and fostering hierarchical politics. In this chapter, however, I will use hospitality in my analysis of the interaction between migrants and one type of host in

Greece: the health-care personnel in the public maternity clinic where I conducted ethnographic fieldwork. I will do so, because, as I demonstrate in the ethnographic sections, hospitality dynamics were de facto present alongside the contractual framework of migrant care and reception and shaped the interactions of migrants with the health-care personnel. Using the concept as an analytical frame allows us precisely to approach processes of hospitality as objects of ethnographic inquiry.

Its domestic origins and specificity aside, hospitality is fundamentally about sovereignty, about processes of welcome and trespass in spaces which hosts at once control but to which they are also obligated to grant access (Candea and Da Col 2012; Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977]; Shryock 2008, 2012). Indeed, scholars who critique the transposition of the concept to non-domestic settings also recognize that the distinction between contractual and social obligations to receive “guests” is morally and politically blurred (Rosello 2001; Shryock 2008). And while hospitality’s idealized moral perfection is inconsistent with the constraints of administratively mediated relations, its ostensible lack of calculation and pragmatic concerns is seldom achieved in domestic settings either (Shryock 2008; Candea and Da Col 2012; Rosello 2001). The Athens public maternity clinic of my research constitutes, unlike domestic settings, a space legally required to receive pregnant women, regardless of financial, legal, or political status.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, it is a highly regulated space, with numerous rules and directives, not always fully clear, determining physical access and access to the different procedures and types of care. The application of these rules and *how* access and care are granted depend, to a degree, on the discretion of the personnel and on their subjective and morally inflected ideas regarding who deserves to benefit from the public good which they have been charged with dispensing (e.g., Willen and Cook 2016). Rather than uncritically transposing hospitality as it has been conceived in its domestic form, I will deploy the concept’s building blocks—sovereignty, the dialectic of trespass and welcome, spatiotemporal constraints of sojourn, the tension between danger and protection and violence and friendship, corresponding mechanisms of control, and the very “distinct materialities” (Candea and Da Col 2012, S14) of the hospital setting—to analyze interpersonal interactions in the microcosm of the maternity clinic. This approach allows an exploration of the limits but also the potentialities of the concept’s cross-scalar application in spaces, such as the public maternity clinic, which incorporate elements of the domestic and the national, without directly corresponding to either.

The analytical tools listed above correspond to site-specific processes that will form the objects of ethnographic inquiry. Apart from elements of the domestic and the national, the clinic further encompasses structural features and cultural norms of bureaucracy, biomedicine, and gendered processes of care. Bureaucracy, biomedicine, and care are all inherently hierarchical domains, entailing entry in physical and social spaces whose cultural codes often evade those who visit them temporarily to conduct business or receive a service. This inherently temporary character of visits to an entity such as a public maternity clinic partly solves the problem of what to do with a guest when the length of her stay ushers her into the category of either local who must be made so or invader who must be expelled (Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977], 503), a problem inherent in domestic hospitality as much as in the relation between migrants and receiving states. At the same time, the visit of migrants to a public facility of care easily becomes metonymic for their group's "visit" to the nation-state at large, particularly when the public facility's personnel belong to the dominant ethno-national group and see themselves at once as gatekeepers and rightfully privileged partakers of the national state's resources.

This latter element foregrounds the issue of sharing, highlighted in scholarship that denounces hospitality's uncritical transposition. In a world of states, "hospitality" is mediated administratively rather than interpersonally, precisely in order to "insulate all parties from the risks and inconveniences of sharing" (Shryock 2012, S31). Yet the administrative and the interpersonal are hard to disentangle in most settings, not least in the intimate arena of maternity care. As I will demonstrate, concerns regarding the sharing of public resources underlie the process of care and are reflected in but also constitutive of interpersonal interactions in administrative settings and transactions.

An approach that at once deploys the analytical toolkit of hospitality and treats its site-specific manifestation as an object of ethnographic inquiry stands to highlight the complexities in processes of reception blurred by the concept's unproblematized transposition and to lay bare the politics and hierarchies enabled either by the normalized, explicit use by the metaphor (Candea 2012; Rosello 2001) or by guest-host dynamics, even when they are not overtly called that by the people involved. It further reveals that, rather than mutually exclusive, hospitality and rights constitute complementary sets of dynamics shaping the interaction of migrants and members of the host nation in entities and spaces such as a public health-care facility.

## GUESTS AND HOSTS IN THE PUBLIC MATERNITY CLINIC

Launching forward from the foundational premise that the problem of hospitality is “the problem of how to deal with strangers” (Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977], 501) necessitates defining the stranger—even more so if we wish to pay attention to scalar specificities. Equating “stranger” with “foreigner,” particularly in everyday interactions, amounts to methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002), in the sense that it assumes that ethnic or national belonging forms the primary dimension of people’s social identification and axis along which they form social connections. In this chapter, I lay out the interactions of the clinic’s hosts with an assortment of strangers, separated from the hosts in some cases indeed by ethnicity or nationality, but just as much by gender, class, religion, professional hierarchies or exigencies, and ideological approaches to maternity care. As hosts, I conceptualize those members of the clinic’s medical personnel with permanent positions there, in their status as permanently employed public servants in the Greek National Health System (NHS). Given the scope of my ethnographic observation, this cohort consists overwhelmingly of midwives working in the clinic’s outpatient department, triage department, and labor room, whose interactions with migrants I witnessed when I spent time in those areas, from March to September 2017. To a lesser degree, it also includes two senior obstetricians that participated in my research via informal conversations and semi-structured interviews. People occupying the continuum between (hostile) strangers and potential community members (Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977], 504), on the other hand, are myself, the native ethnographer; the migrant patients whose care I was there to study; Roma women and their families, who, unlike the majority of middle-class Greeks increasingly opting to give birth in private facilities (Mosialos et al. 2005), overwhelmingly prefer this public clinic for maternity care and childbirth; obstetrics residents, whose presence there is temporary, unlike the permanently employed midwives-hosts; and a male, Middle-Eastern,<sup>3</sup> NGO-employed interpreter who had lived in Greece for several years and was accompanying pregnant migrants to the hospital.

Unlike Pitt-River’s (2012 [1997], 503) stranger, all of us listed above do have a “jural” place within the system. I have formal permission to be there; pregnant women are legally entitled to public maternity care; obstetrics residents are contractually employed; and the NGO interpreter’s presence also abides by the hospital’s formal rules, since he is escorting

women seeking care. Further, we are not guests in someone's home. Yet our interactions with our "hosts" are mediated just as much through the "law of hospitality" (Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977]) as through the administrative framework that regulates our presence in the hospital.

### FOREIGN STRANGERS, VOICELESS GUESTS

If the drama of hospitality plays out across thresholds and on specific stages, then setting this chapter's opening scene in the clinic's labor room means that the narrative started out in *medias res*; it plunged into a crucial point toward the climax of a chain of events, rather than telling the story from the beginning. The story of hospitality in the maternity clinic begins in the outpatient department, in whose large reception area anyone can enter freely from the hospital's concrete courtyard. The "tests" (Candea and Da Col 2012; Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977]; Shryock 2008, 2012) of hospitality, for hosts and guests alike, start here, where guarded thresholds are waiting to be crossed and rituals of intelligibility, which transform strangers into guests (Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977]), to be performed.

At the outpatient department's reception area, midwives on duty take turns staffing the cubicle where the public conducts administrative matters through the glass window. On my first day of fieldwork at the hospital, on March 16, 2017, I am invited to set up shop inside the cubicle. There, a midwife in her 50s, Martha,<sup>4</sup> who has most likely worked in the Greek NHS for at least two decades, is processing the paperwork of a Syrian pregnant woman. "Foreigners are a big problem," she tells me, mostly because there is no linguistic interpretation. The hospital does not employ people who could interpret between Arabic or Farsi (or other languages spoken by refugee cohorts, such as the Pakistanis' Urdu or the Kurdish dialects of Kurmanji or Sorani) and Greek. On their part, refugees speak no Greek, and their English is also limited. Furthermore, "all," according to Martha, pregnant migrants come to the hospital when they are close to term. They come without any results of prenatal examinations, a fact that puts pressure on the doctors. Until two months before, she tells me, they used to come in mass numbers without appointments, but the hospital has since coordinated with the NGOs providing social care to refugees, and the appointment system is now observed.

Unpacking these complaints lays out the interpersonal dynamics of hospitality operative in the clinic but also the broader socio-structural context of migrants' social care in Greece at that moment, which played a crucial



role in shaping the subjectivities of the hosts. The fact that the health-care personnel and migrant women under their care were unable to communicate verbally anchors my analysis in this section. The linguistic gap posed an additional challenge to already overworked and frustrated personnel, but more significantly this gap spawned or exacerbated the hierarchies within the inherently vertical relationalities of medicalized reproductive care (e.g., Cosminsky 2016; Davis-Floyd and Sargent 1997), and these factors decisively tilted hospitality's scales of "friendship and violence" (Shryock 2012, S30) toward the latter.

After a few days hanging around the cubicle, I enter an inner space, the outpatient department's examination room. There, women's files are opened or assessed by midwives and obstetrics residents on duty, emergency cases are examined, and fetuses close to term monitored. A few yards away from the open reception area, the examination room has no access-control keypad or doorbell; people just open the door and walk in. The personnel either encourage entry or ask people to walk back out and wait; there is an order in their system I do not quite understand. I push the door open gingerly, expecting to be questioned, but nobody pays me any attention. Pregnant women are waiting to be seen; others are lying in beds behind a cloth partition; trainee midwives are attending to the women behind the partition or hovering around the obstetrics resident on duty seated at a desk facing the entrance.

In his foundational piece on the "law of hospitality," Pitt-Rivers distinguishes between strangers, who are unknown, and guests, who attain this status through "rites of passage" that make them known to their hosts and situate them along the local "hierarchy of prestige" (2012 [1977], 503). In the context of reproductive care, these processes encompass embodied, social, and cultural elements. At least in the highly medicalized setting that I observed, knowing pregnant women meant knowing the physical particularities of their reproductive systems, their medical histories, but also the social relations and cultural patterns that may have been factors in their childbearing.

At the examination room's desk, an obstetrics resident, Voula, is checking the file of a Syrian woman a month away from giving birth, who has come to the clinic for the first time, accompanied by an NGO-employed social worker and an interpreter. Voula leafs through the assortment of papers in the woman's file<sup>5</sup> and finds an ultrasound scan with a different name on it. Confusion and irritation ensue, as Voula and Martha, the midwife we met earlier, look through the woman's papers for an ultrasound

with the correct name on it. I want to interfere and tell them to ask the woman herself when and whether she had her last ultrasound. I hesitate, but, prompted by months of ethnographic research on the other side of the “maternity encounter” (Malakasis and Grotti 2016),<sup>6</sup> I address my suggestion to the social worker, who responds in a friendly but resigned manner:

Even if she remembers, since she doesn’t have it with her... You can’t imagine; they lose half their papers.

A few days later, the same obstetrics resident, Voula, grumbles as she sorts through another Syrian woman’s sparse file. It is a very young woman in her first pregnancy, and she has just arrived in Athens from an Aegean island of first reception.<sup>7</sup> She does not have an ultrasound or any other examination results with her.

“They don’t know anything; the man knows everything,” Voula scoffs, referring to refugee women in general. “When they have their period; when they are giving birth.”<sup>8</sup>

Martha attempts to give an explanation—“Since it’s the man who’s dominant...”—but Voula persists: “Okay, but the man was dominant here too, but our women knew when they were on their period, and when they were supposed to give birth, and how many children they had.”<sup>9</sup>

For Pitt-Rivers, each community has its own standards, which find no direct equivalent in other settings. But in a colonialism-scarred world, the ostensibly local “hierarchy of prestige” (Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977], 503) is usually inflected by and reflects imported and imposed “criteria of cultural excellence” (Herzfeld 2002, 905). Historically, in order to secure its own precarious position within the hegemonic space of “*Europeanness*” (Hesse 2007, 646, emphasis in the original), Greece<sup>10</sup> has erected strong boundaries of “civilization” against ethnic, national, racial, or religious categories farther away than itself from the ideal of whiteness and western Christianity (Herzfeld 2002; Tsoukalas 2000). The resulting evaluation mechanism, therefore, situates migrant women, Muslims from Syria and Afghanistan in their vast majority, toward the bottom rungs of a spatiotemporal civilizational ladder.

Unlike Pitt-Rivers’ ideal-typical stranger, then, who has “no place within the system, no status save that of stranger” (2012 [1977], 503), these strangers have a place within the global distribution of “symbolic capital” (Bourdieu 1994), in which hosts are also embedded. Rather than being unknown, therefore, these potential guests are known through

pre-existing prejudices that compel their hosts to privilege culturalist explanations for phenomena largely grounded in these pregnant women's recent structural circumstances. Messy medical files reflect the discontinuity of maternity care over protracted, unpredictable refugee journeys with multiple stops at places where care was either inaccessible or provided in "emergency" (Grotti et al. 2019) rather than regular form. Further, the gendered lack of agency over their reproductive processes attributed to Syrian and Afghan women by Greek health-care personnel (see also Malakasis and Sahraoui 2020) often reflects the linguistic gap or the fact that the women consider it futile to communicate their thoughts and wishes, given the haphazard and indifferent treatment they have faced in structures of reception and care since their arrival in Greece (Malakasis Forthcoming) (Fig. 3.1).

The desk where Voula is seated faces the room's entrance. To her right, along the wall, pregnant women close to term lie on reclining beds



**Fig. 3.1** The living space of a Syrian family of five placed by the UNHCR in a NGO-administered hotel in downtown Athens. Their suitcases, covered yet ready to use, evince the unpredictability of their journey and overall circumstances, which impacted the maternity care pregnant refugees received

separated from each other and from the main space with cloth partitions. They are hooked up to NST machines monitoring their fetuses' heart rates.<sup>11</sup> Behind the partition, I can see stockings feet, but not much else.

Much like in the labor ward upstairs, the social geography of the examination room corresponds to voiceless strangers hosted at the room's physical margins, in "stages" (Shryock 2012: S24) designated specifically for them and the procedures they must undergo. The "hospitality" encounter in this setting does not breed the affinity it would in a home's living room or even in a village square. Hosts are not compelled to entertain their guests at all times or cloak their rational concerns under ostensibly spontaneous warmth. Rather, health-care personnel check in on their pregnant "guests" at intervals designated by conventions known only to them, unlike the "shared language" (Shryock 2012, S22) of hospitality. In the labor ward, these depersonalized hierarchies are accentuated, rather than weakened, by the physicality of the encounter.

On a morning in mid-June 2017, about a month after I have transitioned from the outpatient department to the labor ward, I walk in to find a 20-year-old Syrian in an advanced stage of labor. She is in one of the seven labor rooms surrounding the central desk at the far end of the ward's main area. The door is open, and I can see her standing next to the bed, leaning on it with her arms. She is wearing a hospital gown that bares most of her front when it often comes undone. A young trainee midwife, Artemis, is helping her breathe during the contractions and the pain. At the central desk, three senior midwives are discussing the issue of summer leave; their voices are raised and angry.

As I hover by the room's entrance, a male obstetrician walks in, checks the woman's NST, pronounces it "good," asks about her dilation, and leaves. The woman's body stiffens; she is in pain, but she is making an effort to not yell too loudly. Artemis tells her in English to "relax." A little later, she inserts her finger in the woman's vagina to check her dilation. For Artemis, this is the third time she has assisted a woman through labor, and she is still feeling unconfident. She inserts her finger again to make sure. A female obstetrics resident walks in and speaks to the woman in English, in a raised voice and harsh tone: "relax, not like this, okay?"

The resident thinks the woman's dilation is at eight centimeters; she thinks her cervix is also effacing but holding up on the upper left. She asks the woman to open up and inserts her finger in her vagina. After this, the woman falls on her knees again in pain, and the resident yells at her, "not like this." At the central desk just outside, the senior midwives'

conversation has turned to what they will cook for lunch once they make it home after their shift. One of them says she will make sautéed wild greens and fried potatoes to serve alongside grilled fish. It's a down-home, wholesome meal, and I register a general sense of approval.

I turn my attention back to the Syrian woman in labor. She is now standing up and leaning toward the bed in rhythmic movements; she's crying, but more quietly. The senior midwives are now talking about the hassle and intricacies of dying the roots of the hair.

While I join the midwives' conversation on hair coloring, I maintain eye contact with the pregnant woman through the labor room's open door. I want to be encouraging and friendly, but I don't know how. I am also thinking that, if she were one of the five Syrian women with whom I have been conducting long-term, ethnographic interviews on their maternity care in Greece for the past eight months, she would describe to me this scene in detail, probably mentioning that there was another "doctor" there (given the paper gown I am wearing, similar in color and cut to the gowns worn by health-care staff) taking notes in her hot-pink notebook. The woman sees and observes everything quite keenly; she just has no words to express her thoughts.

Either solicited and put into words or unspoken and merely assumed, the thoughts of refugee women were interpreted to health-care staff by a set of people occupying a distinct position in the structure of care formed around refugee women, interpreters employed by NGOs to accompany them to public health-care facilities. Through interpretation that exceeded the linguistic, these actors shaped potential guests—the humanitarian sector's broader involvement, however, also shaped the subjectivities of the hosts.

### MAKING STRANGERS KNOWN: THE GUEST-INTERMEDIARY

Most days that I arrive for fieldwork, I find Qassem at the hospital's concrete yard, chatting to a pregnant, usually Syrian, refugee and her partner, explaining or urging them toward secular and "modern" ways of thought and practice centered on gender equality and faith in biomedicine.

"In the end, I have my way of convincing them," he tells me, confident in all the ways in which he straddles the world of the clinic and that of refugees. "This is not Syria, where she will give birth at home or by the well."

A political refugee from the Middle East himself, albeit one who did not receive asylum but rather “amnesty” via a large 2001 program for undocumented migrants (Fakiolas 2003), Qassem has been in Greece for 21 years. After working an assortment of jobs, he was hired, in the summer of 2016, as an interpreter for a major NGO that provided, at the time of this research, housing as well as medical and social services to refugees. His job is to interpret for all the women aided by his organization who come to the hospital.

In Pitt-Rivers’ account (2012 [1977]), in small, face-to-face communities, strangers become guests via their relationship with an established community member. Qassem himself occupies an intermediate spot between guest and community member in the hospital; he is neither medically trained nor employed in the Greek NHS, yet the treatment he receives positions him at a middle ground between professional insider and member of the public. At the outpatient department’s reception cubicle, he explains the data on the asylum-seeker’s card to the midwife preparing a woman’s file; “what would we do without him?!” the midwife coos to me. Unlike the rest of the public, and indeed unlike most other NGO-employed interpreters and social workers I observed in the clinic, Qassem is inside the cubicle, not in front of the window. Like me, he is invited to store his belonging in the staff cabinets at the back of the cubicle. In an office, he confers with an obstetrician on the problem of a woman’s missed prenatal examinations; the two commiserate over the messy cases they are called to handle. Qassem tells the doctor that he and other NGO workers are “going crazy.” “I’ll go crazy one of these days too,” the doctor replies. At the examination room, he engages in familiar, cordial banter with residents on duty. “I only have one Elisa, I do not have ten,” he tells one of them, trying to cajole her into skipping a bureaucratic formality. “And you’re paining me.” The refugee woman he is accompanying is at her eighth pregnancy, and she is also recovering from surgically removed thyroid cancer. Four pregnancies ended in miscarriage, and she has borne three girls via C-section. The current fetus is also female. “She won’t stop until she has a boy,” Qassem tells the resident, “you mark my words.”

“No, I will perform a tubal ligation after this C-section,” the resident, Elisa, retorts. “No more.”

The woman’s medical file further reveals a serious car accident; her abdomen is scarred by a sizeable burn.

“With this burn and a fourth C-section, we are doing a tubal ligation,” the resident insists.

“I am telling you, they don’t stop until they have a boy,” Qassem also stands his ground. “It’s law.”

Health-care staff relies on Qassem to make refugee strangers known, yet he does more than that, and this is perhaps why he has transitioned from stranger to guest to halfway community member, unlike most NGO workers, who are treated with professional distance by the clinic staff. Qassem does not only interpret refugees to the health-care staff; he also strives to enculturate them into the gender and medical norms that prevail in Greek hospitals.

“These people are not used to maternity care,” he tells me when I interview him after months of observing him at the clinic. “They don’t know anything. When you tell them they must undergo exams, it seems strange to them; ‘I’m pregnant, I’m not sick.’”

Much like most members of the health-care staff, Qassem identified culturally backward, oppressive gender norms as the main obstacle refugee women’s care. “Peasant” Syrian men, unlike other Middle-Eastern national groups, such as Iraqis or Kurds, object to male doctors seeing their wives’ bodies, he said. “The typical ones we see with the headscarf,” he tells me, reiterating the hegemonic, racially profiling stereotype. “She has married a man, and he is the only one who has the right to see her.”

In his self-appointed position as intermediary, he gets drawn into interpreting the Koran for them, to explain that there is no shame in a man seeing a woman’s body for medical reasons. “I am forced to become one of them,” in appealing to the Koran’s authority, he tells me; a task that, as an atheist, he resents (Fig. 3.2).

Months of effort, he said, have paid off; most refugees have stopped demanding female doctors. Refugees listen to him, he said, because he facilitates their path to care. “So, they don’t say anything. Whatever I say, that’s what’s done.”

The way Qassem is welcomed and allowed to cross thresholds almost as if he worked at the maternity clinic belies the hospital staff’s often acrimonious ambivalence regarding the NGOs’ inroads into Greek public health care. The humanitarian sector’s involvement in Greek social care grew significantly in response to the austerity regime that started in 2010.<sup>12</sup> Its irruption in response to the episode of migration that began in the summer of 2015,<sup>13</sup> however, hints at supranational processes of entry and reception that affect the hospitality encounter in the public clinic’s microcosm. Refugees crossing into Greece from Turkey on their way to countries of Northern and Western Europe have been, since early 2016, trapped





**Fig. 3.2** A Syrian refugee walks the streets of Athens pushing her three-month-old baby in a stroller. After interviewing Qassem, I asked her if she would be embarrassed to have a male obstetrician examine her or assist her with childbirth. “No,” she said emphatically, she understands that he would be looking at her as a doctor, not as a man. And since his examination would be health-related, the Quran would have no problem with it either

in Greece, unless they accept to return to Turkey or to their countries of origin. As part of turning Greece into a “buffer state” for the rest of the European Union (Christopoulos and Spyropoulou 2019), the European Commission has directed significant funds toward the social care of migrants there (Howden and Fotiadis 2017), funds primarily channeled to the humanitarian sector via the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Major transnational and Greek NGOs operative in the country have used these funds to offer health care and housing and to employ numerous social workers and interpreters aiding refugees in their dealings with administrative and medical structures.

Although refugees desire to reach countries of “core” Europe (Delanty 1995, 48), they are made to wait indefinitely in the physical and political foyer of the larger edifice. The image of the “foyer” evokes the domestic, but transposing the conceptual metaphor of hospitality to state-level entry



and reception transcends its use as a heuristic for the interpersonal dynamics of the clinic; rather, it risks reproducing its discursive deployment by powerful public actors, who use it to depict migrant reception precisely as an act of benevolence toward uninvited and henceforth indebted guests (Rozakou 2012). Arguably, however, it is precisely the built-in hierarchies and power-based arbitrariness of the official, contractual framework, which disproportionately allocates migrants to first-entry EU states and violates refugee law through “agreements” of dubious legality (Christopoulos and Spyropoulou 2019) that foster hospitality-like dynamics in entities such as the public hospital. Through the mass involvement of the humanitarian sector, protocols of entry had to be adjusted and the hosts’ mastery over the house was challenged.

Referring to the problem of the linguistic gap, a senior obstetrician, Eleni, said that a major medical NGO had offered the hospital to station its interpreters there permanently, provided its logo could be displayed on hospital premises. But this would brand the hospital as a refugee hospital, Eleni said, and the hospital was already serving more refugees than its share, at the expense of the specialized medical services that it was supposed to provide to refugees and the general population alike.

For another senior obstetrician, Angela, the current circumstance of refugees and the humanitarian sector compounds a structural imbalance of Greek health care, the underdevelopment of the primary-care sector. The maternity clinic of the hospital where I conducted research is one of the University of Athens maternity clinics, based and separately administered in various university hospitals in the Athens metropolitan area. These are public hospitals but with a strong research and teaching component; both Eleni and Angela are also faculty members apart from senior doctors. For Angela, taking on the care of dispossessed cohorts, such as refugees, detracted from the clinic’s primary mission. Ordinary maternity care should take up only about 20 percent of the clinic’s activity, she said, and the rest should be research and specialized services (e.g., pathological pregnancies).

If strangers must become known, for hosts the central test of hospitality is that of sovereignty; the challenge of rendering their physical and social space supposedly is wide open, while retaining the power to determine and regulate access (Shryock 2012). My interlocutors are employees in a publicly owned facility, not domestic hosts. Their words, however, reveal a sense of ownership that compels them to speak earnestly in terms of welcome and trespass.

“We deal with everything here, it doesn’t bother us,” Angela told me, during an evening shift at the labor ward. “We would just like some sort of entry control; they are sending us women without their histories and appointments.”

Yet refugees are a “wave,” Angela said; the chronic cause for the hospital’s scientific but also class demotion are “gypsies,” whose presence is, for Angela, a factor that has “forced” middle-class, Greek women to resort to private maternity clinics.

“We end up offering our specialized knowledge to immigrants and gypsies,” the doctor protested.

Syrian refugees have occupied the role of an Other, in Greece and wider Europe, since 2015, yet partially so often also represented as dignified supplicants rendered such by circumstances that in the past affected Europeans as well. Roma however constitutes Europe’s perennially racialized and marginalized cohort (e.g., O’Nions 2014).

### THE GUESTS-BEGGARS

Looking at it from this angle, the difference between refugees and Roma is the fundamental difference, in Pitt-Rivers’ analytical terms, between honorable indigents and insolent beggars. The former are people who are not allowed to pay and who, at better times, would be willing and able to reciprocate. The latter, however, are chronically unable or unwilling to pay or to potentially assume the role of hosts at another hospitality “occasion” (2012 [1997], 509). Furthermore, they do not act as guests, but rather as rightful partakers in public health, often defying formal rules of access. At the triage department, many of them have learned the code for the access pad, normally restricted to the public, and buzz themselves in asking for prenatal care, which, as triage midwives also stated, contradicts the character of the hospital as a tertiary-care facility.

Social boundaries, however, are fluid and contextual. Thus, Roma are re-humanized when contrasted to the “inhuman” subjectivities of other cohorts in the clinic’s microcosm, a microcosm embedded in broader Greek social hierarchies. Tellingly, this re-humanization is articulated amidst the labor ward’s head midwife rant against the hierarchies between midwives and obstetricians. She is speaking loudly and aggressively, unconcerned about who may hear her in the buzzing ward. Residents are steps away, and senior obstetricians walk in and out. Midwives assist women through hours of labor, she says, yet obstetricians hog the credit merely by

stepping in the delivery room at the last minute. Greek women are also to blame, she argues, because they are “clueless” of the work that midwives perform.

Another senior midwife, Alkmini, interjects to confirm the contrast between ungrateful mainstream Greeks and Roma women. Once, she tells me, she assisted a Greek woman with fetal arrhythmia through her delivery, yet the woman credited the successful outcome to her doctor, who had had no part in the process. Unlike Greek women, Roma women acknowledge the work of the midwives, expressing their gratitude by saying “auntie, may I eat your shit.”

“There is no doctor who is also a human being,” Alkmini concludes.

To wit, Roma patients suddenly are re-humanized and transition from hostile strangers to guests, when they observe the conventions of hospitality by displaying gratitude toward their hosts. The tilt of the scales from hostility to openness may be temporary, given the abysmal social chasm that separates Roma from mainstream Greeks, but it occurs nonetheless. More than this, however, it is a gratitude that is acknowledged and praised, because it confirms the subjectivity of the hosts as such, through the acknowledgment of their professional mastery.

### THE GUESTS-DENIZENS

Shortly after she rants against obstetricians, the head midwife rebukes two residents directly, when they perform an episiotomy<sup>14</sup> on a Syrian woman. Episiotomies are a key indicator of the biomedical model of maternity care (Smeenk and ten Have 2003; WHO 2015), dominant in Greece since about the 1980s (Georges 1996). Just after they have incised the woman’s tissue, the head midwife enters the delivery room and takes over, chastising the residents angrily and loudly.

Later, I ask the resident who led the labor process if she is a senior resident. My question aims to understand the way labors are allocated among residents, but she thinks I am asking why she did not stand her ground. “Yes, I am senior, but we don’t speak back to the midwives,” she tells me; “there is a lot of bullying.”

To join the obstetrics community, residents must learn the ways of established obstetricians. The labor ward, however, the site where they are hosted and tested as potential community members, is the domain of midwives, who favor a less medicalized model of care. At the overlapping thresholds of physical spaces, professional categories, and communities

demarcated by their ideologically and scientifically divergent approaches to care, the lens of hospitality highlights the multiple struggles, structural hierarchies, and normative processes of trespass and welcome that occur just below the veneer of contractual arrangements.

Although united with the residents by age and precarity, for most of my fieldwork, I have gravitated toward the permanently employed, mostly middle-aged midwives, who have seemed more central to the processes I am there to observe. I interact closely with residents for the first time when Saleena comes to the hospital to give birth, on a Sunday in June 2017, along with her husband and nine-year-old daughter. Saleena is not wearing a head covering, and her husband dons a white T-shirt and long shorts, a casual summer outfit similar to that of the average Greek. Their smiling, sociable little girl speaks Greek fluently and interprets for her mother at the triage unit. Amira has thick, dark hair in long, carefully woven braids; the image of her face etched in my mind months after the encounter evokes animated drawings of Heidi. She's wearing a red-and-white, polka-dot dress and a white cardigan, and she is carrying a red, child's backpack. The admiring affection the child evokes to the staff conditions her parents' welcome.

Amira is even able to translate my consent protocol to her mother. Yet even before I ask, one of the residents on duty, Effie, has already encouraged me to witness Saleena's delivery. This has been the case since I started at the hospital; nobody has ever asked me if I had a woman's consent to be present in any procedure; on the contrary, they have encouraged me to watch. The joint effect of formal rules and hospitality dynamics is once again at play: the effects of my formal permission are compounded by the growing friendship of my hosts. Effie also encourages me to make my way upstairs to the labor ward, on the hospital's second floor, via the internal elevator, which links the ward to the ground-floor triage unit, rather than the regular route open to the public.

As we wait for Saleena, placed in a labor room, to reach the pushing stage of her labor, I spend time with the residents. During shifts in the labor ward, they hang out in what is formally the head midwife's office: a long and narrow room, crammed with brown and gray, old-fashioned pieces of office furniture. It is 9 p.m., dinnertime in Athens, and they invite me to join them in ordering food. We debate from where to order *souvlakia*, and I recommend my neighborhood grill, some 700 meters away from the hospital. As I praise the place, the familiar pang of fragile attachment hits me, followed by the equally familiar reaction of shutting it

down. “My” neighborhood will be mine for as long as my professional situation allows me to keep a residence in my home country—a length of time that, for a junior academic unsure of her next position, is hard to determine.

As we eat, I chat with Effie. She is 32 years old. Fueled by my own anxieties as much as by the objectives of the research, I ask about her plans after the residency. She tells me she will pursue some sort of specialization abroad, in a subfield of either gynecology or obstetrics. After this, she may stay abroad. Hoping for a spot in the saturated Greek NHS is “absurd,” she says, and the alternative of a private practice would be viable only if she were the younger relative of an established gynecologist, who would bequeath her clientele and equipment.

Just as we finish eating, Saleena is ready to start pushing. Minutes after she is wheeled into the delivery room, she gives birth to a baby boy, assisted by three residents, Effie, Maria, and Nikos, who have asked me how to say “congratulations” (*mabrouk*) in Arabic. They know I have been working with refugees outside the hospital, and, in this moment, I am the (Greek) community member that facilitates the hospitality event. Nikos is excited; he asks me a few times to get the pronunciation straight, and he says it to her. Saleena thanks them, and I teach them how to say, “you are welcome.” The moment’s joyful connectedness occurs in the context of—or, arguably, despite—multiple host-guest relationships between the Syrian family who stepped into the Greek hospital to bring their new member into the world and continue on their way, the Greek anthropologist stationed in her home country on a fixed-term academic contract, and the obstetrics residents, who shall have to look for different employment, quite possibly outside the country, once their training periods at the public hospital end. Our multiple subjectivities as guests or hosts in the nation-state, in the hospital, and, for me and the doctors, as denizens in the country’s labor force generate a plural hospitality event where hostility is “laid in abeyance” (Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977], 509) through the realization of the contingency of host and guest positions.

Yet, for some of the health-care staff, I am still a “dangerous” guest. Before we started eating, Maria and Nikos broke Saleena’s waters manually, and I asked why. Maria responded that, since Saleena had been admitted to the labor ward, there was no point in letting her wait it out. The necessary conditions were in place; this was her third birth, and she was already dilated. Had they let the labor evolve by itself, she said, it might have taken all night. This way, she gave birth three hours after arriving at the clinic’s triage.

Hearing our exchange, Soula, the midwife on duty that night, intervened to tell me that breaking a woman's waters manually was a natural way of inducing labor, without medication. A little while later, when Saleena was given her newborn boy for skin-to-skin contact,<sup>15</sup> Soula asked me whether I had noted how well, how by the book everything was done. The biomedical model of maternity care, which represents pregnancy and birth as dangerous processes requiring medical management and interventions such as episiotomies and C-sections, prevails in Greece as in most industrialized countries (Rowland et al. 2012; Smeenk and ten Have 2003). Yet the opposing view of reproduction as a natural process that requires little intervention has been gaining increasing scientific and social currency, as evinced by statements, directives, and campaigns of bodies such as the WHO and the UNFPA (Lokugamage and Pathberiya 2017). In her capacity as midwife but also representative of the hospital, Soula tried to ensure that my post-departure stories would confirm the clinic's adherence to this trend. I responded that I was not there to judge them; I was there to understand.

### THE GUEST-POET

This is a good line to navigate tricky turns in the ethnographic encounter, but not entirely true. After understanding, I must write. And the balance I must strike between representation and critique (Cabot 2015) is never far from my mind. In the clinic's hospitality "assemblage" (Shryock 2012, S24), I occupy the spot of the "guest-poet" (Shryock 2012, S23), the guest whose post-departure words can make or break the hosts' reputation. The more the doors of the house open to me, the more I become aware of the danger I pose—and also, in a more self-serving way, of the danger of producing shallow scholarship or not being allowed back for future research. On one of my first days in the hospital, a midwife describes to me, guilelessly, the class and ethno-racial hierarchies, rather than formal and equitable rules, which determine in which maternity wards women are placed after giving birth. Or perhaps what I perceived as lack of guile concealed, in fact, an intention to get this information out. Whichever the case, she opened up the house to me in a dangerous way (Shryock 2008, 415), which could create all sorts of trouble, were I to relay this information. I will not do so here, or in any other articles, particularly since I did not corroborate the scheme she described by prolonged and systematic observation in the wards. Yet awareness of the "deception" (Bernard

2011, 256) inherent in ethnographic fieldwork, when research participants have normalized the ethnographer's presence enough to let their guard down and behave as if there were no observer in their midst, crept up on me throughout my sojourn in the clinic.

The only time I do not feel welcome at the clinic, when hostility between hosts and guest is not "laid in abeyance" (Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977], 509), is when my behavior indicates that I have not learned the local language and that the "poems" I will write after leaving may mar the reputation of my hosts. Flustered by the pain of an Afghan woman in a labor room, I ask her in English if she needs me to call a "nurse," thinking she is likelier to understand "nurse" than the more specialized term "midwife." From a few yards away, the head midwife hears my inaccurate, albeit well-intentioned word choice. The chastising that ensues resembles the ones I have witnessed against obstetrics residents. While I cower at my chair, my head hunched over my notebook, actually documenting the incident and already intending to use it in an article such as this, the head midwife paces around bellowing, her irate remarks shooting forth from accumulated anger.

This is why this country is going to shit; this is why we have such a large percentage of C-sections. You are a guest here. This is what you will call us in your writings, nurses?

### CONCLUSION: CONTESTED SOVEREIGNTY, AMBIVALENT HOSTS

This is the first and only time I am called a "guest" during my fieldwork in the clinic. My "hosts," the midwives, are hosts who do not own the house, yet feel proprietary and protective toward the physical space of the hospital, the public-health resources it encompasses, and the norms of reproductive care they espouse and promote. Their subjectivities as hosts emerge through and alongside their plural identifications and exigencies: civil servants, health-care professionals, Greek nationals, women, and people embedded in specific class hierarchies and ideological contestations within the broad community of maternity professionals.

Similarly, in an entity that combines the bureaucratic with the biomedical, rules of access claim unassailability in their supposed basis on rational planning and scientific principles. The lens of hospitality, however, foregrounds the complex interaction of formal rules, sociocultural hierarchies,

and professional and ideological exigencies that determine the content, so to speak, rather than the form of “guests” reception in the clinic.

An indiscriminate transposition of hospitality to settings featuring processes of welcome and trespass risks stretching the concept to a point that would render it slack and meaningless. Its critical deployment, however, illuminates and problematizes *de facto* hospitality dynamics in entities where physical access and access to resources should be available on the basis of an equitable and contractual framework rather than class or ethno-racial hierarchies.

## NOTES

1. The term “labor rooms” refers to the rooms where women in labor are placed until they are fully dilated and ready to start pushing, when they are taken to the delivery room.
2. In April 2016, the Greek government passed a law granting free maternity care throughout pregnancy, labor, and the post-partum period to all women without means or insurance, regardless of legal or political status in the country.
3. This identification is not meant to essentialize him, but rather to protect his anonymity per the ethical commitments of my research.
4. All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of research participants.
5. For the significance of the file and what it reveals regarding the trajectories of pregnant migrants along migration and care routes in that specific socio-historical period in Greece, please see Grotti et al. (2019).
6. From November 2016 to July 2017, I conducted ethnographic research with five Syrian pregnant refugees in Athens with the help of a Syrian interpreter. Working closely with them afforded me a grasp on the way pregnant migrants perceived and experienced maternity care in Greece—a perspective I could not acquire through my work in the hospital, because of the linguistic gap and my spatiotemporally limited interaction with migrant women.
7. Refugees entering Greece via Turkey did so via boats that docked at one of five Aegean islands: Chios, Kos, Leros, Lesbos, and Samos. Depending on geopolitical circumstances and administrative rules beyond the scope of this chapter, some refugees were transferred or allowed to make their way to the mainland. For detailed discussions of these processes, particularly as they pertain to pregnant women, please see Grotti et al. (2018) and Malakasis (Forthcoming).



8. The same quotation appears in a forthcoming publication by myself and Nina Sahraoui, on the effects of gender on migrants' health-related deservingness.
9. For evidence that belies claims that migrant women exercise little or no agency within their own maternity care, please see Grotti et al. (2018) and Malakasis (Forthcoming).
10. By "Greece," I refer to the nation-state established in the modern period. Further, the term does not denote a unitary social actor, but rather the hegemonic discourses propagated by the most powerful actors within the collectivity.
11. The "fetal non-stress test" (NST) is performed after the 28th week of gestation to evaluate the health of the fetus by measuring its heart rate in relation to its movements. It is called a non-stress test, because it is not invasive and poses no risk or discomfort to the fetus.
12. In 2011, one year into austerity, the percentage of Greek nationals seeking medical assistance from *Médecins du Monde* more than doubled from the previous year (Chauvin et al. 2012).
13. *Médecins du Monde* reports that consultations in Greece made up 68.7 percent of total consultations performed in 13 European countries in 2016 (Aldridge et al. 2017).
14. An episiotomy is an incision made in the perineum, the tissue between the vaginal opening and the anus, previously considered to prevent and heal better than spontaneous tears during childbirth (Mayo Clinic 2018).
15. Skin-to-skin contact, associated with natural, rather than biomedical, approaches to childbirth, entails laying the naked newborn on the mother's bare chest directly after birth. It fosters bonding, nursing, and the infant's physiological and neurological development (Marín et al. 2010).

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# Hosting the Dead: Forensics, Ritual and the Memorialization of Migrant Human Remains in Italy

*Vanessa Grotti and Marc Brightman*

**Abstract** In this chapter we consider the afterlife of the remains of unidentified migrants who have died while attempting to cross the Mediterranean from Albania and North Africa to Italy. Drawing on insights from long-term, multi-sited field research, we outline paths taken by human remains and consider their multiple agencies and distributed personhood through the relational modalities with which they are symbolically and materially engaged at different scales of significance. The rising number of migrant deaths related to international crossings worldwide, especially in the Mediterranean, has stimulated a large body of scholarship, which generally

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relies upon a hermeneutics of secular transitional justice and fraternal transnationalism. We explore an alternative approach by focusing on the material and ritual afterlife of unidentified human remains at sea, examining the effects they have on their hosting environment. The treatment of dead strangers (across the double threshold constituted by the passage from life to death on the one hand and the rupture of exile on the other) raises new questions for the anthropology of death. We offer an interpretation of both ad hoc and organized recovery operations and mortuary practices, including forensic identification procedures, and collective and single burials of dead migrants, as acts of hospitality. Hosting the dead operates at different scales: it takes the politically charged form of memorialization at the levels of the state and the local community; however, while remembrance practices for dead strangers emphasize the latter's status as a collective category, forensic technologies of remembrance are directed toward the reconstruction of (in)dividual personhood. These ritual and technological processes of memorialization and re-attachment together awaken ghosts of Italian fascism and colonialism.

**Keywords** Italy • Death • Mourning • Mortuary practices • Migration • Mediterranean • Hospitality • Forensics • Memorialization • Colonialism • Personhood

chapter are based on a total of 11 months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Italy from 2016 and in Albania in 2019. Conducting field research in Albania added a necessary and inspiring comparative frame to the more contemporary migrant shipwrecks. For motives of anonymity and space, we cannot thank individually the multitude of actors, survivors and respondents we met throughout the years. We are immensely grateful to all of our friends and acquaintances who participated in the research, as well as to Nataša Gregorič Bon, Maja Petrović-Šteger, Juliana Vera and Naor Ben-Yehoyada for their comments and suggestions, and to all those who participated in the “Ecologies of Remembrance” workshop organised by Naor Ben-Yehoyada, Bryan Boyd and Zoë Crossland on the 11–12 September 2019 at Columbia University (New York) and at the Anthropology Seminar of the University of Manchester on 7 November 2019. An earlier version of the chapter was published in French in *L'Homme*, and we thank the editors for permission to translate and republish the text here.

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<i>Maj' e Llogarasë mbi Vlorë</i>	The top of Llogaraja mountain over Vlora
<i>Frynë er' e mbanë shumë bore,</i>	Which is blown by [strong] winds and can bear much snow
<i>Ditën gjë është mbytë anija</i>	On that day, the ship was sunk
<i>Çoçë ka pare nuk e tregonë</i>	It has seen something but does not dare to tell.
<i>I flet Llogaraja detit:</i>	Llogara speaks to the sea:
<i>- O deti me kaltërsi!</i>	- O azure sea!
<i>Pse gjysmët na i dërgove</i>	Why did you send us back only half [of the people]
<i>Ca I mban pengje në gjji?</i>	And the rest you keep hostage in your bosom?

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*Maje e Llogarasë mbi Vlorë*, migration song for Otranto, multipart group of Gumenica, 2009 (Pistrick 2015)<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

On 3 October 2018, the mayor of the island of Lampedusa<sup>2</sup> Totó Martello stood aboard a fishing boat, accompanied by survivors and relatives of the migrant boat disaster that had occurred exactly five years previously. Next to Martello stood a survivor holding a commemorative wreath destined to be thrown in the water, above the sunken wreck, which is still resting on the seabed, hardly recognizable beneath the coral now encrusting it. In the early hours of 3 October 2013, a fishing boat which had left two days before from Misurata (Libya) carrying over 500 passengers (mostly originating from a former Italian colony in the Horn of Africa, Eritrea) caught fire and sank close to a small rock off Lampedusa<sup>3</sup> called Isola dei Conigli. The boat capsized as the passengers rushed to escape the flames and sank abruptly, creating a vortex which sucked most of the passengers who had succeeded in abandoning the vessel down into the depths. An estimated 366 people died in a matter of minutes. A few days later, on 11 October 2013, a second boat, carrying mostly Syrian refugees, sank in Maltese waters between Libya and Lampedusa, raising the number of victims by a further 280. The scale and high visibility of both events, often referred to together as the 3rd October tragedies, taking place at Europe's gateway, triggered intense but short-lived responses on the Italian and European political scenes. The survivors and relatives of the victims of the shipwrecks take part in an annual commemoration in early October on Lampedusa, where the recovery operations were based and the remains of the first shipwreck were initially transported.<sup>4</sup> In March 2016 the Italian senate issued a decree making the 3rd October National Day of Remembrance and Hospitality (*Giornata della Memoria e dell'Accoglienza*),

commemorating ‘all victims of migration who die in the Mediterranean and in other international borderlands as they attempt to seek protection and a better future’ (decree 45/2016).<sup>5</sup> Every year, several thousands of visitors, including survivors, researchers, journalists and activists, flock to Lampedusa to accompany the relatives of the deceased and the disappeared in the commemorative events which unfold over almost a week.

The 3rd October tragedies are part of a series of large-scale maritime migration disasters that have occurred in the Mediterranean waters in Italy’s orbit of influence since the 1990s, punctuating the history of Mediterranean migration with flurries of national and international attention from news media and political institutions. Three events stand out in particular: the first is the sinking of the *Kateri i Radës*, a vessel carrying families fleeing political violence in Albania, in the Strait of Otranto on 28 March 1997. We have chosen to frame our chapter with the additional comparative dimension of the *Kateri i Radës* sinking because it highlights connections necessary to understand what is at play in today’s shipwrecks, in terms of the responsibility of the state, the relationship between scales and the divergent meanings of identification, repatriation and inhumation. The two other shipwrecks both involved vessels originating in North Africa: the 3rd October tragedies and an even larger disaster which occurred on 18 April 2015. Besides playing a distinctive role in collective memory, both in ‘sending’ countries and in the ‘host’ nation of Italy, these events are connected by three further features: firstly, the procedures of maritime recovery and in particular the large-scale and technically innovative recoveries of wrecks from deep water that took place in 1997 and 2016; secondly, the forensic identification procedures, which involved some of the same actors in the three cases; and thirdly, the subsequent rituals and materiality of memorialization, which occur at different scales, among relatives, in the communities where the deceased are buried, and at the level of the state.

The 2018 commemoration in Lampedusa was heavily mediatised, as it is every year, but on this occasion, it was particularly tense and polemical. For the first time since 2013, no representative of the central government attended the commemorations; to add insult to injury, the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) cancelled the funding that it had approved under the previous administration through the 3rd October decree to enable schoolchildren to come from across Europe to participate in educational activities within the school in Lampedusa around the theme of migration and remembrance. In this heavily charged context,



Martello refused to board the vessel of the national coastguard, choosing instead to join some of the survivors aboard a fishing boat to participate in the ritual launch of a wreath of flowers into the water to commemorate the dead.

Despite having been elected in 2017 on a stricter immigration agenda than his predecessor Giusi Nicolini, Martello spoke critically of Italy's new government<sup>6</sup> and the drastic decision taken by its new far-right minister of the interior, Matteo Salvini, to close off all Italian harbors to rescue boats:

We are here today to recall a tragic event, many tragic events, and the answer we receive from Italy, but also from Europe, is silence; it is the attempt to erase even recent history. So, when they ...tell me that the projects to invite European schools [are not funded], there was no time, for me this says a lot. This is an attempt to prevent the transmission of ideas...of history, remembrance, memory...this is their attempt, with regard to Lampedusa, to cancel 'the problem'. Because it is not possible to carry on repeating in Italy that the 'problem' of the boat arrivals is over, that the problem of repatriations is over, that everything has been fixed, that no one dies anymore in the Mediterranean. Coming to Lampedusa, you realise the harbour is open, the boats with migrants come here directly... Why are they not telling the truth? Why are they trying to cancel remembrance and memory? ...If this nation is republican and democratic, as enshrined in the constitution, truth and respect for democratic rule have to be upheld... The Day of Hospitality and Remembrance is not a crime, it was approved and enshrined in law by the Italian Parliament, they want to make it a crime, so I say why can't Europe recognise the 3rd October as a day for the whole continent? So, the message which has to emerge from Lampedusa today is this: remembrance yes... but also fight...to respect ideas, democracy and freedom for all. (Totó Martello, 3/10/2018)<sup>7</sup>

By declaring that 'the harbor is open' in his official speech, Martello was expressing an ethical stance of hospitality and remembrance effective across several scales: Lampedusan, Mediterranean and of the Italian Republic. But on whose behalf? By criticizing 'political powers' and by refusing for the first time to board a boat belonging to and representing the state, by throwing the wreath from a Lampedusan fishing boat and by recalling the importance of history, memory and education, he positioned himself as an authority operating on a different time and scale than that of central government. His political statement sought a kind of affective resonance with a deeper historical consciousness. In his speech, the mayor

from Lampedusa, wearing his *fascia tricolore* bearing the colors of the Italian flag across his chest, established his political legitimacy by anchoring Lampedusa at the heart of the Mediterranean and connecting its social and material landscape to collective processes of historical remembrance with strong connections to the post-war establishment of the Italian Republic, resistance and anti-fascism. In the context of the ritual enactments described above, his words illustrate a structural, long-term process which compresses time, space and social relations and which, as we shall see, rests upon specific forms of sociality, community activism, acts of hospitality, exchange and remembrance, around a language of intimacy and forensic ‘technolog(ies) of remembering’ (Wagner 2013: 633).

This process creates a special resonance between hospitality and death, in which choosing to welcome people who have escaped from death revives the national trauma of Italy’s fascist past. Memorials and acts of memorialization of the dead and (from the opposite end of the political spectrum) counter-memorials such as a refusal to participate, or the desecration of tombs, lends the treatment of migrant death echoes of the contested territory of the Italian Republic’s constitutional association with liberation from fascism. These echoes tend, however, to eclipse a deeper historical resonance connecting Mediterranean migration to the fascist regime—this is of course Italy’s colonial past.<sup>8</sup> As postcolonial Italian commentators have observed, Italy’s colonial legacy and moral responsibility toward some of the sending and transit countries such as Albania, Eritrea, Somalia or Libya are seldom tackled in public and political activist discourse on migrant hospitality (Scego and Bianchi 2014); indeed colonialism and its legacy are rarely discussed publicly in Italy at all (Brioni and Bonsa Gulema 2018). By considering the ways in which hospitality may be offered to the dead themselves, we shall further explore these historical resonances, and we will end by arguing that hosting the dead recalls the legacy of fascism and colonialism, through memorialization and forensic recomposition of (in)dividual persons.

Hospitality is generally discussed as a practice that concerns the living; after all, it is assumed, a visitor or guest is an autonomously mobile agent, a sentient being. Yet anthropologists have long demonstrated that the dead are often far from inert; and while this seems a more obvious point in regard to spirits, ghosts or *jinni* (Varley and Varma 2018), it should also be considered in light of numerous discussions of the agentivity of material objects, whether as ‘actants’ to be understood as part of social networks alongside living beings or as enduring aspects of personhood (Tung

2014). The potency, in more than symbolic terms, of the materiality of the dead, has been thoroughly explored by anthropologists, whose interest has nonetheless been mostly restricted to cases in which the deceased are community members (e.g. Bloch and Parry 1982). This is largely true even of the important work that has been done on mass graves and exhumations, which has nevertheless identified many themes that are relevant here, such as the role of forensics or legal medicine, both in searching for material evidence of crime and in the effort to restore individual personhood, the significance for transnational human rights and transitional justice and the role of social memory (e.g. Ferrándiz and Robben 2015). As with the present case, forensic and humanitarian exhumation has been recognized as not only ‘part of a tradition of judicial inquiry’ but also as ‘a necessary step in the completion of funerary ritual’ (Crossland 2015: 242). Despite these resonances, unidentified migrant death and the associated mortuary practices raise unique questions because they are cases of inhumation (not exhumation) of foreign bodies, and burial makes them more rather than less visible; the local community and the local landscape absorb them rather than rejecting them. It is for this reason that we can speak here of ‘hosting the dead’, where burial can be an act of hospitality.

The fact that mortuary practices may adapt to and express social change is well established (Geertz 1957; revisited by Boret et al. 2017) and reiterated in most emerging work on migrant death, which focuses on death within migrant communities in host countries (Hunter and Ammann 2016). Ethnographic accounts of migrant death and burial provide vivid and valuable insight into the emotional subjectivities of companions and survivors (Kobelinsky 2019), contributing to demonstrating the injustice of border death. But the mortuary treatment of dead strangers involves innovations that raise specific problems for anthropology. By discussing these in the framework of hospitality, we seek to examine the specificities of relationships between host communities and dead strangers.

Since 2017, we have visited a number of the dozens of municipal cemeteries in Sicily and Calabria in which the migrants who died at sea are buried. Without giving a detailed account, it is possible to outline some patterns that emerged.<sup>9</sup> Religious leaders such as the imam of Catania and president of the Islamic community of Sicily, the Methodist pastor of Scicli and the parish priest of Cava d’Aliga told us how imams, Catholic, Protestant and, in some cases (especially when Eritrean migrants were involved), Coptic priests had worked together to devise

non-denominational ceremonies to pray for the dead in cities such as Catania, Siracusa and Scicli. Those involved in the burial ceremonies, including priests and custodians of cemeteries, discussed tenderly the ways the bodies were positioned (if possible, with the face or head toward Mecca in the case of Muslims), the problems of trying to find spaces and the readiness with which local people spontaneously donated clean sheets in which to wrap the bodies (the wife of the mayor of Pozzallo is said to have donated the sheets in which her first child had been wrapped following the birth, newly washed and starched). The custodian of the cemetery of Palazzolo Acreide described how the bodies of migrants from the October 2013 tragedy were buried by a single undertaker using a small crane, without any ceremony, yet he told us that the flowers on the grave were placed there by local widows, who extended their care beyond their own family tombs to those that lay untended. Such anonymous gestures were common to all of the cemeteries we visited. The local parish priest at Cava d'Aliga also described how he would regularly find little bamboo crosses and flowers on the beach at Sampieri, left by persons unknown. As Giorgia Mirto has commented to us (pers. comm. July 2019), ordinary local people do not see the deaths of migrants at sea as 'border deaths'; they merely see them as poor unfortunate souls who met an untimely end and who, being far from home, have no one to mourn for them at their graves. They adopt them as their own, even sometimes referring to them as 'sangu meu', my kin (lit. 'my blood'). Others at the 'front line', such as police officers and priests, similarly express compassion rather than political judgment, but in their reflections, they refer more readily to the memory of how caring for strangers, dead or alive, was a way of responding to violence. The Methodist priest in Scicli even referred to the story of local residents donating a ship to the town's Jewish community to allow them to escape the island during the Spanish Inquisition. Beyond our interviews with these key actors, our interest in memory and time in this chapter is directly inspired by our immersion in local communities whose identities, keenly aware of their Greek, Arab, Norman and Spanish heritage in the case of Sicilians and of their Greek and Albanian heritage for Calabrians, are stronger than their concern with Italian nationality or border policies. These local identities, together with senses of pious compassion shared by Catholics and the much smaller Protestant and Muslim communities, evoke temporal more than spatial perspectives, paying scant attention to geopolitical events. Here, compassion for the weak is not an expression of transnational fraternity (unlike humanitarianism), and care for the weak or

the dead is expressed in terms of vertical consanguinity (parent-child relations).

In contrast to anthropological accounts of mass graves and exhumations, ethnographers of migrant death have paid surprisingly little attention to materiality, despite the fact that it has unique importance in the case of dead strangers, for here the material aspects may well be ‘all that remains’ (Black 2018). If the dead community member is ritually reinstated as a part of the community (albeit sometimes relinquishing personal identity) and thus contributes to social reproduction, what happens to the material remains of a dead stranger, and what are the effects of their treatment? Does the multiplicity of bodies that results from mass death, which in other circumstances such as warfare may trigger specific international protocols for forensic identification and repatriation, define their treatment in systematic ways? What are the ritual consequences of forensic processing and local burial in the limbo of states’ national and international disengagement? To consider such questions we turn to the maritime and forensic operations which have been improvised in recent years in Italy in order to locate, recover, identify and bury migrant human and material remains in the Central Mediterranean.

#### NECROPOLITICS AND THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE

The Central Mediterranean route is by all accounts the deadliest international crossing in the world, in terms of both absolute numbers and the magnitude of individual maritime disasters: of nearly 32,000 recorded migrant deaths worldwide between 2014 and 2019, over 15,000 have occurred on there (IOM 2019). Such estimates are necessarily conservative, since they are based on partial government statistics and media and NGO reports, and they do not include those who are lost at sea or in regions where data collection is virtually impossible due to lack of amenities (the Sahara Desert) or unrest (Libya), but where it is likely that the largest number of migrants die—the number of migrant deaths that occur in the Sahara desert is likely to be at least double those in the Mediterranean, according to the director of the IOM (Reuters 2017). Few countries in the world have a centralized and unified system in place for the systematic registration and identification (covering both ante- and postmortem logs) of unidentified remains which operates across state services and jurisdictions, from hospitals wards to police departments and morgues. In Europe, Italy is the only country to have established an office for the disappeared,

the UCPS,<sup>10</sup> directly located in the Ministry of the Interior, and organized around a single database, known as the RISC (*Ricerca Scomparsi*), which centrally collects all reported unidentified corpses gathered on the territory—yet this initiative has only in recent years tentatively been extended to migrant bodies recovered during rescue operations at sea. This complicates the necessary international coordination across a multiplicity of state and non-state actors, a problem compounded by the fact that in international crossings, victims may be nationals of a country which prohibits emigration or lacks records.

The presence of emergency services and news media and the tense and critical conditions in which the crossing and rescues at sea take place have made the maritime crossing between Mediterranean shores (specifically from Libya, Tunisia and Egypt to Southern Italy) and migrant death at sea, into a spectacle, inspiring public and literary commentators to describe the Mediterranean as a ‘cemetery’ (Cattaneo 2018; Vatican News 2018) and a ‘liquid grave’ (Casid 2018; Sarnelli 2015). With each maritime disaster, the use of such terms has grown. But what does the analogy imply with regard to the fate of the remains of the victims? If the Mediterranean is a watery grave, whose grave is it and who is called to mourn and pacify the dead? How is a liquid transnational grave adorned, for whom and by whom? There is no obvious answer to these questions partly because the Mediterranean migrant dead are victims of a mass atrocity that is inadequately covered by international or humanitarian law—the legal obligations of states with regard to the remains of those who die on migration trails anywhere in the world are poorly defined (Last Rights 2017: 1). According to the Last Rights Project, the principles of human dignity already expressed in human rights law and in legal instruments such as the Geneva Conventions do entail duties on states to give proper burial to the remains of deceased migrants, but a legal void exists because such specific duties have not yet been formally codified. Italy itself enshrines the equality of treatment of citizens and non-citizens, including integrity in death, under article 10 of its constitution (Cattaneo and D’Amico 2016), but this article may also be open to divergent interpretations and is openly ignored or even challenged by the Italian government itself. Besides, the impetus to give respectful burial does not come from the law itself, as the Last Rights authors themselves emphasize, citing Sophocles’ *Antigone* (in which the protagonist buries her brother in defiance of the wishes of the new king, Creon) to illustrate their assertion that respectful treatment of the dead is ‘a principle incapable of being overridden by government’

(Last Rights 2017: 2).<sup>11</sup> They nonetheless continue to unquestioningly assume the existence of an agreed definition of respectful burial itself.

If the material aspects are all that remains of dead strangers, this has not prevented migration scholars from focusing instead upon the symbolic value of the sheer multiplicity of dead migrant, which often leads them to invoke Achille Mbembe's concept of 'necropolitics' or Giorgio Agamben's 'thanatopolitics' to highlight how the threat of death is enlisted as a tool for political control over international migration flows (Sarnelli 2015). Reports of migrant deaths can take the form of statistical accounts produced by organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, national naval authorities and some smaller international NGOs, activist groups or blogs<sup>12</sup> or of migrants' own informal accounts in person or via social media. In all these cases, they often translate into an awareness of the possibility of death that is said to condition behavior—death is instrumentalized as a deterrent to migration. De León introduces the notion of 'necroviolence' to characterize the way in which the Sonoran desert has become a place of violence toward which the infrastructure of the US-Mexico border directs migrants seeking to cross, to the extent that it is practically a war zone, where hostile nature is enlisted as a weapon (2015). Death and violence toward the other are construed in turn as constitutive of the host society itself: as Albahari writes, 'death, a prerogative of sovereignty, is one of the instruments by which liberal democracy is purportedly defended, and its life and common good fostered' (2015: 114).

De León's aggregating approach to evidence paints a largely uniform picture of a US border regime in which local agencies enact national policies with brutal efficiency. The evidence of migrant death in the Mediterranean suggests a more complex picture of diverse (human and nonhuman) agents (local, national, transnational) acting in different ways, in some cases aiming to challenge, subvert or attenuate the effects of border policies that are in many respects similar to the US. 'Naturalizing' border regions such as a desert or a sea produces a distancing and dehistoricizing effect on what are highly connected, transformative and living environments with a rich history and characteristic ecology of interspecies relations. Regions such as the Mediterranean are defined and alive through the sea, which, exceeding characterizations in terms of natural wilderness and hostility, is also perceived as a place of abundance, connectivity and regeneration; yet such peripheral regions have also been homogenized as living outside of modernity and located outside of time

(Elhariry and Tamalet Talbayev 2018). Death itself is not merely caused by state regimes, it can take many guises in migration and migration itself is widely thought of by sending communities as a passage from life to death or from death to life. For instance, in Albania, migration, *kurbet*, is also known as ‘black death’, and the migrants’ uprooting from home and family must be ritually mourned by the relatives (Gregorič Bon 2017). Moreover, just as the mistreatment or erasure of dead bodies can be used for political repression or control, forensics and burial can also sometimes be used for acts of resistance, through revelation, making events and histories visible. In the absence of an international agreement to allocate legal responsibility for migrants who die, the forensic analysis and burial of their remains, spring from impulses independent from, or opposed to, a dominant necropolitical discourse, drawing upon historical consciousness. In contrast to the humanitarian impetus behind international responses to natural disasters (Merli and Buck 2015), Italian legal scholars and forensic or medical legal practitioners justify their work in this area on constitutional grounds, arguing that dignified and respectful treatment of unidentified remains is a legal duty in Italy.<sup>13</sup> We suggest that this is not merely a technical move, but rather it is part of a challenge to the assumption that ‘languages of numbers, evidence, rights, the rule of law, exclusion, recognition, trauma and other related notions have a privileged grasp of reality compared with, say, the language of ritual’ (Rojas-Perez 2017: 10). In fact, forensics can become part of the ritual treatment of the dead, and together with burial and mourning, they can also take on powerful political dimensions. A simplified *chaîne opératoire* (Lemonnier 1976) description of the treatment of migrant human remains in Italy would distinguish three main operations: firstly, the retrieval of the corpse from the sea (and in certain cases from the wreck); secondly, naming, through the forensic process of identification; and thirdly the provision of a resting place through burial.<sup>14</sup> In the following sections, we will outline each of these stages and discuss their effects.

## RECOVERY OPERATIONS AND SPATIAL MEMORY

Remains of victims of migrant boat disasters can be recovered from the sea through a rescue operation (at high sea or near the shore), through salvage-type diving operations around shipwrecks, by incidental recovery at sea by a vessel (such as a fishing boat), or through a large-scale naval salvage operation to extract an entire wreck from the seabed and bring it



to land. Italy is the only country to have launched two large-scale recoveries of sunken migrant ships. The first was ordered by a court in 1997, following the sinking of the *Kateri i Radës* in the Channel of Otranto, causing the deaths of 81 Albanians, including a majority of women and children. The victims of the 3 October 2013 disaster were successfully recovered by divers, but following a further mass disaster on 18 April 2015, when an Eritrean vessel sank in deep waters near the Libyan coast following a collision with a cargo vessel, with an estimated 1000 passengers on board, the Italian prime minister Matteo Renzi ordered a further large-scale recovery operation. These large-scale operations were highly mediatized, and to the consternation of xenophobic commentators, they publicly revealed the reality of these bodies formerly hidden on the seabed, as well as allowing subsequent forensic identification processes, thus extending the boundaries of conventional forensic work.

We began the chapter with an excerpt from a migration song recorded in 2009 by ethnomusicologist Eckehard Pistrick in southern Albania, during the local commemoration of the 1997 sinking of the *Kateri i Radës*. This event left deep and enduring emotional scars in Albania, where it is known as the ‘Otranto tragedy’ and for which the Italian navy was convicted (17 years later) for its culpable action, ramming the fishing boat as part of a blockade against a wave of migration from Albania. In this song, the mountain and the sea that are the principal features of the landscape of Vlora are brought to witness the death and disappearance of so many of the town’s inhabitants. Pistrick describes how sensorial features of the landscape, such as the sound of the rushing water of a river, can generate emotional inspiration for remembrance and mourning through poetry and song. The living landscape inspires remembrance of the events it has witnessed. This applies as much to the mountain as it does to the sea, which refuses to return the bodies of the missing relatives. As Yael Navaro-Yashin has suggested, affect may emerge from the environment—a ‘spatially effected melancholia’ (2009: 5) and the ‘subjectivities and residual affects that linger...in the aftermath of war or violence’ (2009: 5). In this example, the most painful mourning is that which takes place in the absence of the body and in the knowledge that the sea retains those bodies (cf. Perl 2016). Some of the survivors and bereaved relatives we interviewed in Albania in 2019 felt deeply wounded by the proceedings of the recovery operations. Despite the fact that, in contrast to the shipwrecks on the Central Mediterranean route, the bodies recovered from the *Kateri i Radës* wreck in 1997 were returned to Albania, local stories abound about



**Fig. 4.1** The boarding dock of the *Kateri i Radës* at Vlora, which became the site of the annual commemoration of the Otranto Tragedy. Vlora, Albania, 2019 (photo by Vanessa Grotti)

how the 57 coffins that were buried in Vlora merely contain seaweed or that the body in the coffin had been irreparably damaged and tormented. As expressed in the inscriptions on some of the tombstones by their missing relatives (see Fig. 4.1), those buried in the cemetery are still suffering in the sea (Figs. 4.2 and 4.3).

This explains factual errors present in book-length features on the shipwreck, such as Alessandro Leogrande's book. It also illuminates the verses the words 'Why did you send us back only half [of the people]/And the



**Fig. 4.2** Part of the Vlorë cemetery dedicated to the victims of the Kateri i Radës wreck, Vlorë, Albania, May 2019 (photo by Vanessa Grotti)

rest you keep hostage in your bosom?’ carry a double meaning: they refer both to the fact that 57 coffins were returned for 81 missing people but also evoke a delayed return of bodies immersed in a watery limbo which altered body and soul and can therefore never be complete or provide a real sense of ‘closure’. The ‘canonical’ mortuary practices involve dressing the body in new clothes and exposing it in the home for 24 hours, to allow relatives and friends to pay their respects and bear witness, and only such direct contact can establish the truth of the passage from life to death, especially in a country which remains intensely distrustful of institutions and government, even decades after the fall of the communist regime and its notorious state surveillance system. The recovery and return of human remains thus allow the state to wash its hands of a tragedy but only brings partial respite for mourning relatives. As Maja Petrović-Šteger so brilliantly demonstrated in her work on forensic identification and repatriation of human remains in post-conflict settings such as Ex-Yugoslavia and



**Fig. 4.3** Inscription on the tomb of a victim of the Kateri i Radës wreck, Vlora cemetery, Albania, May 2019 (photo by Vanessa Grotti). The inscription reads: You who are passing here by/the tomb of our father you are looking at/But, in the sea, he remained/ And the soil will never waste [perish/tretur] him/In our heart, you'll always stay/Alive and smiling/No, we won't forget you/With pain and longing [mall]/ You'll be remembered./ Your spouse and children (translation courtesy of Nataša Gregorič Bon)

Tasmania, identification and return of human remains only partially resolve ambiguous loss for the relatives (2006a).<sup>15</sup> Remains though carry a powerful meaning to those who handle and treat them, and this dimension carried potential for future research.

### FORENSIC INFRASTRUCTURES AND AFFECT

Previous studies of the treatment of migrants who have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean have so far excelled in establishing databases and connecting separate initiatives dispersed across the region; they have also emphasized the suffering of the families of the deceased and the

disappeared (Robins 2019; Stierl 2016). Tapella et al. (2016), through the Death at the Borders project, have provided an account of the bureaucratic processing of migrants' cadavers in Italian borders: records of the operations to retrieve bodies are to be found in the archives of different police forces (*guardia costiera*, *guardia di finanza*, *carabinieri*) depending on which agency was involved, and after the report reaches the public prosecutor's office (*Procura della Repubblica*), there is no standard procedure for the identification of the body. Autopsies are not routinely carried out, and a general examination of the corpse is often sufficient for a burial permit to be issued. Yet even after processing, bodies often remain for long periods in morgues without being buried, because local authorities claim not to know how to process the death certificate (*atto di morte*) which is a prerequisite to burial. Such attention to the bureaucratic processing of the dead, while valuable, risks giving a false impression that southern European nations are less well equipped to manage the anonymous dead and neglects the ritual dimensions of the phenomenon; after all these bureaucratic processes can be considered as ritual stages in their own right, and as such they highlight at once the ritual necessity of burying dead strangers and state institutions' lack of ritual expertise. They do not delve deeper into the local social worlds of borderlands and their unique material, legal and moral configurations, and they oddly neglect to mention some of the key players, notably the work of the Labanof (Laboratory of Forensic Anthropology and Odontology) of the University of Milan,<sup>16</sup> which is the principle among a few institutions and agencies that have steadily worked for the recovery and identification of migrant remains in Italy over the past 25 years, initiating national and international protocols and databases for missing persons.

Mediterranean nations present a considerable variety of forensic identification processes and traditions and operate at highly differentiated institutional interfaces of judiciary, medical and maritime authorities. This complexity is illustrated by the Labanof institute's co-director Cristina Cattaneo's reflections on the lack of response among international forensic scientists immediately after the 3rd October disasters, which contrasted with the usual flurry of activity after a mass disaster such as an aeroplane crash or a tsunami:

Although I had allowed myself to be convinced lazily and a bit naively that it was another case of the usual racism, I felt that this did not tell the full story. The problem was much bigger. And the truth lay in the not only



economic but above all technical difficulty of managing the biggest disaster of recent times, an enormous tragedy diluted in time and in space. (Cattaneo 2018: 28)

In other words, migrant deaths at sea had been occurring constantly since the 1990s, and the dramatic 3rd October tragedies merely made them more visible. That numbers of ‘a tragedy diluted in time and in space’ remain so hard to collect, verify and merge into one single reliable and protected international database is the primary illustration of the almost impossible task that forensic pathologists such as Cattaneo, or the operators of the International Red Cross in Italy, leading actors in the creation of unified protocols and databases for the national identification of anonymous human remains, have to grapple with on a daily basis. Cattaneo draws attention to the emotional and affective elements of these techniques and practices, which play a key role in the forensic process. As in the case of post-conflict former Yugoslavia and Guatemala, DNA sampling and forensic technologies do not merely act for the purpose of ‘knowledge production, truth, and surveillance’ on behalf of the state (Smith 2013: 1), but rather forensic techniques here acquire ‘affective and sacred dimensions...imbued with an ethic of care’ (Smith 2013: 1). The methods deployed include the likes of odontology and facial reconstruction and can scarcely rely on DNA testing:

[T]his is a technical prejudice... you cannot identify only with DNA. In this case there was this misunderstanding, this illusion that all we had to do was to collect some saliva from the mouth of the corpse without even having to open the bodybag... [which is useless without access to the DNA of close relatives] ...we have been using Facebook for the corpses which were well preserved to identify tattoos, beauty marks, scars, or simply the shape of the face. (Cattaneo in Ghidini 2018)

Such technologies can also be active tools in human rights activism and processes of memorialization (Anstett and Gatti 2018). Forensic identification procedures have transformative capacities which turn horrifying masses into separate piles of objects which, once reassembled, become distinct, named (or unnamed) victims to be mourned.<sup>17</sup> Classification and reconstruction restore their personhood. As Cattaneo writes ‘[My job is to] try to prevent forgetting, to get close (emotionally) and talk about what brings these people closer to us, that is finding in the pockets of these

young people the same things we or our young people carry around ... is very useful to get closer and to mediate' (Cattaneo in Ghidini 2018). In this way, forensic scientists have described their work as a deeply emotional process of kinship-making, contrary to stereotypes, and more in line with anthropological understandings of kinship as the expression of multiple forms of relationship.

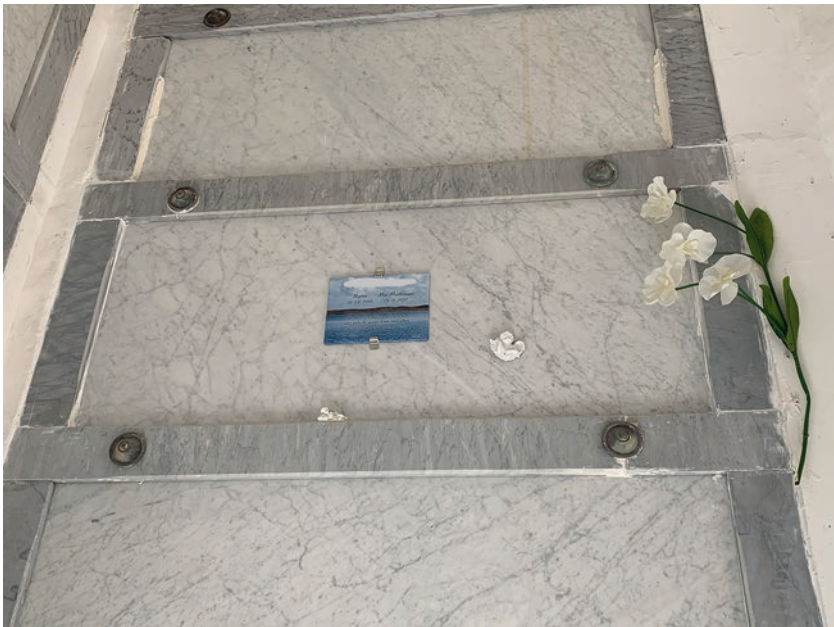
### MEMORIALIZATION: THE INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS' CEMETERY

The forensic work of reconstructing personhood from scattered material remains can be understood as an effort to interpellate the dead and allow them to speak, revealing truths that only they can tell. In its focus on the person and the material manifestations of relations of kinship, attachment and belonging, it contrasts with processes of memorialization, which tend to produce and reproduce collective entities, in this case, the collectivity of the dead at sea. Memorialization in public debate in Italy shares a moral impetus with the hosting of migrants, which is frequently connected to '*la memoria*', a shorthand for remembering those who resisted the fascist regime and its history of violence and repression, especially the racial laws and the deportation of Jews to concentration camps (Glynn and Kleist 2012: 8). These memories are evoked, or ignored, by different political factions to justify their position in regard to migrants, and fascism is invoked in terms of either resistance or nostalgia.

The symbolic resonance of the wreath used at the commemoration of the 3rd October tragedies is a good illustration of this. In Italy, wreaths are symbolically connected to the ritual celebrations of the 25th April, Liberation Day, which take place primarily in cemeteries and at monuments to the dead, from small municipal war memorials to the tomb of the unknown soldier (*milite ignoto*) at the Altar of the Nation (*Altare della Patria*) in Rome. Wreaths, as established state ritual objects, are used to commemorate a nation's dead and their sacrifice, for example, soldiers who died or went missing in combat and whose bodies could not be brought back. As Naor Ben-Yehoyada has noted, monuments like those dedicated to unknown soldiers commemorate an 'entire category of persons' as 'fraternal sacrifices...for the sake of a cause declared "national"' (n.d.: 4). On the shores of the Mediterranean, various community traditions also commemorate local soldiers and migrants who die abroad (e.g.

empty graves in former Yugoslavia, Pistrick 2015: 121), and, as we shall describe, there is an emerging practice of local remembrance for hosting foreign migrants who died en route to Italy.<sup>18</sup>

Cemeteries are prominent in the landscapes of Sicily and Calabria. Imposing walled enclosures filled with elaborately designed family tombs adorn the hills outside each town, often containing architectural gems that are overlooked by tourists more attracted by the ancient necropoli whose nameless denizens have long since vanished. Within the cemeteries, family tombs can be distinguished from confraternity tombs and communal ossuaries, and migrants, with known or unknown identities, have been buried in all three kinds, even on one occasion hosted within a family tomb (see Figs. 4.4 and 4.5). On Liberation Day, 25 April 2017, a ceremony was held in the small Calabrian town of Tarsia to present the project for the creation of an International Migrants' Cemetery, supported at the



**Fig. 4.4** Family tomb containing the remains of a Nigerian girl who lost her life in a wreck off the shore of Sampieri (Sicily) in 2017. Scicli, Italy, July 2019 (photo by Marc Brightman)





**Fig. 4.5** Graves of unidentified migrants, victims of the 3 October 2013 wreck, Palazzolo Acreide, Italy, July 2019 (photo by Marc Brightman)

time by the Italian Ministry of the Interior and the Region of Calabria. The initiative is intended to provide a burial place for unidentified or unclaimed human remains recovered in Italian and international waters, which have hitherto been distributed among municipal cemeteries across Sicily and Calabria, sometimes in special extensions of the existing burial ground. It is meant to resolve the practical problem of giving a dignified burial to human remains after an often lengthy administrative process. During our meeting in late 2018 in a scrubby grove filled with ancient olive trees, on the slopes below the hilltop town, which is to be the site of the migrants' cemetery, the mayor of Tarsia Roberto Ameruso and the civil rights campaigner Franco Corbelli, who conceived and promoted the project, gave an impassioned performance, placing great emphasis on the concept of dignity—Corbelli sees the cemetery as 'restoring dignity to those who have lost their lives'. With relentless energy compensating for his diminutive appearance, Corbelli insistently set out his vision of a



**Fig. 4.6** Franco Corbelli and the mayor of Tarsia, Roberto Ameruso, on the site of the future migrants' cemetery, Tarsia, Italy, May 2018 (photo by Marc Brightman)

monument to peace, a counterweight to the politics of repression that is resurgent in the new government. He described how since the 3 October 2013, the cemetery had become an obsession for him, and before settling on the site in Tarsia with the local mayor and the regional governor, he planned to use a piece of land of his own for the purpose. He also drew attention to the cultural landscape—the picturesque location with the hilltop town above and the seasonal lake below—a protected area managed by Friends of the Earth (see Fig. 4.6).

The cemetery is not strictly intended as a final resting place: on the one hand, burial closes the Italian process of forensic documentation, completing its reconstruction of personhood of remains previously distributed across sites of analysis and storage spread across Italy. The organizers nevertheless hope that relatives may claim the dead at some time in the future, and their bodies may yet be exhumed and transported elsewhere. The

cemetery thus provides a space for mourning ambiguously suspended in time.

The migrants' cemetery is a public statement reflecting humanitarian activism in Tarsia itself, and in the region of Calabria, as well as a previous Italian government's desire to emphasize its image as the front line of migration reception at a European level.<sup>19</sup> At these different scales, these statements are aligned but not identical. For Tarsia and Calabria, it 'scales up' the local actions of a network of mayors opening small rural towns as 'migrant havens', welcoming refugees and asylum-seekers as part of a strategy supporting the repopulation and regeneration of ageing and poor communities with dwindling social services, and proclaims alignment with both secular and Catholic humanitarianism. But at a national level, the previous, center-left government's endorsement (together with the salvaging of the April 2015 shipwreck) promoted an image of the Italian state as a beacon of civilization in the Mediterranean, morally superior to other EU Member States as it shoulders the burden of the humanitarian crisis of migration—the cemetery is accordingly presented as being a place of burial for all migrants who perish at sea in the Mediterranean (although in practice only those who died on the route to Italy itself are very likely to end up there).

On both levels however, the initiative explicitly seeks a kind of affective resonance with a deeper historical consciousness, for the cemetery lies in close proximity to the site of Ferramonti, Italy's largest concentration camp from the Second World War (Fig. 4.7).

As the governor of Calabria, Mario Oliverio, said during the laying of the wreath at Ferramonti on 25 April 2019:

the migrants' cemetery is a symbol that is linked to that of the 25th April, and it is no coincidence that it was conceived and is being realised here. A symbol that respects human dignity, and the millions of men and women forced to cross the Mediterranean who sometimes lose their lives. And dignity must also be respected for those who lose their lives. (Qui Cosenza 2019)

Ferramonti evokes the emergence of the postwar moral and institutional order through the shock of the evidence of the holocaust and thereby claims that the national and international institutions responsible for upholding this moral order—governments with internationally agreed human rights enshrined in their constitutions—should claim migrant deaths 'as their own'. Tarsia might offer interpretation as a form of



**Fig. 4.7** The Museum of Memory on the site of the Ferramonti camp, Tarsia, Italy, May 2018 (cl. Marc Brightman)

‘countermonument’, which ‘does not console or reassure—it does not heal. On the contrary, it “torments” its neighbours’ (James E. Young, in Homans 2000: 22–23) with the reality of death at the threshold of Europe. But there are reasons for thinking that its role is more ambivalent. The annual celebration of the Liberation at Ferramonti portrays the concentration camp as a relic of resistance, rather than of oppression, in its own right. The reason for this is that the concentration camp was not a site of extermination; nor was it, in practice, a site for deportation. It was designed to be a holding center for Jews and other minorities and political prisoners from all over the continent, who were supposed to be deported to Nazi death camps. The camp officials are said to have continually put off German requests to deport interns of Ferramonti to Germany. It was the first concentration camp to be liberated by the Allies in 1943, and in contrast to what they would find further north, it looked to them more like a village than a prison (it had synagogues, a hospital, school and a



nursery)—indeed many inmates stayed there, under their own administration, until the end of the war. To add to this image of Ferramonti as a place of refuge, after the liberation it also became a refugee camp. The site of Ferramonti therefore has complex affective resonances (Stewart 2012): as representative of concentration camps in general, it evokes the horror of the holocaust and of fascism; yet for those who are aware of the relatively humane way in which it was managed, it evokes the values of the resistance and the liberation, which were to be institutionalized in the Republic and in international human rights instruments. Political actors such as rural mayors and legal prosecutors invoke these values when they justify the moral and legal rationale for the recovery, identification and burial of unidentified migrant remains in Italy today.

### ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE DEATH OF STRANGERS

For there to be hospitality, notes Patrice Ladwig, citing Derrida, Simmel and van Gennep, ‘there must be a door...there must be a threshold’ (2012: 93), and indeed what clearer threshold—an ontological one at that—than the threshold between life and death? Yet few authors have taken comparisons between the threshold of life and death and the threshold crossed by the visiting stranger (or indeed the border) beyond the level of analogy or metaphor. Robert Hertz’s observation, in his seminal study of death based on data from the south Pacific, that ‘the death of a stranger, a slave, or a child will go almost unnoticed; it will arouse no emotion, occasion no ritual’ (1960: 76) has remained largely unchallenged, with the vast majority of subsequent scholarship in the anthropology of death focusing on mortuary practices for members of the community. The figure of the dead stranger has most often taken the form of the lost soul, who suffers from having died a ‘bad death’, leading anthropologists to document the widespread perception of the ‘danger of the unincorporated dead’: typically, wandering spirits, ‘for whom no rites were performed’ could act as ‘hungry ghosts’ who ‘yearn to be reincorporated into the world of the living, and since they cannot be, they behave like hostile strangers’ (Abramovitch 2001: 3272). Exploring one such case of those ‘who have died a bad or violent death away from home’ (2012: 90), Ladwig notes how Lao people care for ‘initially anonymous ghosts’ through ‘hospitality and the establishment of a kinship bond’ through material action—in this case feeding, which transforms the ‘radical alterity of ghosts’ into ‘an integral part of the social world’ (2012: 91). The Lao

practice of giving sweet food to revenants on a specific day of the year, feeding ghostly strangers to turn them into kin, is worth comparing with the Sicilian tradition whereby deceased kin return on the eve of All Souls' Day bringing gifts and sweets for children and where families bring flowers to their tombs the following day (Camilleri 2001). In both cases the ritual serves to reintegrate the souls of the dead into society; or rather (following Benveniste's definition of community as the product of mutual exchange, 2016), the ritual maintains a cycle of transactions that perpetuate the dead's place in the community (cf. Malcolm n.d.).

Such ghostly encounters share with classical anthropological discussions of mortuary practices for community members the themes of kinship and social (re-)integration (Bloch and Parry 1982). This is not usually the case with the other significant area in which the treatment of the remains of dead strangers has been discussed, which is that of enemies killed in warfare. Lowland South America is one exception, where the ritual killing and disposal of the remains of enemies was a fundamental element in social reproduction, and among the Tupinamba, to be killed by the enemy was considered the 'good death' (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 274; Allard and Taylor 2016: 62). Simon Harrison notes that despite the fact that the Geneva Conventions of 1949 declare that war dead must be 'identified and buried in marked and properly maintained graves so as to permit their repatriation after hostilities have ended' (2012: 1), ideologies of race nevertheless 'intuitively structure attitudes and behavior towards the dead body... they are, after all, ideologies which naturalize social inequalities by misrepresenting them as founded in the physical body and in human biology' (2012: 5). These ideologies of race are often deeply embedded as colonial legacies in attitudes toward foreign bodies, and they continue to influence the cultural attitudes of many Italians toward migrants from the global south (Brioni and Bonsa Gulema 2018; Scego and Bianchi 2014). As noted above, the Geneva Convention does not apply to those who die on the migrant trail, and there are therefore considerably fewer legal mechanisms to prevent racial prejudice from having a free rein in the treatment of dead migrants.

The enduring importance attached to the place and manner of burial and the decomposition or cremation of remains testifies to the fact that personhood is a more complex affair than an opposition between the material container and a spiritual identity. Yet many authors seem to share Hertz's assumptions about the immateriality of the social person: for him, death 'destroys the social being grafted upon the physical individual and

to whom the collective consciousness attributed great dignity and importance' (1960: 77). The role of the materiality of personhood is acknowledged by the current teaching of the Catholic Church that 'the bodies of the dead must be treated with respect and charity in the faith and hope of resurrection. The burial of the dead is a work of bodily mercy; it gives honor to the sons of god, temples of the Holy Spirit' (Catechism of the Catholic Church n.d.: 2300), and the Vatican's support for the Tarsia cemetery (in which Franco Corbelli takes considerable pride) is certainly informed by this view. This Catholic teaching undermines the broad association drawn between Western, European or 'naturalist' ontologies and the notion of the immateriality of the soul and which Marilyn Strathern traces to Victorian England, as expressed by E.B. Tylor, who she argues was wrong to think that immortality was linked to immateriality (Strathern 2018). In many cases 'the body is not only divisible but also shareable, and...its fragmentation may form part of a process that is seen as not only normal but also as necessary to the continuity and regeneration of life' (Ramos 2010: 32), and we suggest that the personhood of the deceased persists in the material remnants following death, even when these may be broken up and dispersed, though in such cases the very disintegration of the person poses further questions. Not least among these is the problem of perspective and control, for the discourses surrounding the mortuary practices for dead migrant are dominated by their hosts at every stage of the *chaîne opératoire*, from recovery through forensic and administrative processing to burial. When the Italian hosts dominate these practices, even when the corpses are returned to the sending communities, as occurred with the victims of the Kateri i Radës, the bereaved relatives feel detached from them and are unable to conduct the proper rituals.

### CONCLUSION: SCALES OF REMEMBRANCE

The Italian government promised a state funeral for the migrants who died in the 2013 disaster but in the end organized an ill-conceived memorial service in Agrigento to which the survivors were not invited. The event was discredited in particular by the government's gesture of inviting representatives from the Eritrean embassy—thus generating a cruel farce, whereby the victims of the boat disaster were to be officially commemorated by delegates of the state that they had been fleeing (Scego and Bianchi 2014). Eritrea's status as a former Italian colony and the role of this colonial connection in the history of the Eritrean community in Italy

are part of a colonial historical background that lurks beneath the surface of competing anti-immigrant and anti-fascist public sentiments. The event backfired thanks to the protests of the Eritrean relatives of the dead, and the refusal of the mayors of Lampedusa and Agrigento to participate, on the implicit grounds that remembrance and hospitality are morally entangled with each other. The collusion of the Italian and Eritrean states in this inhospitable act of remembrance served to resurrect the ghosts of colonialism, as a reminder of the deeper historical responsibility borne by European nations for the postcolonial trajectories of African societies. For similar reasons Albanian politicians were criticized by relatives of the Kateri i Radës missing for making little attempt to memorialize dead community members, leaving the task up to families and church councils. They accuse the Italian and Albanian governments of neglecting their promises to finance and build a monument to the dead, to focus instead on colluding in trade deals which benefit only the corrupt politicians themselves. As one informant declared, ‘the Albanians have a deep affection for Italian people, but they hate the Italian government, the Italian government is fascist’. Furthermore both of these cases underline the temporary status of the guest—by inviting Eritrean officials to participate in the ceremony at Agrigento, the Italian state symbolically returned the dead migrants to their place of origin and the bodies recovered from the Kateri i Radës were sent back to Albania. But in both cases Italy proved a bad host, because the ‘return’ of the guests was not acceptable or meaningful to their relatives. This highlights one of the problems of hosting the dead: the law of hospitality implies that host-guest relations should be temporary, but dead strangers may remain indefinitely. Memorialization can be thought of as an attempt, which sometimes fails, to overcome this difficulty either through unconditional hospitality or through symbolic restitution.

It is families, religions and community organizations rather than governments that have initiated the acts of naming that have played a special role after mass atrocities in the past. This has been the key strategy of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, and Enrico Calamai, who was Italian consul in Buenos Aires in 1972–1977 during the Argentine military regime, has underlined how Europe is producing ‘its own *desaparecidos*, [migrants] left to die and made invisible by politics of elimination and memory-erasure’ (Gualtieri 2018: 22). The ritual naming of the disappeared bears witness to the injustice of their absence. This ‘necronominalism’ (Laqueur 2015), inscribing and reading or speaking the names of the dead, invokes ‘the individuals indexed by the names and fixes those lives



into collective memory' (Hodges 2019). Naming dead strangers poses a difficulty, for the anonymous dead can be hosted as part of fraternal humanity; the named stranger is marked as an other, whose kin are foreign. The act of naming, moreover, is carried out by the host, together with the treatment of the corpse and the eventual burial. The forensic work of the Labanof seeks to reconstruct identities and names to show that the dead were people, with interconnected lives, families, friends, ambitions. Their stories can re-ground them in the mutually entangled histories of the different shores of the Mediterranean. Yet they also highlight an unresolved problem, which is that of setting the rules of hospitality. As we have seen, different actors presenting themselves as hosts compete to decide how migrant bodies should be treated and what meanings should be attached to them. One of the features of hospitality however is that the relations between host and guest can become especially tense when they do not agree upon the rules of hospitality (Shryock 2012). Migrant human remains are on one level giving rise to the emergence of new forms of hospitality, such as new forensic protocols and new kinds of cemeteries. On another level, however, there is little to indicate that the bereaved relatives have any say in making the rules.

## NOTES

1. This song refers to the 'Tragedy of Otranto'; on 28 March 1997, a fishing boat called the *Kateri i Radës*, carrying 122 civilians, left the town of Vlora in southern Albania to cross the Strait of Otranto toward Italy. It was intercepted and rammed by an Italian navy corvette and sank in a matter of minutes, causing the death of over 81 people, 24 of whom were never recovered (Leogrande 2010; Pistrick 2015).
2. Lampedusa is the largest of the Pelagic islands. It is part of the autonomous region of Sicily but is located close to the North African coast. Having been occupied or colonized in turn by Phoenicians, Arabs, British and Bourbons, its population is largely a fishing community isolated from the mainland and neglected by the state, despite the establishment of a permanent military base in the 1970s and the more recent establishment of migrant reception infrastructure (*Centro di Primo Soccorso e Accoglienza* [First Aid and Reception Centre], CPSA). During the 1990s it became a seasonal tourist destination as well as a prominent part of the Mediterranean 'migration archipelago' receiving a sizeable share of the boats carrying asylum-seekers rescued at sea following increasingly dangerous sea crossings in the Channel of Sicily.

3. Cf. Quagliariello this volume.
4. Most of the bodies recovered from the 11th October shipwreck were taken to Malta (Cattaneo 2018: 82–83).
5. <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/3-ottobre-e-giornata-nazionale-memoria-vittime-dellimmigrazione>.
6. On 4 March 2018, general elections were held in Italy which led to the creation of the current coalition government between two parties located on the populist and far right of the political spectrum: the Lega and the Five Star Movement. Among the first measures taken by the government were highly restrictive and anti-immigration policies directed at closing off Italian land and sea borders and targeting migrants already present in the country.
7. Text taken from the video available at <https://www.agi.it/video/lampedusa-ricordo-strage-migranti-2013-4442921/video/2018-10-03/>.
8. Italian colonialism in Africa (1882–1960) and Albania (1939–1943) left enduring cultural marks and social structural legacies. Many colonial subjects became Italian citizens. A significant number of migrants came to Italy from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia from the 1970s, and thousands of Italians still resided in Libya decades after national independence. After the communist regime in Albania fell in the early 1990s, many Albanians migrated to Italy.
9. A detailed account of the various kinds of mobilization and tensions among local communities, survivors and relatives to identify and mourn for the dead is beyond the scope of this chapter, as is the broader context of hospitality (and inhospitality) for survivors. For examples of the latter, see Kobelinsky (2019), Pillant (2019), Souiah (2019) and Zagaria (2019).
10. The *Ufficio del Commissario Straordinario del Governo per le Persone Scomparse* (UCPS) was created in 2007, and its work was extended to the victims of international migration recovered at sea in 2012. The UCPS, being a ministerial office located within the Ministry of the Interior, is headed by an appointed commissioner and is subject to the Ministry's authority (<http://www.interno.gov.it/it/ministero/commissario-straordinario-governo-persone-scomparse>).
11. Antigone, a recurring figure in political philosophical discussions of biopolitics, positioned herself as a 'stranger', by choosing to define herself as a 'resident alien' (μέτοικος) (Henao Castro 2013).
12. For example, the blog of journalist and writer Gabriele del Grande <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/>.
13. In contrast to other mass disasters (such as natural disasters or aeroplane crashes), and as Cattaneo has pointed out (Cattaneo and D'Amico 2016), the international community of forensic experts has not rushed to the scene following migrant shipwrecks, and instead Italian experts have orga-

nized themselves, often working on a voluntary basis, to carry out the necessary tasks.

14. In the case of the Kateri i Radës wreck, the third stage is replaced with the return of the bodies to Albania. With apologies to material culture scholars, we use the notion of *chaîne opératoire* loosely here, as a rhetorical device, and our objective is not to offer a systematic description of the *chaîne opératoire* in question (a thoroughly worthwhile task beyond the scope of this chapter) but rather merely to sketch its outlines.
15. '[T]he questions "how many pieces of human remains make up a missing person?" and "what counts as sufficient proof of one's identity?" were ones that I had debated many times before' (2006a: 2).
16. <http://www.labanof.unimi.it/>.
17. Petrović-Šteger has written, how, as well as helping to detect and prosecute crimes, forensic experts in technical interventions into the landscape of mass graves in post-conflict Yugoslavia crucially redefined the value of such spaces. In sieving the soil, they erased some while preserving other traces of the recent past, ritually cleansing the land (2006b). This 'sieving' of the remains brings forensics closer to the two-stage burial practices common to many traditional mortuary practices (Hertz 1960; Bloch and Parry 1982): the separation of the soft from the hard parts, the flesh from the bone, is evoked by the forensic salvaging of material that is particular, meaningful or which embodies a connection to others.
18. Although, unlike war cemeteries and memorials (Prost 2011), those for migrants attract few visitors.
19. Another case that has been presented as a 'migrants' cemetery' in Calabria is that of Armo, a village outside Reggio Calabria. Under the initiative of the mayor and the previous parish priest, 45 migrants who died at sea were buried there in 2016. Although the charity Caritas aspires to transform it into a project similar to Tarsia, it has so far operated in a similar way to other cemeteries that host migrants who died on their journeys, albeit on a larger scale, and the expanded area of the cemetery where the shipwrecked migrants are buried also contains the tombs of local people.

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## Ritual and Ritualism in a Contested Sea: Scalar Distortions of Space and Time

*Michael Herzfeld*

**Abstract** The ground of mutual understanding between locals and migrants in the Mediterranean Sea emerges through the performance of ritual activities. These should be distinguished from the formalistic or incantatory sense of “ritualism.” They include the socially engaged practices of hospitality—a virtuous tradition that governments, even as they claim it for the nation-state, violate in local eyes by confining migrants to impersonal spaces and uncertain futures. Passages across the sea also partake of a pervasive sense of ritual, which thereby offers rich metaphorical material for considering the scalar shifts at play—shifts that entrain such conversions of social interaction into the asocial frameworks of neoliberal management (which in turn encourage aridly scientific modes of inquiry) but conversely also domesticate cultural distance through a subtle apprehension of shared habits of gesture and generosity, made accessible by the close vision of ethnography as described in these essays.

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Anthropologists are thankfully long past the era of wondering whether one could talk about a “Mediterranean culture.” By and large, they have realized, and accepted, that what is interesting is not what anthropologists have to say about this topic but what people who live in the area claim and what they do about it. If doctors and dieticians wax ecstatic about something called the “Mediterranean diet,” if political leaders invoke something vaguely conceptualized as a common Mediterranean heritage, if local people invoke a supposed similarity between themselves and the neighboring countries, it matters not a whit that others might find many of those claims contrived or even specious. What matters is that social actors, invested with varying degrees of power and authority, not only utter them but also often deploy them for clearly material ends. Moreover, they do so with a ritualism, an incantatory solemnity, that for anthropologists demands analytical attention rather than acquiescence in an official version of self-stereotyping, an acquiescence that leads to “methodological nationalism” on the grand scale.

In these observations, largely written in response to the other essays in this volume, I am going to explore that ritualism on its own terms. Taking my cue from Edwin Ardener’s sensible rhetorical question, “When is a rite *not* of passage?”<sup>1</sup> I propose to see how far Arnold van Gennep’s classic formulation can be used to show how local people and anthropologists alike depend on rituals of belonging and learning to make sense of today’s wildly roiling sea and how the common structure of their perceptions may help us refine our methods while also strengthening the role of ethnography in the study of processes that for too long have been the privileged domain of self-appointed experts with little experience-based knowledge of the region or preparation for working within it.

In framing my argument in this way, I am instantiating the theoretical point that comparison is not only compatible with a reflexive stance but is also necessarily part and parcel of what such a stance entails. One cannot realistically compare social and cultural worlds except through the personal experience of traversing difference, whether in the mind or, perhaps preferably, by switching field contexts; and one’s self-knowledge is itself the product of such deliberately discommoding experiences, such self-inflicted ruptures of normality and routine. Anthropologists are rarely still,

and their movements through time and space produce a constant stream of comparative observations, which often start out as self-inflicted culture shock before they mature into scholarly reflections.

Before I go any further, I would like to separate two very similar words from each other: ritual and ritualism. Rituals, or rites, are events, acts of piety or supplication, and they mark individuals' ties to a social context that they more or less understand as their own. These terms have implications, variable though they may be in scope and intensity, of belonging to that context. Ritualism, by contrast, is (as the suffix implies in the original Greek), an *imitation* of ritual, an invocation of form in which the claim on participants' affective loyalty may be presumptive or coercive but in any case cannot be assumed to be genuinely efficacious. It is, to invoke an old American political phrase, a claim on "hearts and minds" that presumes to judge participants, not for their personal sense of commitment but for their outward displays of conformity. Like scientism in relation to science, or moralism to morals, ritualism is a rhetorical appropriation of a socially relevant practice for political or ideological purposes. The distinction is not an absolute one, since individuals may take part in a local ritual without any sense of commitment or belief—simply "going through the motions"—but I would consider such an act to be ritualistic rather than a genuine practice of ritual. Like everything else in the nation-state, ritualism does, after all, also have social roots.

We might then see ritual as a *model* for the ritualism of bureaucracy with which I will be concerned later in this essay. Rituals are stretched into ritualism when they are conducted on a massive scale because the sheer difference of scale makes any sense of intimate participation untenable. But ritual as metaphor does not only serve the mechanistic purposes of a nation-state bureaucracy. It may also serve as a powerful literary device for calibrating individual experience with social life, in much the same way that actual rites perform the realignment of individuals and groups with the societies of which they are members or into which they are inducted.

Claude Lévi-Strauss was perhaps the first to realize the literary potential of ritual as metaphor when, in *Tristes Tropiques*, he invoked images of ritual passage every time he crossed a sea, a continent, or a national boundary, or, indeed, when he crossed from one stage in his life to another.<sup>2</sup> Like many of the migrants in today's Mediterranean, although under notably more comfortable conditions, he was a refugee from violence and the threat of annihilation—in his case, that posed to anyone of Jewish origin by the pro-Nazi Vichy regime in France. *Tristes Tropiques* is a tale of

crossings. In traversing tropics, Lévi-Strauss invoked a tropology; in traversing topics, he metaphorized a conceptual topology. *Tristes Tropiques* is a poetic masterpiece, but, as has often been observed, it is not ethnography. It is, rather, and more importantly, a prologue and an exhortation to a more self-conscious ethnographic practice and an early precursor of the idea that reflexivity and comparison are part of the same determinedly rooted experiential practice that we call ethnography—a practice that requires, in a word, passage: passage through a temporally defined learning curve, spatial passage from one site of knowledge to another.<sup>3</sup>

Naor Ben-Yehoyada's *The Mediterranean Incarnate* illustrates this passage ethnographically and textually.<sup>4</sup> The book crosses many frontiers, notably in the gripping scenes of passage across the sea as the exhausted ethnographer cooks for his Tunisian fellow-sailors on a Sicilian boat, catches his share of watch duty, photographs every detail he can capture, and struggles to maintain his note-taking. This shipboard initiation was a rite of passage in multiple senses, including that of producing a doctoral dissertation and rethinking it as a book. In that sense, all anthropologists undergo similar forms of passage. In this case, what emerges is not a static cultural area but, in its place, an encompassing cultural debate carried on by the warring (and occasionally peacemaking) peoples of the region over millennia of interaction and producing the relationship that he aptly identifies as cousinage rather than siblinghood.

Migrants themselves often conceive their experiences as analogous to ritual passage. This should not surprise us; the power of passage as a metaphor comes from its capacity to link different kinds of ritual experience—marriage and death in Greek rural rituals, for example, and the funereal experience of exile among Albanian migrants so lugubriously described in the poem that Vanessa Grotti and Marc Brightman use as the epigram for their essay. Senegalese Mouride workers in Turin treat their wanderings like the *hajj* to Mecca, as do Turkish migrants in Europe their regular return visits to their home communities.<sup>5</sup>

People have thus been wandering across differences of scale—this is itself a powerful moment of intellectual passage for our discipline—in many places and epochs; and many of the experiences of passage are about the search for a better life. The very language of progress and development, concepts redolent of the evolutionist thinking of a resurgent colonialist impulse, builds on the same implication that people should seek the means of improvement through the spatiotemporal framework of passage. Ardener's question, which was presumably intended to ask critically what

value such a teleological model as van Gennepe's could have, can be transformed through another scalar shift into a demand to know how any crossing of the dangerous sea could ever be undertaken without hopes of passing to a new and better life.

But nothing, for the migrants or for ethnographers, is certain at the outset. Ritual—notably as transition—entails risk, as van Gennepe's successors Mary Douglas and Victor Turner both recognized.<sup>6</sup> Are these ritual pilgrimages usually destined to lead to disappointment, or can the harried migrant and the ambitious ethnographer expect them to lead to some identifiable success? For the ethnographer, member of a privileged elite that can even transform a tale of failure into a literary triumph,<sup>7</sup> the risks are perhaps slight. For the migrants, however, they are enormous. There are so many stories, for example, of women lured into prostitution with promises of a glamorous new life, who ultimately find themselves desperate to escape back to the relative safety and dignity of poverty at home—where, however, they may also face opprobrium (or worse) for their sexual misadventures or for their failure to bring home new wealth. Scaling up from the comfort of familiar rituals to the terror of passage into the vast unknown seems, more often than not, a path to disaster.

Metaphors are by their very nature open to variable and unpredictable interpretation. They can be cannily manipulated and grievously misunderstood. Scaling up is one process that exposes their fragility. Recontextualizing them is another. Fighting fire with fire, I propose here to re-deploy the metaphor of the rite of passage as a means of exposing, together with the other authors in this collection, the structural violence that has lurked behind claims of sovereignty and stability. This is a matter that also affects the practice of our discipline, which itself is partially entrapped in the logics of various nation-states' adaptations of neoliberalism and audit culture to the largely inappropriate domain of academic life.

The highly domestic methodology of ethnography is a striking example of this problem. It faces a similar scalar shift of application to those documented in this volume and faces similar (if nevertheless far less life-threatening) threats in consequence. In this regard, it resembles the equally domestic practice of hospitality, on which, moreover, it is deeply dependent. Insofar as anthropologists do their research as guests of those whose lives they study, they necessarily also experience the tension between kindly care and the exercise of careful control over the stranger that is at the heart of hospitality, especially in those many Mediterranean lands in which it has become the basis of claims to both radical similarity and, as

“national character,” equally radical distinctiveness. Ethnography’s confinement to the level of local research now exposes it to charges of triviality and marginality, conveniently, one should note, for the more survey-oriented and top-down disciplines that might be discommoded by the data that ethnographic research unearths.

In this industrial and neoliberal age, an age that has not yet dispensed with the territorial obsessions of nationalism, hospitality has also become the operative metaphor for scalar inflation ranging from the hotel and catering industry to the reception of migrants and even incarceration. Lacking the grim irony of the British idiom of being “guests of Her Majesty,” the most coercive versions of these inflated hospitalities are softened only by the agency of specific individuals, disgusted by what they are asked to do to their fellow human beings and prepared to risk the wrath of their superiors in order not to violate their own understanding of what hospitality entails—the duties of the host, violated by those who allow the control side of hospitality to outweigh the caring dimension to the point at which the ritual politeness is swept aside by the cruel realities of imprisonment and death.

And death itself calls for rites of passage; when the rituals of death are not consummated for the visitor unfortunate enough to have died far from home, one of the fundamental principles of hospitality is violated. Such a breakdown demands a critical inspection of the ways in which different kinds of passage merge in a combustible mixture that, instead of producing gratitude and reciprocal kindness, triggers outrage, warfare, repudiation of commonality, and the breakdown of that common humanity Greeks call *anthropiá*. Inasmuch as friendship and hospitality can morph into each other with frightening ease even beyond the ritualized transitions that I have reported from mountainous western Crete, for example, and that are especially true for the segmentary tribal structures of Bedouin-based polities in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere in the Arab world, they operate like the equally tensile binary of peace and genocide noted by Kapferer in the Buddhist world.<sup>8</sup>

Given the way in which hospitality combines lateral generosity with vertical power plays, it is an ideal site for just such abrupt transformations. While it is an enactment of reciprocal ethical obligations, the travesties that its projection onto larger scales has produced expose a tension between those obligations and the bureaucratic desire for control. It is here that “upscaling” threatens the ideals of generosity that the ostensible ideology of hospitality promotes. The essays in this volume complicate this

sad picture, showing how even within the most hostile environment some social actors make it their business to reclaim the space of hospitality for what they consider to be its rightful ethical use. It is interesting to read in Grotti and Brightman's essay that a politician like Martello, despite his participation in a national government that took a decidedly tough line on immigration, may nevertheless, operating in a local setting with intensified significance in the national debates on the topic, invoke hospitality to call attention to the failures of the new, right-wing government to be good hosts. His move was plainly political; equally plain, however, was the ethical appeal at its core—an ethics grounded in ideals of hospitality and reciprocity.

Mention of ethics, moreover, also requires consideration of what it is that anthropologists do differently from other social science disciplines, especially as that difference is directly related to the dynamics of hospitality. Such differences between sciences, much like those that separate ethnicities from each other, are never as absolute as their practitioners are wont to claim. But they are important. The length of time that anthropologists typically spend in the field, the processes of language learning and other varieties of cultural inculcation, and, above all, the enormous burden of personal responsibility that goes with the successful breaching of the walls of cultural intimacy are not only features of a rite of passage; they are, as befits a calling with such obviously ritualized techniques of research, the marks of a professional ethic that is as unique as it is pressing for the individual researcher.

This is not the place to explore further the outrageous bureaucratization of ethics that has in some places begun to straitjacket the discipline's basic methodology and that demands an ethical response.<sup>9</sup> Here I would simply note that any system that removes the burden of responsibility—and the right to assume it—from the researchers themselves can hardly claim to be ethical except in the sense that policing can be called ethical; one suspects that in many cases the main objective is to protect the researchers' institutions from potentially expensive legal issues.

Hospitality provides but one example of the ethical dangers of projecting intimate, domestic engagements onto a much larger scale. The bureaucratization of ethical decision-making is another; it is analogous to the reduction of human experience to numbers and procedures justly pilloried by Grotti and Brightman. The ultimate indignity of death in the anonymizing sea, they point out in a significant replay of van Gennep's tripartite structure, is reversed through the ritual sequence of recovery, naming, and

burial. By the same token, the reburial of the recuperated individual identities in the impersonal archive of bureaucratic documents and statistics is a violation and indeed a withdrawal of hospitality, an act of structural and ethical violence that Martello's evocation of Nazism and its victims, replete with echoes of Italian self-congratulation over not having been quite as bad as the Germans, is only partly successful in challenging.

Ultimately, what Sarah Wagner calls the "technology of remembering," cited here by Grotti and Brightman, can only work for those who are themselves operating with some sense of a real relationship with the departed.<sup>10</sup> Anything else is theatre—which, to be sure, has its own ritual propensities (famously celebrated in the collaboration between Victor Turner and Richard Schechner<sup>11</sup>), but which, organized by state organizations, too easily works against the survivors' urge to refashion a real connection with those who are no longer alive and produces only empty ritualism.

Anthropologists have both a responsibility and a pressing professional need to resist such reductionism. Their ethical responsibility is an ineradicable debt to their informants, one that is straightforward enough conceptually, although paying that debt may sometimes be difficult to put into practice. The professional need comes from the devastating effects of audit culture on the way anthropologists can conduct their research—effects that occur not only through the misapplication of professional ethics already mentioned but also through the selective allocation of research funding.<sup>12</sup> Here there is a direct parallel between the distortion of the hospitality paradigm in sociopolitical relations on the one hand and the distortion of ethnographic research triggered by current funding practices on the other. Unrestrained scaling up is capable of producing gross distortions of social relations, as well as of the ways in which we study those relations. This effect is especially evident in the structure of research funding in Europe, where not only are researchers often judged by their home institutions in terms of the cash they can pull in but it is also often the case that individual research of the highly personalized kind that we recognize as true ethnography is much harder to fund than enormous projects that allow little space for individual creativity in the field and rest on expectations of a high degree of predictability. Research with migrants and other precarious populations requires a delicacy of approach that fares poorly when funding is directed to self-styled experts with little prior cultural and linguistic knowledge either of the host countries or of the migrants' own cultural origins.<sup>13</sup>



In tying research to the objectivist goal of predictability, surely a gross distortion of the inchoate realities of human experience, this structure is intended to “responsibilize” researchers to perform according to narrowly conceived contractual arrangements while effectively removing from them any semblance of responsibility to ethnographic research—that is, to the capacity to respond creatively to field situations rather than following a narrowly prearranged line of inquiry with usually quite unsurprising results. In the terms I am laying out in this essay, this structure distorts the ritual of progressive discovery that lies at the core of anthropology’s distinctive methodology, substituting, as Grotti and Brightman acutely note, the aridity of formal assessment for the rich revelations brought by a self-consciously applied ritual sequencing of our work. It does so by upscaling research so that the domesticity of the ethnographic encounter risks becoming a tragically weakened metaphor for social-science methods answerable only to the voracious demands of audit culture. Those demands are for large-scale research that sacrifices the risky intimacy of the true ethnographic encounter for safely countable, reassuringly numerous, and superficially verifiable data. The authors of these papers have, by contrast, set an example of both feasibility and insight. Their work strengthens the argument for genuinely ethnographic research—research, that is, conducted on an intimate scale and entailing intense and protracted engagement with the social actors on whom it focuses—at a time when such work is threatened by the allure of large numbers and massive organizational structures.

The first port of call is logically the question of how the analysis of hospitality can move beyond the stereotype of Mediterranean identity. In this regard, Chiara Quagliariello is gloriously unequivocal. Hospitality to foreigners, she says, “has nothing to do with the notion that hospitality is part of the cultural values of the Mediterranean area.” In this, she instantiates Brightman and Grotti’s declaration that the authors of this volume “make no attempt to define a distinctive Mediterranean hospitality” but instead examine regimes and scalar transformations of hospitality in what happen to be circum-Mediterranean states. But the risk of falling prey to cultural essentialism remains part of what such scalar acrobatics entail. Quagliariello is thus undoubtedly correct in claiming that the provision of hospitality to foreigners does not demonstrate that hospitality is a typically *Mediterranean* feature; but Lampedusans do claim it as a typically *Lampedusan* virtue. Hospitality is, after all, an assertion of moral and social superiority in many parts of the world. Its distribution as a cultural

trait is therefore unlikely to be restricted to any one geographical area; but, by the same token, it will be claimed as a distinctive moral property by virtually any social entity that recognizes it as a virtue in the first place. Every community I have visited, even one that had me unceremoniously deported by the Greek military regime in 1974, made extravagant claims about its own hospitality, often with the clear aim of demeaning nearby communities by comparison. And what goes for single communities goes equally, with minor variations, for districts, provinces, and even nation-states.

This is segmentary logic in action, and it becomes decidedly more aggressive as it moves to a more inclusive scale. Countries can each safely claim to be the most hospitable of all, knowing that other countries are anxious for them to keep the unwelcome visitors and largely care not one whit whether such *ersatz* hospitality entails active mistreatment or simple neglect of the so-called guests. This has been the burden borne by the southern European nations as a result of the Dublin Regulation whereby they were essentially forced to act as the other countries' border guards. Ethnography can (and here does) lead to a complex understanding of the violence conducted, not only against the bodies of the migrants but also against the sensibilities and values of local people who already have some experience of offering the migrants their local version of hospitality. Quagliariello's account reveals some variation in locals' views about the most appropriate ways of treating the foreigners. This may reflect a measure of competitive concern with reputation—a feature of small communities around the world, not only in the circum-Mediterranean area.

Quagliariello's nuanced account is especially valuable because, while she trenchantly dismisses the old spectre of a Mediterranean culture area, which often threatens to reappear in the thinnest of disguises, she also shows that it is based on some of the same totalizing logic as we see in the politics of border policing, Mediterranean solidarity, and resurgent ethnonationalism—hence my earlier remark about the danger of an emergent methodological nationalism but on a larger scale. Our methods are no less susceptible to scaling up than is local hospitality, and they face an analogous danger: that of absorption into large-scale survey analyses in which all traces of cultural nuance and individual agency have been suppressed. Even in anthropology, there is a risk of over-generalization. Moreover, in communities where a measure of self-regard is understood as a social virtue, the anonymity that we give individuals out of a concern for their privacy may inaccurately reinforce an impression of local homogeneity and,

in the process, may also silence the agency of individuals desirous of recognition.

Quagliariello has managed to write an account that does reflect the nuances of factional horizontal disagreement as well as vertical disaffection from the views of the bureaucratic state. Her firmly grounded ethnographic analysis evokes a strikingly different Mediterranean than the old totalizing idea of a place solidly unified by the values of honor and shame. Instead, it accords with Ben-Yehoyada's view of the agonistic friendships between people from different Mediterranean locations as cousinage rather than fraternity,<sup>14</sup> as she herself notes. Her incisive description of local reactions to the increased state control of "hospitality" also shows that the agonism of competitive hospitalities can be skewed vertically, up the scalar cliff as it were, allowing local people to reject the formal hospitality of the state as inferior to their own generosity.

Her analysis of this Italian site thus parallels recent discussions of the segmentary character of solidarity in Greece.<sup>15</sup> Internally, too, the possibility for competing forms of hospitality appears in the way that Lampedusans have, for Quagliariello, fallen into categories that clearly express the tensions between solidarity and exclusion. Just as she can write about the Mediterranean without claiming it as a homogeneous area, she is also explicit in rejecting the old anthropological myth of homogeneous communities. Difference is the motor of interaction; complex relations dispel the convenient but empirically unsustainable illusion of total conformity at any level. Lampedusans are evidently able to distinguish among different groups of foreigners, albeit in perhaps rather stereotypical terms, and it would be interesting to know how far their apperception of the differences sharpened or weakened over time. Migrants do not constitute a homogeneous mass, although it is convenient for hostile authorities and unsympathetic journalists to act as though they did.

Both the competitive localism of the Lampedusans and their distrust, in varying degrees, of the state and its policies might superficially seem to reinstate that sense of a wider Mediterranean pattern that the early critiques of "Mediterraneanism" questioned.<sup>16</sup> They do so, however, in a form that is both geographically more restricted and yet at the same time transcends the coastlines of the Mediterranean sea and that also allows for the play of significant internal variation at every level. As a unified entity, "the" Mediterranean is both a geographical datum and a political concept. It is not "a" culture; describing it as such simply (and simplistically) reinstates methodological nationalism at a higher scalar level<sup>17</sup> and

therefore almost certainly at an intellectually even more vacuous and destructive one.

That areal focus hangs, like evanescent traces of the smoke that men of this region so often display as evidence of their self-consciously Mediterranean masculinity (for local people can be the most egregious self-stereotypers of all), around all the essays collected here. It shrouds an implicit promise of new perspectives to appear as the smoke disperses. In some cases, this spectral areal focus is also useful in very direct, practical ways. There *are* cultural resonances among the various countries ringing the sea (men in most parts of the region *do* view smoking as a mark of masculinity, even though they ever more frequently express reservations about it) although these features may also change (on Crete, for example, I have found that in recent years some men have stopped smoking—along with heavy drinking and even in a few cases the massive consumption of fatty meat—as they have become increasingly careful of their health). That resonance has never been in serious doubt and was not put into question even by the most severe of the early critiques of Mediterraneanism, including my own.

There are also hints in these pages, however, of a more pervasive and interesting sense of mutual recognition, a form of semiosis that requires serious consideration for two good reasons: first, because it provides a much more nuanced pathway to understanding both intra- and extra-Mediterranean forms of cultural communication; and second, because it promises some useful methodological advances. From the complex (and internally contradictory) political implications of recalling the proximity of a fascist site during a memorial to migrants lost at sea, to the silent gestural communication between an ethnographer and social actors with whom she has no common language, these essays display and analyze telling moments of nuance, a word nicely glossed in Italian as *sfumature*—the things that fade like the dissipating smoke from a too aggressive confrontation of their presence. Much ethnography consists in catching those wisps before they dissipate altogether.

The *sfumature* adumbrated here suggests ways in which common cultural ground may transcend the more obvious differences that divide the many languages spoken in the area without pushing us toward a totalizing reductionism. Cynthia Malakasis' research, for example, was primarily focused on the Greek caregivers and their administrative support staff. As she persuasively argues, however, the political dynamics of hospitality infuse the maternity wards despite the scalar difference between those

spaces of officially provided medical care and the domestic arena of the private home. One may wonder how the foreign women who were the patients, many of them from societies whose values overlap significantly with those reported from Greece, understood the gestures that Malakasis interprets from a knowledgeable Greek perspective; yet—and this is the core point—they clearly did indeed understand them, at least to some extent.

In the same way, I found myself wondering whether Quagliariello's Lampedusan informants felt some measure of kinship—cousinage?—with earlier arrivals from North Africa because of already existing traces of language contact in the local dialect, or of *lingua franca* in the everyday speech of both sides. That is not something to which we are ever likely to be able to give a definite answer, but any hint that such commonalities were noticed during interaction might point to such a historical grounding of mutual cultural resonance. The fact that some elements of cultural communication cannot be demonstrated except on the basis of circumstantial evidence—that they are unprovable in an objectivist sense—does not mean that they are unimportant. Quite to the contrary, such traces of commonality may be all the more durable for their resistance to easy identification. Moreover, the state's expropriation of territorial space for its sequestration of migrants and of the right even to interact with the migrants ruptured the very possibility of such discrete familiarity, making a mockery of official claims to be practicing anything Lampedusans or the migrants could recognize as true hospitality. Yet such familiarity, or mutual recognition, may have made the earlier pattern of locally provided shelter a potential link with similar interactions during the still more distant past.

In similar vein, Malakasis' convincing demonstration of communication that did not require the mediation of language leads me to wonder about the implications of the hospitality metaphor for the two sides of these sometimes uncomfortable cultural transactions. Were gesticulations of a kindness that was also a form of social control imbued with similar implications in (say) Syria and Greece, and were they therefore comprehensible, at least at a subconscious level, in the same terms? How would we know? What we need is something akin to a Benvenistean etymological genealogy for gesture and posture—not as a demonstration of continuity with a classical past, as in the celebrated work of the nineteenth-century scholar Andrea de Jorio<sup>18</sup> but as evidence for commonalities that reverberate across space as well as time. Such a genealogy would be very difficult to trace. Even leaving aside the multiple languages that a researcher would

need to master, itself a difficult goal in these days of restricted (and restrictive) funding, the links between language and other forms of social semiosis are not straightforward. Nevertheless, I suggest, in this linkage lies a potentially exciting new project that would shed critical light on both the realities and the stereotypes that infuse attempts to generalize about the Mediterranean in cultural terms.

Although that larger project might be very difficult to achieve, the traces of shared understandings are often quite palpable in the present time. In a plea to resuscitate the hospitality metaphor in situations of the kind she describes, Malakasis shows very clearly that both sets of social actors, midwives and migrants, did indeed share some measure of understanding of the metaphor of hospitality and that both sides understood the metaphor as not solely limited to the state's official rhetoric. We do not have to be madly Mediterraneanist to see that centuries of contact have produced some area of mutual intelligibility, possibly even to the point where gesture, although noticeably different from country to country in specific details, nevertheless also does afford a generic sense of connectedness. Indeed, such reciprocities might perhaps have served, as in Ben-Yehoyada's accounts of Tunisian-Sicilian encounters, to revive the ghosts of an older age: more *sfumature*, more traces of convivial smoke shared in the agonistic amity, the jesting and jousting, of boats and cafés and brothels.

The chapters in this volume focus on hosts rather than guests and wisely so; the authors have opted to work in areas of their own unquestionable competence. This is a more productive approach than we see in so much of the hastily mounted investigation of the dynamics of migration. As Heath Cabot has noted, too many of the self-appointed migration experts who inflicted themselves on Greece, for example, spoke neither Greek nor any of the migrants' languages, but they also lacked the awareness of intercultural *engagement* that Malakasis implicitly (but persuasively) opposes to the cultural *dissonance* (usually in the form of racism) too often assumed rather than critically examined in migration studies.<sup>19</sup> This is not to say that the racism does not exist—it unquestionably does—but rather to underscore the often subtly muted instances of real, effective communication that can and often does inspire a very different attitude to migrants on the part of host communities and even institutions.

Ethnographic research has a temporal dimension, as does hospitality. Indeed, much as rituals consist of a series of nesting boxes or Russian dolls, all (always as in van Gennep's schema) equally structured in triune

form, acts of hospitality reproduce in miniature the longer-term relationships on which ethnography depends, and brings to a sharper focus the ritual features of entering the field from outside, transitioning to partial membership, and ultimate acceptance that is the fundamental pattern of virtually all serious in situ field research. As researchers try to make sense of the bewildering array of cultural differences (but also the equally striking similarities) among the migrants and their hosts, one methodological step that could conceivably shed a great deal of light on the intercultural dynamics would be the reflexive recording of the researchers' own difficulties and progress in various areas of cultural competence including—but not limited to—language. In a way, this is something all ethnographers do as a matter of course, but doing it with deliberate thoroughness amid all the complexities of intercultural engagement produced by migration could generate genuinely novel insights into the nature of communication, its failures, and its sometimes unexpected successes. Malakasis' insightful and self-aware retention of the domestic hospitality model, for example, suggests exciting possibilities for such an approach.

Malakasis' empathetic reconstruction of the Syrian patient's visual interaction with her, an interaction that seems all the more meaningful in the absence of verbal exchange (“interpretation that exceeded the linguistic,” in her genial phrase), suggests that such a methodology might be a notable source of insight into how the structure of hospitality mediates cultural contact—more so, perhaps, than would be achieved by arriving with full proficiency in the patients' language from the start. Malakasis, although working primarily with Greek midwives, did in fact, in the course of her interactions with their patients, pick up a few words of Arabic. Her skill in so doing also allowed her to help newcomers among the Greek caregivers achieve greater rapport with their patients. Expanding that skill into a longer-term methodology might generate an unrivalled capacity to evaluate shifts in attitude, topics, and ease of communication across time, yielding rich methodological rewards of more general applicability.

Malakasis' sensitivity to nuance emerges clearly in the incident in which a midwife reacts angrily to being called a nurse. Not only does Malakasis allow her readers to learn from her unintentional mistake (most good ethnography results from the solecisms we inadvertently commit in the field), but she thereby strengthens the case for treating the hospitality metaphor as useful at this scalar level. Perhaps to an outsider, the hospital would not seem like an exact extension of a home, raising questions about the relevance of talking about hospitality, but the point here is precisely that it was

the informant herself who chose to make an issue of what she saw as a violation of her professional identity and the sovereignty of her calling. As a result, the midwife also proactively moved to defend the cultural intimacy—the private inner core of a supposedly sovereign structure<sup>20</sup>—of her profession and her country alike. Her action reproduces the logic of hospitality, albeit with a more obviously aggressive intent. Like hospitality itself, it both reveals and defends that inner core. Malakasis' evident discomfort with revealing such inner confessions of weakness typifies the dilemma of all anthropologists, whose *métier* is to explore the realms of cultural intimacy—since otherwise they would simply be mouthing the official perspectives already fully available to outsiders—but whose ethical commitment is to avoid potential harm to their informants, in this case by embarrassing them through the revelation of professional intimacies.

The responsibilities of the ethnographer, like those of any guest, are precisely to respect the sovereignty—limited but usually well-understood by all parties—of the host community, be that community a professional group, a village, or a bureaucratic institution. But the claim to sovereignty, like the obligations incurred by the gift in Mauss' famous account, should be discreet and indirect; when it becomes too blunt, a risk particularly triggered by scaling it up too far and too fast, it morphs into abusive power play. By connecting hospitality to sovereignty, Malakasis thus explains what she calls the “slackness” of the hospitality metaphor. The less the behavior of the self-appointed hosts resembles the local understanding of hospitality, the more it exposes their real intentions.

In this spirit, Quagliariello documents the tension between generosity to migrants and resentment over the state's arrogation to itself of the role of collective host—a role, moreover, that excludes the Lampedusans from what they consider their native territory and thereby rips the veil away from the invasive practices of state policing. This is structural violence at work: the sovereignty of local people is abruptly usurped by an impersonal force that in their eyes has no claim on the right to offer hospitality and is thus understood as invasive. Malakasis' slackness metaphor is especially apt here: the link between metaphor and referent is weakened by abuse. The rituals of hospitality belong with the sovereign host. When the bureaucratic ethnonational state attempts to arrogate those rituals to itself, it breaks and disrupts them, fatally destroying their generative power to sustain social relations and rendering them a limp and emasculated imitation of the originals: *ritus interruptus*.



Bureaucracy itself entails a great deal of ritualistic activity, but its obsession with static categories and borders does not accommodate the modular flexibility of true rites of passage. Just as the nation-state attempts to suppress the evidence of temporal wear and tear, so, too, its bureaucracies airbrush the corruptions of time and the weaknesses and provisionality of territorial borders. Methodological nationalism often leads us to suppose, erroneously, that sovereignty is a matter of fixed borders enclosing well-defined spaces. Nothing could be further from the truth. Not only does it move between very different scalar versions of an imagined or claimed territory, but it is also a shape-shifter with a temporal trajectory that allows us to identify its unstable incarnations. An inspection of the history of Poland's borders over four centuries, for example, would dispel any illusion of stability, let alone permanence. All rituals involve some sort of passage, as Ardener's lapidary remark suggests, and this means that the shape of the eternal present is in reality a constantly changing reminder of the ephemerality of even the most powerful states. Shelley's poem *Ozymandias* is not only a reminder of the mortality of rulers; it is a reminder of the mortality of the institutions in their charge.<sup>21</sup>

But what kind of passage do the ritual structures of bureaucratic maintenance mark, and to what extent can we predict what they will produce? Nation-states, while insisting on the permanence and inflexibility of their own borders, are actively reshaping other zones of sovereignty, including many that are internal to their own territories. In pointing out this lability in a recent review of the tangled situation on the island of Lesbos, Efthymios Papataxiarchis reminds us that, in effect, nation-states—which claim to be epitomes of geopolitical stability—are allowing and even encouraging spatial mutations of sovereignty.<sup>22</sup> Bureaucracies are ritualistic, to be sure, but experience teaches us that their ritual aspects do not necessarily produce predictable outcomes, and unpredictability may even be the goal of regimes intent on pushing migrant populations back from their own borders and maintaining them in a state of debilitating uncertainty as a warning to the imagined hordes of others awaiting their chance to enter European space.<sup>23</sup>

A ritual model for thinking about these phenomena should function, not as a means of foreclosing debate or imposing a formal schema on a wildly complex situation, and certainly not out of respect for an outdated anthropological convention, but, to the contrary, as a way of seeing where acts purporting to be forms of hospitality go off track, falling by the wayside of their own claimed intentions. It is not anthropologists, after all,

who have scaled hospitality up in the first place; it was the migration industry, acting with motives even less admirable than those of the hotel trade's banalization of a human relationship in the so-called hospitality industry. Adopting the concept of the rite of passage as a heuristic device exposes the flaws in the metaphor—and, more to the point, the disingenuous attitudes and dishonest intentions behind its use. By plotting the incantatory evocation of hospitality through the multiple official manipulations of time and space, we stand at least some chance of understanding and tracking the shape-changing sovereignties, the inhuman migration regimes, within which real people—migrants and local hosts alike—are attempting to stabilize lives disordered, dismantled, and dismembered through, in many cases, no fault of their own.

## NOTES

1. I heard Ardener articulate this incisive phrase when I was a graduate student at Oxford (1972–76), but do not know of its appearance in his published work. See also Herzfeld (2009: 183). On rites of passage, see van Gennep (1960).
2. Lévi-Strauss (1974). On the structure of the book, see Herzfeld (1991).
3. Conversely, the passage out from ethnographic intimacy to incorporation in the world of scholarly publication can be as painful, and require as many lonely and difficult ethical decisions, as the initial rite of separation from home and the traumatic transition that is the fieldwork sojourn itself.
4. Ben-Yehoyada (2017).
5. Carter (1997) on Senegalese in Italy; Delaney (1990) on the Turkish migrants' home visits.
6. See especially Douglas (1966), Turner (1969).
7. Notably Rabinow (1977).
8. On Jordan, see Shryock (1997); on militant Buddhism in Sri Lanka, see especially Kapferer (1988).
9. I intend to address elsewhere the questionable ethics of bureaucratizing ethical standards in the social sciences and particularly in anthropology.
10. Wagner (2013: 633).
11. See especially Schechner (1985).
12. For a relatively recent assessment of the impact of audit culture, see Shore and Wright (2015).
13. This is the burden of Cabot's (2019) scathing assessment.
14. See Ben-Yehoyada (2014).
15. See Rakopoulos (2015) and the extended discussion in Herzfeld (2021).

16. See Herzfeld (1984), de Pina Cabral (1989); and, for the more orthodox view, Davis (1977).
17. On methodological nationalism, see Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002).
18. See Kendon (2000), a modern English-language annotated edition of de Jorio's magisterial account of Neapolitan gesture, with its attempts to establish connections between modern gesture and ancient statuary.
19. Cabot (2019) offers a trenchant critique of the current rash of migrant experts in Greece, but her critique, which is followed by a critical discussion with several commentators, could well be applied elsewhere.
20. See the analysis of cultural intimacy and extended discussion in Herzfeld (2016).
21. This, famously, is the central theme of Anderson's (1991) magisterial treatment of nationalism.
22. Papataxiarchis (2020).
23. On the ritualism of bureaucracy, see especially Handelman (1990), Herzfeld (1992).

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