

Before Levinas, after Derrida: from Alterity and Hospitality to Xenophobia

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This article aims to constructively reconsider the accepted relations of the language of alterity and hospitality, traditionally drawn from Levinas and Derrida, which have been assumed to be applicable to xenophobia. A closer assessment of Levinas reveals that his 'structure' fails to apply to recent sorts of xenophobic incidents. Just so, Derrida's work upon hospitality does not apply, which Derrida was aware of. Indeed, nor will Levinas and Derrida be disagreed with; a shadow-phenomenology will rather emerge which allows for more sympathetic and applicable treatment of some 'xenophobic' incidents – in South Africa and globally.

Keywords

Xenophobia, Levinas, Derrida, *l'autre*, *l'Autre*, *autrui*, *Autrui*, shadow-phenomenology

Following the increasing frequency of cross-border issues, migration, and xenophobic attacks, work upon xenophobia has become a growing theme in critical study and fiction. We will explain how theories of alterity and hospitality, drawn from Levinas and Derrida, were never applicable to such concerns. To situate the discussion in a sequence: the source of otherness in literary studies is often located in Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* (1961), in which the other is treated as radically other to a self. In turn, 'the other' is treated as interchangeable with the different, the strange and 'the stranger',¹ thereby extending the framework to xenophobia (fear of the stranger).² The stranger in turn is equated with the 'foreigner'. In several cases, fear of foreigners is treated as a fear of 'apocalypse' – death of a subject or those it values.³ To redress such concerns, literary study often assesses xenophobia in terms of a requirement for 'responsibility' to the other (after Levinas) and the paradoxes of 'hospitality',⁴ mostly developed from Derrida's application of Levinas.⁵ But perhaps each step of that sequence warrants some attention. We consider alterity in Levinas, contrast it to xenophobia as fear of apocalypse, then to Derrida's 'hospitality' to explain that their work was never applicable to xenophobia (and nor did they wish it to be), and also that such application is deeply unfair to the xenophobic. Such demonstration might be a little unnerving, as the language of alterity and difference has for decades been taken as basal to theory, so a bulwark of literary and cultural studies.⁶ Nor will that support be undone but, we hope, rather clarified and resituated. Our demonstration will adumbrate a shadow-phenomenology of one sort of xenophobia, stemming from lack, in order to further such studies in Africa and globally.

Levinas' ethics

We first assess Levinas' *Totalité et infini* of 1961, to follow how he approaches alterity. Levinas applies four French terms for 'other': *l'autre*, *l'Autre*, *autrui* and *Autrui* (which we explained elsewhere are very little considered in Levinas study (Galetti, 2015)). All, as do the English 'alterity' and 'other', derive from the Latin 'alter' – which means an 'other', especially *one of two* (Chambers Dictionary). Levinas will bring that root to its breaking-point.

To start, *autre* can be helpfully understood by 'other' in English, in that both can signify any sort of other, human or thing, and both accept a definite or indefinite article (*le, un*). Hence both allow for logic in language (predicating 'a' of something), to predicate characteristics, and for pluralisation of an individual or genus (others, *les autres*). Thus 'other' can be an epithet, while 'alterity' applies the general attribute 'other' to specific individuals.

I approach Levinas as Derrida did (1964: 445): via Husserl (Levinas indeed explained in later years that since 1961 he had practised a phenomenology, which 'worked back' through conditions – i.e. to origins (1998: 87)). Famously, Husserl since 1900 aligned to 'intentionality' as 'consciousness of something', an act corresponding to objectification. That object is given to consciousness in evidence, so is visualised 'in front' of consciousness. Husserl makes that directional intentionality correspond to the *sense* (*Sinn*) of logical predication, in which something is predicated of the subject according to the form '*S is P*'. From that form, Husserl derived the forms 'S can be P', 'S must be P', and 'S is not P', which express possibility, necessity and negation respectively (2002).

Strikingly, Levinas concedes consciousness *but finds an 'intentionality' that precedes Husserl's*, so long as *language* is already given to experience (which condition he will 'work back' to (*infra*)) (1961: 45 1.17).⁷ He employs signs – his preferred term for 'words' – that refuse distance and sight, so precede objectification (82 1.19). Before 'consciousness of something' one 'lives from...' in 'enjoyment' (82 1.33). Indeed, before even a sense of 'other', *one still lives as a 'we'*.⁸ *We 'live from...' (Nous vivons de); from good soup, from bread, work, at home with ourselves* (82 1.17).

Levinas' 'living from' will require no Husserlian *correspondence* to a formal logic outside it, yet allows form. Indeed, Levinas allows a *structure*:

[O]ur analyses are guided by a *formal structure, the idea of infinity* in us.

(52)

To that end, Levinas only *then* allows sight and distance, to move from a 'we' – as *ipseity* follows when I am 'in view of myself'.

Still, that is merely an 'optics', not yet 'ethics'. Levinas moves past 'this other' (*cet autre*), which individuation sets a thing and human in parity; I am never a thing to myself. Rather, I am first an *ego*, hence an other being (*un autre être*) to myself (31 1.25). That requires as its condition the Me (*Moi*). The adjective 'other' can enter in language, and even *the 'bread I eat' becomes other*.

In turn, consciousness before something precludes scanning a range 'from left to right', so from '*one to the other*' (5 1.33). Leaping to the Me *can only* occur without external viewpoint upon the other. Hence in enjoyment 'I can' seek (for Levinas, 'I can' thus signifies a practical *ability* in being, before logical predication of possibility and necessity, and before predicating of something). Thus, in consciousness, a *desire* drives me toward 'a *wholly* other thing' (3 1.18). That whole would first be the essence of 'other': which Levinas effects a

transcendence to *l'Autre* ('the Other'). Thus, Levinas emphasizes, the Other is *not* other like the bread I eat (3 l.12). He adapts (Hegelian to Husserlian) logic. Keeping negation allows an opposite, so a difference before objectivity. Intentionality seeks identification, thus I am not *like* myself, which looks at me from outside, but first require the other to be the *same* (*le même*) (257). As 'this other' would individuate it as what *it is*, so make it *not the same* as *me* (90); desire for the Other allows identification to rise to the Same (upper-case, to signify that it is essential, an idea) – the Same is 'essentially identification' (10).

Yet desire for the Other finds also that the Other is other to it, so other to me. Before objectification and 'opposition' (6 l. 36), 'the I' (*le je*) 'takes itself as other' without distinction (*supra*), so the I is not an Other (7 l.2, 6, 11). Such 'freedom' allows *an other* to be no longer *different* from me in essence. However, neutralising the *Other* as such would 'reduce' it to the Same, so to an identity (14 l.7). The Other can be an essence for me *only insofar as* its essence is to dwell at the 'point of departure' from an intending of essence (12 l. 13). Its alterity could only be constituted as a 'radical' heterogeneity (a difference before genus), for by its essence it must avoid essential difference and opposition. The essence of the Other is to be Other to the Same. Yet the Other has been afforded 'relation' to the Same in a fashion that evolves the conjunction (*et*), which signifies addition *only* insofar as one conjunct essentially eludes. The sign 'and' (*et*) indicates, yet never has 'power' (*pouvoir*, which in French means both power and possibility, the essence of possible ability) over, the other:

We are the Same and the Other. The conjunction *and* indicates here
neither addition, nor power [*pouvoir*] of one term over the other [*l'autre*].
(9 l.20)

Still, that conjunction never *frees* the Other, so nor could the Other wholly exceed the Same. That implies *finitude* of the Other 'within the transcendence' of 'Desire'. Yet an *idea* of a *beyond* to the Other still '*has a sense*' (*sens*) – *Sinn*, which in French also signifies 'direction' (4 l.38). That 'idea' no longer even allows the 'and' – going beyond 'the Same and the [finite] Other' requires the idea of infinity (xv l.14).

Bodily other

Levinas revisits 'living from...' (101 l.1). As 'the other' can mean a thing or person, in enjoyment as *being* it is first things that are 'other', before even an 'I' (*supra*). In that *mundane* sense, 'things' are first 'possessions', they are furniture as *moveables* (*meubles*), which sense is 'elemental' (104 l.11). Such elements *suffice*, 'before the distinction between finite and infinite', so *before* the idea of the infinite (105 l.25). Still, possession allows only 'indefinite' being, the *apeiron* (132 l.22), and is aligned with its 'Heideggerian sense' of using tools – which Levinas rejects. Essentially, such things merely present 'the "other" aspect' (*face*) (105 l.33) rather than *the face* (113 l.19).

Levinas considers 'how' to go to freedom beyond the Same. Before essence, 'being me' implies 'the other', as body – 'I exist as body'. Hence 'this other' as individual is converted to the 'same' by *working* (*travaillant*), which takes the body as its possession (90 l.2). Even so, possession could never de-prioritise the body (which Heidegger's ordinal priority of the question of 'Being' over an existent 'being' does) for the body 'interests' me – from *interresse* as different, as 'going between' (131). A sense of 'me' as body follows, so

desire for the other as my body. Still, desire is produced in work (*travail*), possession of a thing, finitude (141 l.5); it turns out that working no longer suffices.

So Levinas in 1961 never accords ‘*the other*’ a face, ‘*l’autre*’ lacks *visage*, yet the Other, separate without opposition from the Same – so without priority that could subordinate the Other – *can* present its face (*visage*) to me; yet that too is *essentially* terrestrial (177 l). I am offered only a face which indicates that essential withholding from sense. Levinas develops language, for as *metaphor* the face indicates an anteriority to the givenness of sense (*Sinngebung*) (xv l.12). Levinas’ intentionality also lets him treat the face as comprehension by sight, as Husserl’s did, yet vision follows enjoyment (xvi l.16). To reach the infinite anterior to that face, desire begins to overflow the transcendence to the Other.

autrui

To that end, *autrui* means ‘others’ but *excludes* others as worldly things. In language, it refuses a definite article, so signifies a plural signified never wholly present in its signifier. That signified may *be* empirical or not – the form of *autrui* ‘opens’ the relation, to avoid reducing it to the Same. In turn, *autrui* refuses a definite or indefinite article, so resists declension. It thus precludes application as an epithet, which would be predicating (Derrida, 1964: 350). Thus nor does its sense allow consciousness of ‘something’, nor a correlative object or corresponding thing, nor indefinite being as *apeiron*, nor specific content that rises to its genus, especially not ‘this man’ that could rise to the genus of Man.

Yet, for Levinas, the face certainly has a sense as a part of a human body. Following his intentionality, in enjoyment at home with myself in dwelling,

I welcome *autrui* that presents itself in my house, in opening my home to him/her/it [*lui*].

(146)

Just as the *Sinngebung* in the face of *autrui* arises as a rupture in enjoyment, before it can pertain to ‘an other’, to ‘the other’ as wholly other thing, or rise to the Same and the Other, crucially, a moment of *welcome in my home* arises for *autrui* (175 l.20).

Yet the face is ‘not knowledge of an object’ (*supra*), so nor are the logic and ontology of the Same *dismissed* – they merely fail to *ground* the sense of *autrui*, implying a lack of being, but also an *inability* of predicating and simple hierarchy. So while ‘simple opposition’ was surpassed with the Same and the Other (*supra*) (23 l.34), the face no longer leaves a ‘logical place’ for its ‘contradictory’ (175 l.20). Yet, following enjoyment, Levinas *can* work back in language. First, *autrui* in informal speech also means a *singular* human ‘you’ (*tu*), which bypasses the senses of the signifier as closer to consciousness and distance to a signified. One employs language to speak to *autrui* which is indeclinable in language; it is *autrui* that one addresses in a proximity as ‘intimacy’ (*intimité*, which means both *privacy* and *intimacy*, ‘alone’ or ‘together’). Yet nor could *autrui* be a simple ‘personal other’, an impetus to avoid conventions that unwarily fix a characteristic or predicate to ‘other’ – as if I know *autrui* is a person as I am. Rather, it has followed, *autrui* means (*signifie*) this human (or person, or man) *only* insofar as it refuses the category of humanity that I could treat as its finite attribute, only insofar as it *is the absolute stranger infinitely far from me*. Thus *autrui* keeps *its freedom*. Importantly, Levinas summarizes, *autrui* signifies

the man who can be absolutely stranger to me – refractory to all typology, all genre, all characterology, all classification – [...] the strangeness of

autrui, its very freedom!

(461.8)

One arrives at Levinas' *autrui* as condition for a *stranger* in its strangeness. For Levinas, *autrui* as (absolute) stranger is stranger even than the radical difference of the Other (*supra*) that permits its freedom.

Indeed, it has followed, the rupture by *autrui* is a condition for thought of alterity in *being* as enjoyment and for the other in work. Thus *autrui* takes the bread from my mouth (which the Other left undisturbed), leaving 'hunger' as a bodily 'need' (48).

Autrui to the other

In turn, *autrui*'s 'height' implies the 'Most-High' as *Autrui*, which sign resists logic and language as *autrui* does. Just so, as per the Other and *autrui*, I can see *Autrui* in *the face* that ruptures enjoyment (*supra*). Moreover, *autrui* has the sense in *formal* speech of politeness, 'you' as *vous* – so capitalisation into *Autrui* accepts a religious connotation, as proximity to a distant 'Thou' to whom one speaks in intimacy and also with reverence.

Moreover, as 'most-High', *Autrui* is a condition for the given even before *Sinngebung* (*supra*). As the given refers to the giver, *Autrui gives* (64), so 'reason' is reformulated as our capacity to receive. As *autrui* is the condition for thought of alterity (*supra*), I can think I am given what I *need*. Thus I recognise I am hungry and can be sated. Were that sufficient, of course, I could satisfy my hunger to 'assimilate' even *the other*, by working from this other to the same (v. 89-90). Yet *Autrui* gives without primacy of thought, no longer recognising a bodily *need*, so without satiety, even though without lack; moreover, *desire* still seeks to go to *Autrui* with what I am given. Thus Desire seeks *to give*. Such 'analysis' is still essential, thus cognition of an essential difference in the effects upon me of *autrui* and *Autrui*; '[t]he difference between need and Desire' means that:

[t]o recognise *autrui*, it is to recognise a hunger. To recognise *Autrui* – it is to give.

(48)

That allows *Autrui* too its refusal of *essential* categories, to transcend the Same by an *even 'higher dimension'* to the absolute Other (as Stranger, in the *upper* case, as *essential*) – that Stranger further precedes even the original *root* of 'alter' as 'one of two'. Levinas summarizes:

The *absolutely Other* is *Autrui*. He and I do *not form a number*. The collectivity in which I say 'you' or 'we' is *not a plural* of the 'I'. ... [The] Stranger who disturbs the *being at home* with oneself [...] *also means the free one* [...] He escapes my grasp *by an essential dimension*...

(9)

Hence *autrui* (thus *Autrui*) is the 'original event' of signification (64 1.34). As Levinas only let sight *follow* enjoyment, *Autrui* begins to be understood in *hearing*; the face speaks (37). That 'height' from which speech comes is understood by 'teaching' (9) – Desire 'understands and hears' (*entend*) *Autrui* in speech (146), which too refuses visibility or distance, a teaching in intimacy (90, 128 1.39). It follows that '*thought*' consists of *speaking*. Importantly, *the prior sequence, from enjoyment to Autrui*, is 'elevated' to *the higher dimension of language*, in 'discourse' (Ibid).

A next stage follows, in a sort of ruptured circularity (a term Levinas strictly avoids as it would evoke only the same), as we rise to *ethical* intentionality. Discourse is elevated to the ‘heights’ from which the ‘I can’ proceeds once more in language, so as ‘responsibility’ (*réponse/abilité*), and revisits the other beyond *Autrui*. Hence, it follows, language no longer reaches *the other* (*l’autre*), no longer ‘*even tangentially*’, even as a ‘silent language’ in intimacy. A turning toward an ‘elsewhere’ occurs according to *interiority*, and the other only be reached by a being without need, which in a certain sense *lacks nothing* (32 I.29), as the other comes from exteriority beyond the *logos*, the essential origin of language. That ‘structure’ – asymmetry as ‘metaphysics’ – is the idea of infinity which Levinas’ sequence has worked back to. ‘The other *metaphysically* desired’ in its *absolute difference* – ethical lack of separation as absolute separation – can only be reached in its sense (*sens*, direction) by a being in righteous straightforwardness (*droiture*) (33 I.35). One revisits ‘the other in an eminent sense’, in *ethics* (3 I.1). One finds much more in Levinas, but for our purposes we halt here.

Xenophobia before Levinas

We employ an African example to elucidate one style of xenophobia. Consider the xenophobic attacks in South Africa, which first occurred against migrants in Alexandra township in March 2008 and erupted again in more locales in January 2015.⁹ A phenomenology arises *that shadows* Levinas’ at each juncture. It too begins from intentionality, provided that there is language to ‘work back’ to conditions. Consciousness too begins from a ‘we’ who live. However, intentionality avoids Husserl’s sort, in a way that begins to precede Levinas’. Consciousness is not yet of something *given*, as an object, but something lacking before it is an object. Thus our pre-objective intentionality does not yet begin from Levinas’ ‘enjoyment’. To be sure, ours is a ‘dwelling’... but *we fail to enjoy when there is not enough good soup*, not enough bread, when we are hungry for them. We live in *lack* of enjoyment. The ‘sense’ of soup and bread are rather that of threat – they can be removed.

Nevertheless, I can be in view of myself, in ipseity, and my body can be other to me. The bread I eat too can become other. Hence I can still desire the other (*autre*), as one of two, who is the same as me. Moreover, certainly, I experience the stranger, and thus I see the stranger *appears*. Yet in lack I am unable to *experience the stranger as other*, insofar as I experience myself as not one of two (*alter*) with the stranger; the stranger is not an other which can become the *same* as me, nor even be *like* me, which would require me to see it as other. I am unable to identify it as other, and experience it as strange from the first.

Its sense is thus not yet logical, I predicate no characteristics of it – rather, in lack of enjoyment, the logical necessity of intentionality becomes a need. However, before I consider my *power* to affect things, I fear I am *not able* to fulfil my need. Negation applies before its logical and empowering uses. As we live in lack, in need, I do *not* desire the other; and henceforth ‘*the other*’ is not identifiable with *the stranger*, for our experience of *the stranger* is that of fear. We fear it comes to take our soup. That fear does not become desire for a wholly other thing – fear of the stranger does not transcend enjoyment to essence, so is also not included to the Same. Thus *no other in its individual sense, nor Other pertain to the stranger*. We are not the Same and the Other. That stranger thus eludes the structure of ‘alterity’, the predicate of otherness. Instead of alterity, it has a sense of *xenoity*, a Greek sign that originates before even a common root in ‘alter’. In turn, I have no sense of its finitude, which I require for a sense of the infinite. The xenoity of the stranger does not appear to me

by the 'idea of infinity'. We fear we are 'powerless'. So in lack of enjoyment, that threat by the stranger is before the subject and prior to the I, and as we fear it comes to take our bread, *it has the sense of threat to 'us'*. Xenophobia – the 'fear' of 'the stranger' (*xenos*) – is never solely about myself, but fear for *we* who live in lack, who fear the threat to that which we live from. Thus the experience of the stranger that appears as a threat to us can still be expressed in language – the language, to be sure, of theory – as fear of apocalypse (from *apokaluptein*, 'uncover'). It appears as a threat to our being, a threat of our non-being, a threat of death.

So, to revisit Levinas' other in being, and lack of 'living from' – it is indeed first things that are other. However, we lack *enough* things, we experience a lack, a lack of possessions, of furniture. Possessions are not elemental, our *lack* is elemental, so our fear of apocalypse is prior to what we possess. I possess my body, but too little else, too little furniture, and insufficient work. The stranger threatens that which I possess – my body that works – as well as that which I lack. Hence my lack of possessions is unrelated to indefinite being, for insofar as I lack possessions I have no tools. Such things reveal their aspects to me but, without the other or the Other, do not reveal the face of the stranger.

The stranger of xenophobia is faceless to us. So though I exist as body, my working does not convert the other to the same. Rather, *I fear that stranger comes to take work from the body that I possess.* I thus have no 'interest' in the faceless stranger, so do not comprehend it in my sight. Even were it to have facial expressions – such as a plea, or suffering – I could not see it. *I do not welcome the stranger into our dwelling.* Rather, I fear the stranger before it can become a man, of the genus Man, and before it is a man like me. Long before it can reveal its face, a condition for hospitality, the stranger is *unwelcome*.

Of course, nor am I unwelcoming to all. I can comprehend others (*autrui*), and welcome them as single or together. However, I cannot include the stranger to language. Crucially, *the stranger that I fear does not speak my language.* Hence no rupture of my lack of enjoyment occurs by the face of *autrui*. The fear of the faceless stranger is prior even to responsibility for *autrui*. Although in alterity the face overflows logic, the fear of the stranger and of apocalypse precedes logic. It is illogical. Language does not even fail to express what is before signification; my fear is inchoate and formless. Without language, I am unable to speak to the stranger in any informal way, I do not call it 'you'. It is kept far from my intimacy, has no place in my privacy, when I am alone or together with an other or others (*autrui*). Yet the stranger is too close to me, its proximity is that of threat. So while Levinas' *autrui* is the absolute stranger far from me, the proximity of *our* stranger engenders fear that it will destroy us. Before *autrui* has its freedom, I need grant to the stranger no freedom.

Indeed, Levinas' stranger only *then* takes the bread from my mouth, leaving bodily need. We lacked, and my body needed, from the first. Thus even *Autrui* has no relation to our stranger – it does not imply reverence; I treat the stranger irreverently. I keep it from my religion – I can be religious to others (*l'autre, l'Autre, autrui, Autrui*), but our experience of the stranger is irreligious. Just so, as I recognize no stranger, the *Stranger* that does not speak my language, does not *give*, but threatens to *take*. Hence I am 'unreasonable' insofar as I do not receive, and I am ungenerous. I seek to withhold – to keep the stranger from my bread, which belongs to us, to me as other and to others who are the same as me; *I seek to keep the stranger from working.* The 'our' and 'we' of Levinas' collective is after the 'we' who lack and fear, the stranger is long before becoming a number to us, but a singular threat. Thus we allow no Stranger, for the stranger lacks an essential dimension from the first. Its difference from me is before essential difference, and before the absolute difference and asymmetry of a structure of separation and connection. The stranger does not teach me, I learn nothing from it. Before all, we do not 'lack nothing' – we lack before anything. Hence we *also* fail to metaphysically desire the stranger as 'the other in an eminent sense' that comes from exteriority. We do not think of or speak to the stranger but act, in our fear and need, to keep it

from our work and bread. That stranger – the migrant – comes from beyond elsewhere, even further beyond than exteriority, beyond borders. So, without all four terms, the stranger of the xenophobic eludes the structure of alterity. We lack a responsibility to welcome that which we fear will destroy us, and grant it no freedom to live in our dwelling. *But only from the height of ethics could we be deemed unethical.*

Derrida's hospitality

How, thus, could welcome occur? In *Adieu* (1999), Derrida starts from Levinas' 'structure' as developed above, quoting one paragraph from *Totalité et infini* on three occasions:

To approach the Other [*Autrui*] in discourse is to *welcome* his expression, in which at each instance he overflows the idea a thought would carry away from it. It is therefore to *receive* from the Other [*Autrui*] beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of Infinity. But this also means: to be taught. The relation with the Other, or Discourse, is ... An ethical relation; but inasmuch as it is *welcomed* this discourse is a teaching. ... It comes, and comes from elsewhere, from the exterior, from the other [*l'autre*]. (18, 25, 27; Levinas 1961: 22 ff; Derrida's emphases)

Hence we address Derrida *insofar as his approach conforms to Levinas, in these works*. First, the subject – thus the I – is a 'host' in the dwelling, and Derrida emphasizes the importance of the idea of Infinity to welcome *Autrui*, which grants *Autrui* its freedom (60, quoting Levinas 1961: 66). The 'structure' of welcome developed from intentionality follows:

this approach of the face – as intentionality or welcome, that is, as hospitality – remains inseparable from separation itself. Hospitality assumes 'radical separation' as experience of the alterity of the other [*l'autre*], as relation to the other.

(46)

We hope it is obvious that Levinas' structure (*supra*) conforms to that which Derrida calls 'hospitality'. Indeed, Derrida summarizes, 'intentionality is hospitality', and 'one would understand nothing about hospitality *without clarifying it through phenomenology of intentionality*' (51, our emphasis).

We tried to do so. Then we detailed how, in phenomenology of intentionality as lack, before *Autrui* and the other, we do not welcome the stranger, are not a host and do not desire to be hospitable.

From this juncture, Derrida develops hospitality via Levinas' later *Autrement qu'être*.¹⁰ Most Derridean work centres here – valuably – on the etymology of hospitality.¹¹ The Latin root of 'host' is also the root of 'guest', and hostage; in discourse, the host is also originarily and can become the hostage of the guest, thus 'in proximity to the hostility of the *hostis*' (57, also 2002: 359-363).

The dilemmas of the host that seeks to welcome the other, and ends up hostile, follow. Thus a slide begins to occur in literary and cultural study, in that 'hostility' comes to be equated to xenophobia. As Rosello puts it:

When strangers meet strangers, each becomes not only both a potential host and a potential guest, but also ... A potential enemy: the old Latin equivalent between the host and the enemy continues to lurk behind each

generous attempt at meeting the other on his or her ground, and suspicion may, at any time, poison the budding relationship between ... National and immigrant' (2001:75).

But xenophobia has no root in *hostis*. To assess its applicability, one would require at least to relate hostility to 'the stranger' – that relation is not considered in *Adieu*, but in *Of Hospitality*; and may be less applicable to Levinas and xenophobia than has been assumed. At issue is still whether the Stranger enters hospitality via alterity.

Of Hospitality

Indeed, in *Of Hospitality* Derrida does link the other (*l'autre*) to the stranger (*l'étranger*), rendered by the translator as 'foreigner' (ix). Derrida considers also the root *xenos* (in Greek 'both stranger and foreigner'). In Plato's *Sophist*, the Stranger goes up against Socrates *vis-à-vis* the 'accepted *logos*' of Parmenides, that being is and nonbeing is not. Derrida sets up the stakes by reference to Levinas' economy (from *oikos*, the home/hearth) and an *essential* Stranger. It is

as though the Foreigner [*Xenos*] had to begin by contesting ... the 'master of the house' [by contesting] the power of hospitality.

(5)

However, Derrida is aware of what Levinas in 1961 never considered (*supra*) – a divergence in language, also allowing for threat. This Foreigner '*speaks oddly*' (Ibid), so *initiates 'war' in discourse about the 'threatening logos*' of Parmenides. Indeed, this Stranger engages in 'combat' about 'man as a political being' (13).

Next, Derrida does not mention Levinas' 'same', but allows for a Stranger viewed as 'outside', merely *like* Socrates (*supra*). Yet nor does Derrida find absolute strangeness, for Socrates – as he did at his trial by the Senate – *acts 'like'* a foreigner:

[w]hat does [Socrates at his trial] say in presenting himself *like* a foreigner ...?

(17, Derrida's emphasis)

Socrates, playing a verbal game, says: 'I am a complete foreigner to the language of this place'. However, Derrida interprets the Greek to have 'complete foreigner' mean 'helpless'. According to Derrida: just as the Sophist speaks 'oddly', Socrates is complaining that 'if I were foreign you would accept with more tolerance that I don't speak as you do' (21). Notice that Socrates accuses the Senate not of xenophobia, but xenophilia. Xenophobia has no role in the philosophical discussion.

Secondly, Socrates, Sophist and Senate speak one *language* – the Stranger merely speaks 'oddly'. He is not absolutely different. Derrida's *Sophist* does not consider an absolute Foreigner, anarchically different and strange, *who cannot speak our language* (18). Thus Socrates can begin from a Foreigner like me, able to be emulated, as if one were like him, to question man as political being.

Yet, thirdly, both the Sophist and Socrates *want* to speak. The Stranger in the *Sophist* does not come to destroy but to play verbal games in a mock war. Thereafter, the Sophist engages in debate about political being. For Derrida, the

contract of hospitality ... links to the foreigner and... reciprocally links the foreigner.

(21)

The stranger of xenophobia (*supra*) is unable to accept a contract, for it could not understand it and we would not comprehend it. That stranger is not yet *like* me, even if it does not enter as the same; does not link reciprocally for it is not yet welcome. Hence Derrida's hospitality does not consider the foreigner as *feared* (*phobia*, rather than *philia*), nor which – *before* the logos – threatens an apocalypse. It does not consider we who are unable to engage, who do not want to speak to the faceless stranger, who fear our lives and work are threatened before words, are not yet 'master of the house' for we lack a house, and master too little, so who are not yet political because we have no political voice. In that fashion, the stranger and the xenophobic are more originary than hospitality, than Derrida's phenomenology, so are occluded from his approach.

Most strongly, application of alterity and hospitality by literary and cultural study is *violent* – it imposes those sorts of intentionalities onto these sorts of xenophobics who fear they are powerless. It argues that they ignore their responsibility because they do not try to be hospitable first, and assumes they are unethical. One marginalizes such xenophobics, is blind to the threat they feared from the start, since their lack of enjoyment. One ignores, for instance, S'bu Zikode (chairperson of the Durban-based Abahlali baseMjondolo [shack-dwellers] Movement), who claims

[t]hose in power are blind to our suffering. This is because they have not seen what we see; they have not felt what we are feeling every second, every day.

(Zikode 2006; in Flockeman: 249)

To be sure, such xenophobics are only unethical – and they are – when they are *actually* inhospitable, and a fortiori when they are actually violent. But if Zikode is right, they are unethical only after their experiences have been marginalised.

Derrida and xenophobia

That oversight is soon demonstrated according to our priorities. Later in *Of Hospitality*, Derrida considers censorship in media (i.e. between those who share a language). That censorship – shutting websites, bugging phones – occurs by an unseen and 'anonymous' 'power'. Yet that power too is foreign, and at last, *foreign to language*. Indeed, it is without religion, as it is faceless and does not appear to the subject. As faceless, it sets aside *every condition of hospitality* (*supra*). Derrida points to his previous examples, and again situates the discussion via the 'home' and 'traditional conditions of hospitality' ... to admit xenophobia (53). However, he thus derives the

xenophobic circle (*not directed to the foreigner* as such, but, paradoxically against the anonymous technological power (foreign to the language or the religion, as much as to the family and the nation) which threatens, with the 'home' the traditional conditions of hospitality.

(53, our emphasis)

In such a technological world, one can become 'virtually xenophobic' (53). Derrida separates his xenophobia of the foreigner from alterity, language and the face, and avoids the conditions for the home and hospitality. Yet his xenophobia and its threat, which follows

from Levinas, is merely *virtual*, and amongst we who *have and enjoy possessions* – cellphones, pc’s. As noted, we who lack do not have sufficient possessions; to be sure, we often have cellphones (an oddity of market penetration) even in Alexandra. However, we lack enough work, bread, and often even a ‘house’. Our faceless stranger is foreign to the nation, but what threatens us is that it is foreign to us in its proximity, for we have too little to give. That is an *actual* xenophobia, following a fear of apocalypse directed precisely *at* the stranger. Before all, that stranger has been overlooked.

Conclusion

Nonetheless, the above merely augments the genii! Levinas avoids the term ‘apocalypse’; Derrida keeps apocalypse away from hospitality and xenophobia,¹² and insists that his logic develops a *duty* to avoid xenophobia and acknowledge alterity, in favour of hospitality.¹³ Consideration of xenophobia is far from their generosity (even should it marginalise xenophobics). Indeed, they are also right. Doubtless, we are all the same or alike, all others – even migrants. Responsibility and hospitality are necessary for rational intentionality. But it is *fear* of apocalypse – however irrational – which originally and wordlessly drives such intentionality of xenophobia. Henceforth, nor ought a ‘tradition’ of alterity and hospitality to be applied to xenophobia incautiously; yet nor would previous – honourable – work in literary and cultural study be undone, but augmented.

Indeed, many of the 2015 events in South Africa support these results. On January 23, the media, police and government described xenophobics who ransacked foreigner’s shops as criminals. But the lead photograph in *The Star* newspaper (23 January 2015) showed people running away with large soft-drinks and crates of tomatoes, which they lack; in the background, a foreigner, on her knees, is kept in place by two men. One is cradling a two-litre soft-drink in his arm while his other arm pushes her down. They do not look at her face. In later weeks, academics and opposition parties stated that the root issues are poverty and unemployment, which the government at first denied, claiming the attacks were co-ordinated by criminals. Still, the government came under scrutiny from international governments, and on 28 April government leaders in South Africa claimed they ‘are not to blame’, stating that refugees left ‘citizens feeling cheated and out of jobs and resources’ (*The Citizen*)

We followed that phenomenology. So, while some have claimed that phenomenology, including Levinas’ and Derrida’s, is practically and politically irrelevant, that is not so. Contrasting xenophobia to alterity allows for clarifying the experiences at the root of such events, as a condition for political engagement. Of course, we have barely begun that task, and further alignments should occur judiciously (hence our references to literary and cultural studies occurred in footnotes, in a parallel structure). For instance, *a fortiori*, what would be the *migrant’s* experience – overlooked by theorists of hospitality, as well as the media and government parties! – which knows *itself* to be the stranger, yet is threatened by those who refuse to give?¹⁴ We have ways forward. We who speak to each other, however oddly, need to bridge *languages*, redress *lack*, restore *enjoyment*, *see what the marginalized see* and help them *see what we do* (that strangers are the same or alike). We could redress fear before we blame. In turn, we need to speak to others about xenophobe and stranger as political beings. We need to see again, before we can engage in politics.

¹ For instance, Felski refers to ‘the recent impact of Levinas on literary studies. As an advocate of otherness, Levinas warns against the hubris of thinking that we can ultimately come to understand that which is different or strange. Ethics means accepting the mysteriousness of the other ... For theorists weaned on the language of alterity and difference, ... to recognise is not just to trivialize but also to colonize’ (2008, 27). Let us be clear – we agree with Felski, but note the divergence of colonisation and its legacy of racism to others from cross-border issues of migrancy and xenophobia. We seek opportunities in the latter – which requires variation from Levinas and the language of alterity in literary studies.

² After explaining the etymology of xenophobia as fear of the ‘stranger’, Mohr quotes Banton to treat xenophobia as fear of the Other (2008: x). That compilation, titled *Embracing the Other, Addressing Xenophobia in the New Literatures in English* collates 23 essays that consider xenophobia in literature in relation to ‘the other’ (or ‘the Other’) over five continents. Two address South African literature (Petzold on Conyngham, and Marín upon Gordimer’s later novels).

³ For example, Petzold explains Conyngham’s work was typical of an ‘apocalyptic’ theme of white South African writers in the mid-1980s. In Conyngham’s *The Arrowing of the Cane* (1986), *The Lostness of Alice* (1998) and *The Desecration of the Graves* (1990) a ‘pattern of apocalyptic visions becomes apparent’. To do so, a ‘specific threat from “outside” is utilised to create an atmosphere of violence and utter hopelessness. It is this form of a “negative embrace” of the Other that strengthens white fears of black South Africans and reinforces xenophobic tendencies’ (2008: 142). Note our distinction between racism and xenophobia.

⁴ In the collection *Mobilizing Hospitality*, Derrida’s ‘hospitality’ – equated also to Levinas – is taken as basic to treatment of asylum (cf. the editor’s ‘Introduction: Mobilising and Mooring Hospitality’ (Gibson 2007:9). In addition to a bibliography of over 100 works, that introduction lists applications of Derrida’s hospitality across nine authors and five countries.

⁵ Rosello, in *Postcolonial Hospitality, The Immigrant as Guest*, explains that ‘[o]ne of the books that most lucidly addresses the potential ambivalence of hospitality is Jacques Derrida’s *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*. Written in homage to the dead philosopher, *Adieu* is a reading of Levinas’s *Totalité et Infini*, which Derrida calls an ‘immense treatise of hospitality’ (2001, 11; quoting Derrida 1999, 21).

⁶ As to ‘fiction’, for a recent equation of ‘radical alterity’ to ‘hospitality’ in *English Studies in Africa*, as basal to post-transitional and contemporary South African literature v. Moonsamy (2014). In cultural studies, v. the ‘Introduction: Facing the Other at the Gates of Democracy’ in the important *Go Home or Die Here: Violence, Xenophobia and the Reinvention of Difference in South Africa* (2008: 1-25). We aim to support such study as we proceed.

⁷ All inline references are to *Totalité et infini* (1961) as the English translation *Totality and Infinity* (1969) employs only two terms (the other, the Other).

⁸ In this paper, we employ ‘we’ to refer to ourselves (the author), and also those who live in a collective – the xenophobic, Levinas’, Derrida’s – to avoid overt difference between those who lack and those who do not. ‘I’ signifies Levinas’ or Derrida’s essential ego.

⁹ We are aware of the complexities of such examples, for instance, some deem these attacks were not ‘xenophobic’ but instances of an internalised afrophobia. We demarcate xenophobia insofar as it parallels Levinas and fragments of Derrida developed from Levinas.

¹⁰ We will not yet address ‘the third’, which emerges in Levinas’ work by *Autrement qu’être*. Derrida is aware that it adds complexity, as the third – which must not, he emphasizes, be treated as ‘the third man’ (29), as though Levinas restores anthropology – is required to mediate the ‘relation’ to the ‘other’ to arrive at justice, a condition for politics.

¹¹ Cf. also Gibson 169, Flockemann 266 n. 4, Still 2010.

¹² V. Derrida (1984, 1984b), which avoid mention of hospitality or xenophobia.

¹³ Derrida's *Aporias* (18-19, 20). Derrida details the 'double concept of the border', even between 'Europe and non-Europe' as central to a plural 'logic of the aporia' that guides his oeuvre. He mentions xenophobia outright once *as that bound to the law which dictates a 'duty' to 'welcome foreigners in order to not only integrate them but to recognise and accept their alterity'* (19). He then develops that plural logic to consider the immigrant or emigrant and hospitality (33) – Derrida's plural logic sets aside xenophobia to favour a duty, leading to hospitality. Duty develops from Kant's categorical imperative, but even so, Derrida's logic is unconcerned with the intentionality of the fearful xenophobic (and even the fear of the migrant, as we note below). Hence, thereafter, Derrida occluded mention of xenophobia to focus upon hospitality, cf. 1997b, which considers border checks, 2001, which considers the migrant issue, and 2002, which also considers the 'absolute stranger' as 'uninvited guest' in relation to the host and hospitality (361-362), via Levinas since *Totalité et infini* (364 ff.).

¹⁴ On 9 January 2015, *The New Age* reported that refugees in Johannesburg had 'refused to move to a new shelter', due to 'fear of xenophobic attacks', as some 'community members had threatened to attack them'. Those foreigners refuse a home in the first place, due to fear and threat – words employed in a very everyday fashion. Authorities did not notice; the attacks began a week afterward.

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