

Transgressing the Nation: In Defence of Cypriot Peasantry and Rustic Politics

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Abstract

*This article examines the proposition that Cypriot peasant culture, sociopolitical underdevelopment and nationalism are inextricably linked. In assessing this thesis, it utilizes perspectives from peasant and postcolonial studies. The article suggests that whilst the peasantry, like any other social class, can be appropriated for nationalist purposes, peasant consciousness is able to transgress nationalist endeavours, specifically, by reimagining dominant projections of the nation, resisting centralized power and supporting struggles for autonomy. This is illustrated in and through global as well as Cypriot experiences of rustic politics, challenging through *infrapolitics*, i.e., indirectly and invisibly, the dominant language and predicates of nationalism.*

Keywords: peasant studies; *infrapolitics*; postcoloniality; civility; nationalism; Cyprus conflict

What does it mean to be a Cypriot peasant? To be not just *horiatis* (χωριάτης; peasant/villager) but a *horkatos* (χώρκατος; a major *horkatis*, an unreconstructed peasant/villager as used in the Cypriot dialect)? Is it appropriate to employ the notion of peasantry to explain the self-centredness and nationalism of the Greek Cypriot community? Can Cypriot rural culture and rustic politics be redeemed?

In responding to these questions, this article pays tribute to the late Caesar Mavratsas, thinking the problematic *with* him as well as *against* him. Doing so by engaging his last book, *The Society of Peasants [Η Κοινωνία των Χώρκατων]*.² In assessing his thesis, this article utilizes perspectives and insights from peasant and postcolonial studies, which Mavratsas chose not to engage.

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² C. Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants: The Cultural and Political Underdevelopment of the Greek Cypriots in the Beginning of the 21st Century [Η Κοινωνία των Χώρκατων: Η Πολιτισμική και Πολιτική Υπανάπτυξη των Ελληνοκυπρίων στις Απαρχές του 21ου Αιώνα]* (Athens: Papazisis, 2012). All translations from the book in this article are mine. I translated the title as ‘The Society of Peasants’, following on Mavratsas’s clarification and preference on page 2 of the book: ‘In English, the word that corresponds to the modern Greek concept of *χωριάτης* is not the word *villager* (which commonly refers to the inhabitant of the village), but the word *peasant*’.

Laughing At/With the Peasant

The idea of what it means to be an archetypal Cypriot peasant, *horkatos*, is comprehensively examined by Mavratsas in his book. *The Society of Peasants* is witty, quirky, and a must-read. Its principal aim, flagged in the subtitle, is to provide a critique of ‘the cultural and political underdevelopment of the Greek Cypriots in the beginning of the 21st Century’. The critique is scathing, a polemic making no compromises. Mavratsas cleverly utilizes a popular Cypriot TV series, *Vourate Geitonoï [Run Neighbours]*, to reflect on the rustic, uncultured character and self-indulgence of Cypriot society.³ By engaging and reflecting on this TV series, he negatively valorises the notion of *horkatos*, as depicted in the protagonist of the series and *horkatos* par excellence, Rikkos Mappourous.⁴

Mavratsas views the *horkatos* as ‘an indigenous Greek Cypriot phenomenon.’ In other societies, he claims, there are no *horkatoi* only ‘*horiates* (always with the negative meaning of the term)’.⁵ He argues that ‘Greek Cypriot *horkatosyni*... is *sui generis*, but still a special case of a more general phenomenon of *horiatosyni*.’⁶ Both terms are negative. *Horkatosyni* is major peasantry, *horiatosyni* ordinary one. Mavratsas takes to serious task the social and political everydayness of *horkatosyni* and elevates it to a scholarly object of analysis but also derision. As he explains early on in the book: ‘I have to confess from the beginning that my theoretical engagement with this particular topic surely relates with the fact that *horkatoi* provoke a great deal of laughter.’⁷

Let me clarify that I am all for laughter and joy in both academic work and life. There is too much seriousness and grimness, not to mention self-importance and narcissism in scholarly opinion and its august ability to capture and explain complex phenomena through heavy scientific terms and jargon. Mavratsas did not like that. He was a master ironist with a fantastic sense of humour. For us, who were lucky to be his colleagues, it was a delight to be in his presence, to chat with him in the corridors of the Department, to partake in his lively analyses of the latest ‘scan-

³ First presented on Sigma TV on 8 October 2001, the episodes of the series were shown for more than a decade and are now available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAIKyAzc-2CI&list=PLa9iKGvILYE6e5KZzyMEzpRKgTHeRPqk9>. A feature film with the same title and series actors was released in 2019. For the trailer, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bO_S5Tt5RZE.

⁴ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 29-43.

⁵ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 27.

⁶ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 27.

⁷ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 9.

dal' and his meditations on the long list of pathogens of Cypriot society. He could always see the funny side of life, satirising and cutting to size all those who were in a position of authority, a great believer in 'speaking truth to power'. Consequently, it befits his intellectual temperament that he has written such a smart and funny book about contemporary Cypriot society, path-breaking in using a TV series to revisit Cypriot political culture and nationalism, a book that is accessible to a wider audience beyond academia.

However, and at the risk of spoiling the fun, it is important to remember that laughter is also a serious matter. Especially in scholarly uses, it should not be merely a question of *what* one laughs about but *how* one laughs, not just the *content* but the *context* of laughter, and whether one laughs *at* someone or *with* someone. At this point, I register my first disagreement with Mavratsas. For the *horkatos* he analyses in his book engenders mainly a negative, elitist laughter, and with the author adopting a rather caustic and sarcastic attitude.

Mavratsas explains that for him *horkatos* is a 'psychosocial type'.⁸ He thus wishes to set *horkatos* apart from the mere peasant or villager. Following the rapid acceleration of urbanisation in Cyprus, the *horkatos*, Mavratsas says, nowadays mostly lives in cities. *Horkatos* is someone who has brought his peasant or provincial attitude with him to the city, who has not managed to outgrow his rural habits so as to embrace urban civility. Mavratsas explains that historically the peasant and villager have had negative meaning and cultural value.⁹ The existence of this historically entrenched hierarchy is not of concern to him, not worthy of deconstruction or critique. Nor is the negative impact of global capitalism in the marginalisation of peasant societies and the erosion of rural livelihoods worthy of analysis, specifically with regard to the asymmetrical relationship it establishes between the 'undeveloped' peasantry and urban centres in control of the commodification of crops.¹⁰

Whilst using Elias's pioneering work on *The Civilizing Process*,¹¹ Mavratsas concentrates on 'the civilising process of the peasant' as the feature of correct behaviour

⁸ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 17.

⁹ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 17.

¹⁰ See, for example, E. Vanhaute, H. Cottyn, Y. Wang, 'Peasantries', in *The World is Out of Joint: World-Historical Interpretations of Continuing Polarizations*, ed. I. Wallerstein (New York: Routledge, 2015).

¹¹ N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners (Vol. 1)*, translated by Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978) and N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process: State Formation and Civilization (Vol. 2)* translated by Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982).

in modern developed societies.¹² This is not wrong. Still, it only captures half of the moral story of Elias and not the most interesting half. Mavratsas misses –or does not care to acknowledge– that for Elias the development of manners and the taming of passions in European society is instrumental and politically ambivalent. For Elias, civility is strongly connected to ‘a peculiarly courtly rationality’, constraining affects through self-discipline and a means of gaining access to power by making the civilised courtier appear ‘as the epitome of the man of reason.’¹³

That is to say, Elias offers an alternative critical perspective on the power structures within which civility and non-civility discursively operate. As he explains:

‘At present, many of the rules of conduct and sentiment implanted in us as an integral part of one’s conscience, of the individual super-ego, are remnants of the power and status aspirations of established groups, and have no other function than that of reinforcing their power chances and their status superiority.’¹⁴

Contrary to Elias, Mavratsas is not concerned with the socially constructed character of civility. He merely uses Elias’s binary as an unproblematised universal, reinforcing the historical hierarchy with all its biases, power implications and afflictions. Mavratsas’s suggestion that nowadays *horkates* rule the Greek Cypriot polity, although witty, is a rhetorical as much as a power move. It is a heuristic that perpetuates a negative stereotype in modern society, allowing the author to bundle together and explain in broad brushes a series of problematic attitudes in contemporary Cyprus through the lens of ‘non-civility’. Whether *horkatosyni* can be responsible for all the social and political ills of Cyprus, including nationalism, is one question to which we will return later. Suffice for the moment to register that beyond treating *horkatos* as a legitimate laughing stock, Mavratsas is unequivocal that the *horkatos* is ‘extremely dangerous’.¹⁵ Securitising the Cypriot peasantry is not a light matter.

At this point, it is useful to bring into conversation Mavratsas’s *The Society of Peasants* with Vasos Ftohopoulos’s *Peasantry Is... [Horkatiko Einai]*.¹⁶ Given Ftohopoulos’ politics, this is something that Mavratsas would certainly not have approved (sorry Caesar!). Mavratsas is aware of Ftohopoulos’s book. In fact, in his own book, Mavratsas mentions another ‘small book, which provides catalogues of peasant

¹² Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 21-24.

¹³ Elias, *The Civilizing Process: State Formation and Civilization*, 7.

¹⁴ Elias, *The Civilizing Process: State Formation and Civilization*, 332.

¹⁵ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 11.

¹⁶ V. Ftohopoulos, *Peasantry Is... [Χωρκατίκων Είνα...]* (Nicosia: Aigaion, 1997).

[*horkatiki*] behaviour’ in Cyprus, but dares not speak its name or give its details.¹⁷ He even provides selected extracts from it, but still treats it unworthy to reference the book and the author. He merely acknowledges that ‘the aim of such writings is to deride Greek Cypriot life, and in addition to socially criticise mentalities and behaviours that are negatively assessed, while considered to be widely practised’.¹⁸

Why does Mavratsas use and quote but does not name Ftohopoulos’s book? To be fair, Ftohopoulos’s book is not academic. It is a collection of sayings and aphorisms, with insights that are sometimes penetrating and funny. Crucially, Ftohopoulos is an arch-nationalist figure, the editor and publisher of the monthly newspaper *Enosis*, whose politics Mavratsas loathes (Mavratsas calls *Enosis* ‘vulgar [*xydaia*]’), and I concur that the writings are extremely problematic, and they often use chauvinist and racist discourse that is totally unacceptable). Still, I cannot but commend the context that Ftohopoulos gave in the short introduction to his little book, *Peasantry Is...*, and which is diametrically opposite to the one given by Mavratsas. It is worth quoting in detail:

‘*Peasantry Is...* is not simply a humorous work, nor an attempt to deride the peasants and their habits. *Peasantry Is...* is first of all a deep penetrating look into the rapidly changing world of Cyprus, where literally ALL phenomena deceive us. It is a folk study of a transitional period where our people, with one foot in the mud and the other in the speed of so-called development, have lost the pride in their village descent, without being able to culturally assimilate to the new urbanised way of living... Maybe for this reason *Peasantry Is...* has been so successful. Each one of us has seen in the *horkatikon* a part of his neighbour, whether he is a *horkatos*, *horiatis*, or capital city dweller. Where *Peasantry Is...* really takes off is at the point where we discover ourselves. We thought we have overcome our peasant self, yet we discover that deep down or in particular times *Peasantry Is...* is US.’¹⁹

Even though, as we saw, Mavratsas also dissociates the *horkatos* from the mere peasant or villager, he still makes a clear hierarchical distinction between an ‘us’ and ‘them’, the ‘cultured’ and ‘uncultured’ in Cypriot society. Mavratsas sees *horkatosyni* to be the dominant mentality that is widespread in Cypriot society at

¹⁷ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 48.

¹⁸ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 48.

¹⁹ Ftohopoulos, *Peasantry Is...*, 7; my translation.

all levels,²⁰ and from which his authorial voice and a particular cultured minority stand apart. His writing is dismissive and cynical and indeed this is an attitude that Mavratsas would like to impart to his reader, hoping through this book to cultivate ‘a more critical, and perhaps more cynical eye.’²¹

By contrast, Ftohopoulos’ laughter is Rabelaisian.²² His is not cold humour, cynical irony, and sarcasm which seeks to degrade the *horkatos* and place the author above the object of his mockery (although, it must be said, this is exactly what Ftohopoulos does when he refers to the Turks or Turkophile Greek Cypriots in his other writings). In the case of the *horkatos*, Ftohopoulos embraces a cosmic laughter and should be credited for that. He does not laugh at, but with the peasant, seeing himself and every Cypriot as part of a society that is either totally unconscious of its ‘rustic’, ‘uncultured’ heritage, or desperately and comically striving to overcome it. As Ftohopoulos puts it, in the last aphorism and witty twist concluding his book, ‘in the end, peasantry is to make fun of peasants [*telos, horkatiko einai na peripaizeis tous horkates*].’²³

Peasant Nationalism, Urban Cosmopolitanism

Why is (Greek) Cypriot society a society of peasants? Mavratsas writes about the peasant but his real target is different. He has a clear political agenda and writes his polemic with the purpose of linking peasant culture to nationalism. This, in my view, explains why he ignored Ftohopoulos’s work – a fanatic nationalist laughing with the peasant and still seeing himself as a peasant. I do not think he had a credible way of explaining a self-ironic critic of peasantry that was also a nationalist. Mavratsas identifies four features of peasant culture, *horkatosyni*, which he develops in the book: (a) maintenance of traditional views; (b) lack of education and culture; (c) self-centrism and self-importance; and (d) aggressiveness towards others.²⁴ Mavratsas proceeds to apply them in chapter three to Greek Cypriot everyday life,²⁵ and finally in chapter four to Greek Cypriot politics (the longest chapter in his book).²⁶

²⁰ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 28.

²¹ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 10.

²² See M. M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984) and, on its political uses in historiographical writing, C. M. Constantinou, *States of Political Discourse: Words, Regimes, Seditions* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 83-95.

²³ Ftohopoulos, *Peasantry Is...*, 49.

²⁴ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 52-55.

²⁵ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 65-84.

²⁶ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 85-117.

The Society of Peasants is weak on reviewing the literature of peasant studies. It is more of a sequel to Mavratsas's oeuvre, his first book on aspects of Greek Cypriot nationalism and his second book on 'clientistic corporatism' in Cyprus.²⁷ The overwhelming majority of references in his book are not on peasant studies but on the Cyprus conflict, Greek Cypriot nationalism, Greek-Turkish relations and the referendum on the Annan Plan. Beyond the claimed limitations and complexes that *horkatosyni* brings to Cypriot society, Mavratsas is concerned with the adverse effects of *horkatosyni* with regard to reaching a comprehensive settlement of the protracted Cyprus conflict. As he puts it:

'These mentalities, I will seek to substantiate in this chapter, prove that the Greek Cypriot *homo politicus* is essentially a great *horkatos* who, even though he bears the greater responsibility for the problems of the Cypriot society, persists in denying this fact, seeing everywhere enemies and foreign conspiracies, and considering that he is justified to be in continuous contest with Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots as well as the international community.'²⁸

I fully sympathize with Mavratsas's frustration about ethnocentric politics, conflict-sustaining discourse, diplomatic dissimulation, partial truths and denial of responsibility for one's actions that characterise the long history of the Cyprus conflict. However, I strongly disagree with his reductionist linking of Cypriot politics to *horkatosyni*, which marginalises or misses alternative causes and understandings of the politics at play. Let me outline my disagreement.

Firstly, Mavrarsas draws a fast and weak connection between nationalism and *horkatosyni*. He claims that there is an 'innate *horkatosyni*' in nationalism and that the 'fanatical nationalist is surely a great *horkatos*'.²⁹ But why should this be so? Mavratsas says 'the reason is very simple' and employs a strong ally, Benedict Anderson, suggesting that the apparent 'philosophical poverty' that Anderson identifies as a paradox of nationalism (i.e., lack of great philosophers meditating on the phenomenon) is a sign of a bogus ideology.³⁰ However, on the contrary, Anderson

²⁷ C. Mavratsas, *Aspects of Greek Nationalism in Cyprus: Ideological Contest and the Social Construction of Greek-Cypriot Identity 1974–1996* (Athens: Katarti, 1998) [in Greek] and C. Mavratsas, *National Unity and Political Pluralism: The Atrophy of Greek-Cypriot Civil Society at the beginning of the 21st century* (Athens: Katarti, 2003) [in Greek].

²⁸ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 86.

²⁹ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 88.

³⁰ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 88-89.

does not belittle nationalist thinking and writing or the power of its appeal, but issues a warning against bias: “This “emptiness” easily gives rise, among cosmopolitan and polylingual intellectuals, to a certain condescension.”³¹ In other words, Anderson’s point is rather a caveat against intellectual arrogance in thinking and writing about nationalism. Also, to the extent that the nation and nationalism are cultural artefacts, propagated through print capitalism as Anderson painstakingly showed us, to view nationalism as cultural backwardness or provincialism is to miss the point of how nationalism is very much produced and entrenched through official education, cultural upbringing, the map, the museum and so on.³²

Secondly, Mavratsas claims that ‘superiority complex’ is indicative of ‘extreme provincialism’ and that the ‘weakness or inadequacy of nationalism should have been evident to whoever can think rationally’.³³ I doubt that this is evident, or that nationalism, racism, supremacism are *ab initio* irrational beliefs. Consider nationalism, racism, and the superiority complex in Nazi Germany. Nazi politics, as shown by Zygmunt Bauman, did not just exhibit moral indifference and invisibility with regard to the racially inferior, but rather, and more worryingly, the ‘moral consequences of the civilising process’, the hidden possibility of modernity and the dark side of western rationalism.³⁴ Nationalists and racists can be very modern, rational thinkers and this is the most disturbing lesson.

It is also useful to consider the anti-colonial nationalism that developed as a response and challenge to Western superiority and cultural imperialism.³⁵ What is at

³¹ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books: 1991), 5.

³² On the propagation of nationalist education and attempts to overcome it in Cyprus, see for example, Z. Bekerman and M. Zembylas, *Teaching Contested Narratives: Identity, Memory and Reconciliation in Peace Education and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); C. Charalambous, P. Charalambous, and M. Zembylas, ‘Doing ‘Leftist propaganda’ or Working Towards Peace? Moving Greek-Cypriot Peace Education Struggles Beyond Local Political Complexities’, *Journal of Peace Education*, Vol. 10, No.1 (2013), 67-87. On the production and dissemination of national and cross-ethnic identities in Cyprus through photography, cinematography, and the museum, see L. Wells, T. Stylianou-Lambert and N. Philippou, eds, *Photography and Cyprus: Time, Place and Identity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014); C. Constandinides and Y. Papadakis, eds, *Cypriot Cinemas: Memory, Conflict, and Identity in the Margins of Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); T. Stylianou-Lambert and A. Bounia, *The Political Museum: Power, Conflict, and Identity in Cyprus* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

³³ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 88.

³⁴ Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989).

³⁵ On the many different fronts through which western cultural superiority was propagated see E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979) and *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993). On the postcolonial reimagining of subaltern and peasant history, see P. Chatterjee, *The Nation and*

stake in dismissing these indigenous ‘nationalist’ struggles for equality and dignity –valorising different cultural assets of subjugated people– as parochial, provincial, or irrational phenomena? Or, indeed, sidelining the responsibility of European imperialism and civilising mission in the making and feeding of reactionary policies and nationalist discourses. Ditto in postcolonial Cyprus.³⁶

Mavratsas’s scathing critique of ‘peasant nationalism’ culminates in the Greek Cypriot rejection of the Annan Plan for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus Problem and all that happened during and following the referendum in April 2004. He sees the referendum as ‘an additional essential indication of the dominance of *horkatosyni* in the Greek Cypriot society.’³⁷ I am in full agreement with Mavratsas about the scheming practices of Greek Cypriot politicians, the poisonous atmosphere and the blame-game against locals and the international community for ‘conspiring to impose’ the Annan Plan on the Greek Cypriot community. However, I am not at all sure that this can be so easily and readily linked, if at all, to the so-called *horkatosyni* of the Greek Cypriot elites and those that supported the NO campaign. Difficulty or obstinacy to compromise in protracted conflicts can be traced to a number of factors, including entrenched perceptions of injustice,

Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) and D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

³⁶ In relation to the Cypriot postcolonial condition, see further R. Bryant, ‘On the Condition of Postcoloniality in Cyprus’, in *Divided Cyprus: Modernity, History, and an Island in Conflict*, eds Y. Papadakis, N. Peristianis, and G. Welz, eds (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 47-65; C. M. Constantinou, ‘On the Cypriot States of Exception’, *International Political Sociology*, Vol. 2, No.2 (2008), 145-164; C. M. Constantinou, ‘Cypriot In-dependence and the Problem of Sovereignty’, *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2010), 17-33; V. Argyrou, ‘Independent Cyprus? Postcoloniality and the Spectre of Europe’, *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2010), 39-47; U. Bozkurt and N. Trimikliniotis, ‘Rethinking the Postcolonial Cypriot Statehood: The Cyprus Problem, Class Struggles, and Ethnic Conflict’, in *Beyond a Divided Cyprus*, eds N. Trimikliniotis and U. Bozkurt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 47-66. In relation to Cypriot nationalist cultures, ethnic identities, and subjectivities, see among others, R. Bryant, *Imagining the Modern: The Cultures of Nationalism in Cyprus* (London: IB Tauris, 2004); Y. Papadakis, *Echoes from the Dead Zone: Across the Cyprus Divide* (London: IB Tauris, 2005); M. Hadjipavlou, ‘The Cyprus Conflict: Root Causes and Implications for Peacebuilding’, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (2007), 349-365; Y. Navaro, *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); N. Trimikliniotis, ‘The National Question, Partition and Geopolitics in the 21st Century: The Cyprus Problem, the Social Question and the Politics of Reconciliation’, *Global Discourse*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2018), 303-320. O. Demetriou, *Refugeehood and the Postconflict Subject: Reconsidering Minor Losses* (Albany, NY : SUNY Press, 2018).

³⁷ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 101.

inequality, and insecurity, and not only to an uncultured or crude nationalism.³⁸ Moreover, the scheming practices and vitriolic politics surrounding historic referenda is not something unique to Cyprus and its political culture (for a recent illustration, consider the politics surrounding Brexit).

Thirdly, Mavratsas is totally seduced by urban civility and globalisation, something that creates a definite bias and hierarchy towards more rural and nationally rooted lifestyles. He contends that 'commitment to nationalist principles surely can be considered as commitment to a bygone era, commitment to national principles that are no longer functional under the current conditions of globalisation.'³⁹ How so? Moreover, why surely so? Nationalism and globalisation as mutually exclusive ways of living is a crude and sweeping binary. Cruder is Mavratsas's view that the *horkatos* 'faces a range of difficulties when he is obliged to function in the contemporary urban environment' and 'lacks the skills required in such environment, e.g. he cannot complete official forms, does not understand or cannot speak any English, has serious difficulties with modern Greek, etc.'⁴⁰ Thus, urban, bureaucratic, and linguistic discomfort robs the peasant from 'modern' social and political understanding. This is very troubling.

Furthermore, for Mavratsas, while functioning in the 'global society and particularly in the global economy, Greek Cypriots remain provincials.'⁴¹ He is consequently uncritical about 'the values and conceptions that derive from globalisation', which he understands to be linked 'particularly to the cosmopolitanism and tolerance produced and expected by the new global multicultural society.'⁴² Mavratsas' faith in the liberal promises of globalisation runs contrary to all the major critiques of globalisation as a complex phenomenon with ambivalent effects, some definitely in the direction Mavratsas points to, but some in exactly the opposite direction.⁴³ Faith in globalisation collapses when one considers the more recent backlash against the neoliberal

³⁸ See E. E. Azar, 'Protracted International Conflicts: Ten Propositions', in *Conflict: Readings in Management and Resolution*, eds Burton, J. and Dukes, F. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 145-155. In relation to Cyprus, see C. Adamides, *Institutionalized, Horizontal and Bottom-up Securitization in Ethnic Conflict Environments: The Case of Cyprus* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2012).

³⁹ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 90.

⁴⁰ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 54.

⁴¹ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 82.

⁴² Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 82.

⁴³ See, among others, S. Sassen, *Globalization and its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money* (New York: The New Press: 1999).

mantras, often by the very neoliberal power centres that propagated (economic) globalisation, or what has been termed as the new era of ‘deglobalization’,⁴⁴ including closed borders, security walls, migration phobia, and so on.

Finally, the ‘natural’ and unproblematised linking of globalisation with cosmopolitanism in Mavratsas’ thesis is also a concern. Globalisation encourages knowledge of the world and a broader perspective, yet often done through a sterile ‘tourist gaze’, elite or metropolitan forms of cosmopolitanism rather than reflexive ones, shallow familiarity of the world rather than deep commitment to understanding and learning from foreign cultures and planetary diversity.⁴⁵ Such critiques qualify the ethical impact of globalisation vis-à-vis nationally or locally rooted cultures. Perhaps, most relevant for our purposes is how the earlier and more philosophical forms of cosmopolitanism, such as those of Diogenes the Cynic, were direct attempts at de-urbanisation, abandoning city comforts, its pretentious and corrupting ‘culture’, so that one can meaningfully become a citizen of the world – a cosmos that included humans, animals, and nature.⁴⁶ To become a cosmopolite, Diogenes became ‘uncultured’ and ‘animalistic’. It is thus important to ponder on what kind of cosmopolitanism is missed by urban theorists of politics that simply experience the cosmic through city dwelling, formal education, and rational exchange.

Rustic Politics: Reimagining the Nation, Struggling for Autonomy

Can the ‘rough’ and ‘uncultured’ peasant still think the nation and the national? In his book *Provincializing Europe*, Dipesh Chakrabarty recalls an incident between the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, and a group of peasants that welcomed him with the slogan, ‘Victory to Mother India’.⁴⁷ Nehru challenged them to explain to him what they meant by ‘mother India’ (*bharat mata*), to which one of the peasants responded ‘the earth’ (*dharti*). In ‘a pedagogic moment of nationalism’, Nehru explained to the ‘uneducated’ peasants that beyond the mountains, and the rivers and the fields what ‘counted ultimately were the people of India, people like them... essentially these millions of people’.⁴⁸ Peasant nationalism thus stood to be corrected and delegitimised by the wise leader-pedagogue, even though as

⁴⁴ W. Bello, *Deglobalization: Ideas for a New World Economy* (London: Zed Books, 2008).

⁴⁵ K. A. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Penguin, 2015); B. Robbins and P.L. Horta (eds), *Cosmopolitanisms* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

⁴⁶ Constantinou, *States of Political Discourse*, 122-136.

⁴⁷ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 176-177.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 177.

Chakrabarty points out, the peasant perspective should have been an equally legitimate ‘way of seeing’, ‘not based on the training of the mind that print capitalism could administer to the formally educated nationalist subject.’⁴⁹

Another way of seeing the nation, therefore, or seeing through the nation, is through peasant eyes and experiences. This is not to suggest that the peasant anti-modernist or experiential truths offer a more authentic understanding of the nation, nor to romanticise the Mother India/Earth moment as a spiritual experience and abode that delivers an ecosophic authenticity, of being-in-the-word irrespective of material conditions. Although, it is important to appreciate that decolonial emancipation does not only have to do with subaltern or precariat people, ‘the wretched of the earth’ that Fanon wrote about,⁵⁰ but also with ‘the wretched earth’⁵¹ and the biocolonialism that accompanied western imperialism. The imperial restructuring of agricultural land and crop ‘development’ has had major implications for the traditional habitats of the peasantry and even on whether they would be able to remain ‘peasants’ and not workers and service providers in a centralized economic planning.⁵² So, there is more to be said about the peasant conflation of postcolonial victory with earth emancipation. It should also be acknowledged, however, that Nehru’s modern/urban/educated understanding of the nation is conceptually correct with regard to the formal anticolonial struggle and the victory of Indian independence.

The point that I wish to make is the need to appreciate how the peasant is not a mere knowledge recipient or passive subject of nationalism, and that there is indeed value in non-urban, rural or rustic forms of politics. Even the ‘rougher’ or more ‘silent’ versions. Rustic politics can indeed be considered from the perspective of the rebelliousness and resistance that peasant agency can bring to the social and cultural milieu. On the one hand, to be sure, one needs to overcome the Marxist bias about ‘the idiocy of rural life’⁵³ without simply and blindly endorsing the Maoist zeal and glorification of the peasant, how rural work is pedagogical in itself and helps to build the new human. For the violent excesses of the Chinese cultural revolution are indicative of the problems that the blind following of this ideology creates.

⁴⁹ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 149 and 177.

⁵⁰ F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 2004).

⁵¹ R. Gray and S. Sheikh, ‘The Wretched Earth’, *Third Text*, Vol. 32, No. 2-3 (2018), 163-175.

⁵² J. D. Van der Ploeg, *The New Peasantries: Struggles for Autonomy and Sustainability in an Era of Empire and Globalization* (London: Earthscan, 2008).

⁵³ K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 40.

On the other hand, Mavratsas' dismissive claim that the 1960s 'rise of the so-called peasant studies, the neo-Marxist preoccupation with the peasants and their persistence in granting them revolutionary role has not persuaded many'⁵⁴ is itself unpersuasive and disappointing. If by the 'many' we are referring to revolutionary movements across the world, the contrary is the case. Many a peasant revolution, some violent, some non-violent, from South America to South Asia fully display agential capacity, in some cases formally taking over state power, such as in Bolivia and Nepal, in others developing an alternative political culture hospitable to indigenous lifestyles, like in Chiapas. James Scott goes as far as to argue that 'the peasantry, not the proletariat, has contributed the decisive social base of most, if not all, successful twentieth-century revolutions.'⁵⁵

Yet, as Chatterjee explains, 'the characteristic feature of peasant rebellions' is not coming to power and establishing one's own culture and authority, but resisting urban/metropolitan culture and authority.⁵⁶ Peasant rebellions do not seek to persuade others about the rationale or supremacy of their culture but struggle against 'foreign' infiltration and control in pursuit of local autonomy. Scott identified a politics of defiance and resistance in the habitual peasant practices of apparent deference to authority, agreement but non-implementation, avoidance of contact, and so on. These peasant strategies and tactics of engaging with centralized power are rarely captured as political praxis and that is why Scott coined the term *infrapolitics* to identify the political in the rustic culture and 'habits' of subordinate groups, or as elaborated in a later work, 'the art of not being governed.'⁵⁷

Far from seeing nationalism as a typical peasant attitude, postcolonial histories view the relationship between the nation-state and peasantry as tense and ambiguous, whereby 'the institutionalisation of a modern regime of power coincides with or follows a process of the extinction of the peasantry.'⁵⁸ That is why, national conscious-

⁵⁴ Mavratsas, *The Society of Peasants*, 20.

⁵⁵ J. Scott, 'Hegemony and the Peasantry', *Politics & Society*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1977), 267.

⁵⁶ Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 162.

⁵⁷ For the notion of *infrapolitics*, see J.C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 1990), 183-201, and for more recent elaborations of rural resistance to modern state infiltrations, J.C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁵⁸ Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 158. On the challenges of comprehending the relationship between imperial authority and its subjects, as well as interpreting oppression, transgression and revolts in Ottoman Cyprus, see A. Hadjikyriacou, *Society and Economy on an Ottoman Island: Cyprus in the Eighteenth Century* (Doctoral dissertation, SOAS, University of London: 2011).

ness is often at odds with peasant consciousness, the latter seen to exhibit resilience and innovation, even encompassing rival understandings of community. Not that it might not exhibit also nationalism. But as Chatterjee puts it, ‘the language of nationalism underwent a quite radical transformation of meaning in the peasant domain of politics’, the purpose of which was not the expansion or resurrection of a grandiose nation but the pursuit of local autonomy, a notion that was ‘much more radical and thoroughgoing’ than that of ‘their more enlightened compatriots.’⁵⁹

In other words, the peasant might approach the nation and adopt the attitudes of modern nationalism, in the way Mavratsas described it, but can also see through the nation, or see another nation, experience it in its earthly everydayness, express it in its daily resistance to central-urban forms of domination by way of protecting local commons and more autonomous modes of living and acting. The ‘uncultured’ and ‘uneducated’ peasantry primarily struggle to be left alone if material conditions of living are satisfactory, unlike the ‘sophisticated’ peasantry of mechanized agriculture, export crop commodities and farming subsidies.

From this perspective, there is more to being a peasant than urban-centric thinkers imagine or allow for. Here another ethnoscape, there a different cosmopolitanism, or tactical use of ethnic identity that offends propriety or flies below the radar of mainstream sociability. In the context of Cyprus, even colonial officials found it necessary to commend ‘a kindly and human spirit’ in surveying rural life, for ‘facile and frequent articles in the local Press, written if not in, at least within easy distance of the club, the café and the card-room, inveigh against idleness, wastefulness and improvidence of the villager.’⁶⁰ One of the most common critiques of the Cypriot urban elites against the peasantry was the coffee-house culture of the village, with villagers ‘lolling in various attitudes on straight-rushed chairs’, which interestingly, in this specific survey of rural life in Cyprus, colonial officials saw nonetheless sympathetically in terms of its social and economic necessity, not to mention its suggested importance within and beyond the village for the development of the public sphere, the domain of ‘common concern’ and problematisation.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 160 and 172.

⁶⁰ As outlined by the Governor of Cyprus, Sir Ronald Storrs in the Preface to B. J. Surridge, *A Survey of Rural Life in Cyprus* (Nicosia: Government Printing Office: 1930), 4.

⁶¹ Surridge, *A Survey of Rural Life in Cyprus*, 22-23, and on the importance of coffee-houses vis-à-vis salons in the development and transformation of the public sphere, see J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 31-43.

In other words, given that the coffee-house was ‘the centre of village life’ in the island,⁶² it functioned as a less hierarchical, informal and autonomous public assembly vis-à-vis other colonial and postcolonial institutions in the cities. It could also be seen as a site where ‘forms of non-western modernity’ as well as leftist and nationalist politics could be exhibited, though not necessarily in ways that are legible to orthodox readings of modernity and ideology.⁶³

An especially interesting case of peasant culture transgressing the national script concerns the history of the *Linobambakoi* – the Muslim-Christian community of Cyprus. This is not an example that is much discussed in Cypriot historiography, or only referred negatively, or as an embarrassment.⁶⁴ This subaltern community flexibly and tactically shifted from one identity to another, employed both identities through visual rhetoric in different contexts of everyday life (e.g., going to the mosque on Friday and church on Sunday), exploiting the external features of ethno-religious allegiance, and thus playing with different jurisdictions to gain advantage as circumstances demanded during the Ottoman rule (e.g., less tax or avoiding military conscription depending on whether one was Christian or Muslim). It thus simulated or dissimulated the ‘national’ depending on the policies and demands of successive regimes of power in Cyprus. Who they were was not a given and always depended on what the policy of the central authority was. Notably, the *Linobambakoi* was *an overwhelmingly rural phenomenon in Cyprus*. Yet, it was not a community deficient of cosmopolitanism and cultural coexistence, and it included in some instances not just strategic use but a plural understanding and convergence of ‘antithetical’ religious ideologies.⁶⁵

Added to the above, a number of small and large-scale peasant rebellions in Cyprus during the Ottoman period negotiated the limits of governance with regard

⁶² Surridge, *A Survey of Rural Life in Cyprus*, 22

⁶³ On this point see A. Panayiotou, ‘Lenin in the Coffee-Shop: The Communist Alternative and Forms of Non-Western Modernity’, *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2006), 267-280.

⁶⁴ On the community of the *linobambakoi*, see R. L. N. Michell, ‘A Muslim-Christian Sect in Cyprus’, *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 63 (1908), 751–62, and on how the historical consciousness of this example affects our understanding of contemporary predicaments in Cyprus, see C. M. Constantinou ‘Aporias of Identity: Bicomunalism, Hybridity and the “Cyprus Problem”’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (2007), 247-270. On how the *linobambakoi* were marginalized in hegemonic discourse, see A. Panayiotou, ‘Hegemony, Permissible Public Discourse and Lower Class Political Culture’, in *Cyprus and the Politics of Memory: History, Community and Conflict*, eds R. Bryant and Y. Papadakis (London: IB Tauris, 2012), 71-93.

⁶⁵ See Constantinou, ‘Aporias of Identity’.

to the peasants, sometimes even bringing together Muslims and Christians against central authority, and with a famous one in 1833, led by the so-called *Infidel* (*Gavur*) *Imam*.⁶⁶ The social and political status of banditry in Cyprus is also worth mentioning, something that very much concerned the British colonial authority, although it is still debatable in the literature, whether bandits ‘belong to’ the peasants or ‘speak for’ their grievances, or are exactly the opposite, operating outside the law to ‘subjugate’ them and keep them docile.⁶⁷ Unlike the Greek national historiography, where the bandits (*kleftes*) have been ‘rehabilitated’ as key agents of the Greek revolution and liberators from Ottoman rule, in Cyprus, bandits like the Hasanpoullia (‘Greeks today and Turks tomorrow’) remained folk heroes and were not glorified in the national historiography.⁶⁸ Panayiotou suggests that banditry displayed ‘bicomunal practice’, ‘traditional residuals’, and ‘lower-class “resistance to central authority” [which] persisted until the 1940s without leaving, however, a political legacy. They were the last forms of localist resistance against the centralization of power.’⁶⁹ He is right, of course, to underscore how urbanization and modern governmental infiltration into the rural realm have eradicated the traditional forms of banditry, but with regard to political legacy, the ‘rascality’ and ‘defiance’ of the peasant may be still in place, morphed into other forms, less pronounced, less visible to the sense and vision of politics as direct power struggle and confrontation.

That is why the notion of *infrapolitics* is so useful in understanding peasant politics. And that is why, in *Vourate Geitonoi*, whenever Kattos (the Cypriot policeman in the series) calls the peasant Rikkos (‘bird’, *poulli*), he seems to be making an ambivalent reference, an innuendo, on the one hand, to the Cypriot bandits and outlaws and their dubious activities around the island (*ta poulia*, *ta hasanpoulia*, taking liberties and ‘flying like birds’), and on the other hand, to Rikkos’ rascality

⁶⁶ M.N. Michael, ‘Revolts, Demands and Challenge to the Legitimacy of the Ottoman Power: The Three Revolts of 1833 in Cyprus’, *Historical Review*, Vol. 2 (2011), 57-77 and M.N. Michael, *Revolts as a Field of Negotiating Power: Ottoman Cyprus 1804-1841* (Athens: Alexandria, 2016) [in Greek].

⁶⁷ See P. Sant-Cassia, ‘Banditry, Myth, and Terror in Cyprus and other Mediterranean Societies’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (1993), 773-795; R. Katsiaounis, *Labour, Society and Politics in Cyprus During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 1996); I. Bozkurt, ‘Ethnic Perspective in Epics: The Case of Hasan Bulliler’, *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*, Vol. 16 (2001), 97-104; Bryant, ‘Bandits and ‘Bad Characters’: Law as Anthropological Practice in Cyprus, c. 1900’, *Law and History Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2003), 243-270.

⁶⁸ Sant-Cassia, ‘Banditry, Myth, and Terror in Cyprus and other Mediterranean Societies’, 775.

⁶⁹ A. Panayiotou, ‘Border Dialectics: Cypriot Social and Historical Movements in a World Systemic Context’, in *Beyond a Divided Cyprus*, eds N. Trimikliniotis and U. Bozkurt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 69.

and mischievous attitude that is acceptable and understandable, even endearing, to a Cypriot policeman, like Kattos, who is also a peasant. In the end, Kattos sees Rikkos and himself as members of the same clan, *to poulli mou, to polloui mou*, i.e. my bird, my outlaw, my little bandit. Regulating deviant populations became the main concern of modern governance, but this is not something that has been fully accomplished in either the developing states of the Global South or the developed ones of the Global North.⁷⁰

This is not of course to aestheticize or romanticise historical peasant liberty, illegality and rebellion in Cyprus, nor deny cross-ethnic defiance initiatives in urban contexts, such as, more recently the Occupy Buffer Zone movement.⁷¹ However, it underscores the point that resistance to the dominant nationalist narrative and political agendas is indeed possible, and has been historically practised in Cyprus and elsewhere, also from within rural communities and peasant cultures. Peasantry is not immune to nationalism or the mainstream left-wing ideology, nor can it magically overcome them through local collectives and solidarity, although such experiments even when they only succeed in the short term are indicative of political possibility.⁷² The point is rather that peasantry is capable to and does transgress the nation in its pursuit of autonomy, in its improper and unsanctimonious use of the national script, in showing that the nation is never imagined in a single and uniform way.⁷³

Redeeming *Horkatos*: Rikkos, Raif, Rallis and other Characters of Everyday Life

Let us try to envision this rustic politics through a special episode of *Vourate Geitonoï [Run Neighbours]*, perhaps an appropriate ending to this article given the explanatory status that this comic series held in Mavratsas's thesis. Recall that

⁷⁰ A. Sitas, D. Sumangala, K. Wiebke, and N. Trimikliniotis. 'Deviance', in *The World is Out of Joint: World-Historical Interpretations of Continuing Polarizations*, ed. I. Wallerstein (New York: Routledge: 2015).

⁷¹ M. E. Ilican, 'The Occupy Buffer Zone Movement', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2013), 55-80; M. Antonsich, "'OccupyBufferZone": practices of borderline resistance in a space of exception', *Area*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (2013), 170-178.

⁷² On the rise and fall as well as the politics surrounding four interesting peasant collectives in Cyprus after the end of WW II, see G. Ioannou, 'Αγροτικές κολλεκτίβες στη Κύπρο: εστιάζοντας σε ένα υβρίδιο της ύστερης αποικιακής περιόδου [Agricultural collectives in Cyprus: focusing on a hybrid of the late colonial era]', *Ελετηρίδα Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών*, XXXII (2006), 449-476.

⁷³ Nor, of course, is the nation imagined in a single and uniform way by the cultured elites and national poets. On this point, see K. Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean, 1800-1850: Stammering the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Rikkos Mappouros was the quintessential *horkatos* in the series and paradigmatic for Mavratsas. His behavior exhibited sexism, patriarchy, meanness, arrogance and ethnocentrism, and, as a fixed character, he is not easily redeemable. But let us try to think transgressively, experiment with an alternative image of peasant consciousness – equally comic yet undermining the dominant narrative – making visible the ‘invisible’ counter-contacts and negotiations of such ‘characters’, their everyday encounters and diplomacies in divided Cyprus.⁷⁴

Imagine, therefore, a special episode of *Vourate Geitonoï*, featuring Rikkos and other ‘peasant characters’, that could run along the following lines:

Opening Scene: *Rikkos is rather jolly and relaxed at a coffee-house in Dali village, drinking coffee, smoking a cigarette and chatting with locals. It is the 15-year anniversary of the 2004 Annan Plan referendum and there is an animated discussion among the villagers about the pros and cons of accepting or rejecting the Plan. Rikkos proudly informs them that he voted NO at the referendum and does not regret it one bit. Let the Turks stay in the north and the Greeks in the south. He has nothing against the Turks but no mixing should be attempted. Turks cannot be trusted and there shouldn’t be much contact with them. Most men in the coffee-house agree and applaud him. Rikkos feels content with himself.*

Main Plot: *Rikkos leaves the coffee-house and enters his loaded cabin car. His cellphone rings. He starts speaking on the phone in Greek, occasionally using Turkish sentences, and seems to get directions for a meeting. He enters the UN Buffer Zone following an unguarded earth road, removing a road-barrier, checking if he’s being watched by anyone. He curses the UN soldiers and Secretary-General, Guterres, for erecting barriers in his homeland, making his life difficult. Down the road, he meets a Turkish Cypriot shepherd, Raif, from Louroutzina and they embrace and exchange pleasantries. Rikkos unloads a number of packages of cucumbers from his cabin and in exchange loads a sheep given to him by Raif. Suddenly the UN soldiers appear at a distance and*

⁷⁴ See, for example, C. M. Constantinou, ‘On Homo-diplomacy’, *Space and Culture*, Vol. 9, No. 4, (2006), 351-364; C. M. Constantinou, ‘Multidirectional Diplomacy and the Privatization of Settlement’, *Peace Review*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (2012), 454-461; C. M. Constantinou, ‘Everyday Diplomacy: Mission, Spectacle and the Remaking of Diplomatic Culture’, in *Diplomatic Cultures and International Politics*, eds J. Dittmer and F. McConnell (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 35-52; O. Demetriou, ‘To Cross or Not to Cross? Subjectivization and the Absent State in Cyprus’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (2007), 987-1006; O. Demetriou, ‘Counter-conduct and the Everyday: Anthropological Engagements with Philosophy’, *Global Society*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2016), 218-237.

Rikkos and Raif enter his car and drive fast towards the north. Turkish Cypriot police also arrive at the scene and start to chase them. They manage to escape and hide the car in a nearby farm. Rikkos and Raif curse the politicians, both Greek and Turkish Cypriots for enriching themselves, whilst poor peasants like themselves need to take such risks to make ends meet.

Final Scene: *Fearful that the Turkish Cypriot police is still pursuing them, Rikkos and Raif flee to the nearby shrine, Kirklar Tekke or Tekke of the Holy Forty. They hide in the vicinity of the tombs and as it gets darker, they hear a noise. Rikkos gets scared and starts praying to Virgin Mary to save him. Raif protests that Rikkos shouldn't pray to a Christian saint in a Muslim holy place. Rikkos protests back saying that Kirklar is a Christian shrine, Ayioi Saranta, in Greek language also meaning the Holy Forty, and that the saints are Christian not Muslim martyrs. Rikkos recalls that he used to go there with his grandmother to pray. They start arguing about their cultural heritage until a loud voice is heard asking them to shut up. They stop and wait until the person who shouted gets closer and Rikkos recognizes him as Rallis – an even greater horkatos than Rikkos – one of the Greek Cypriot men in the coffee-house in the opening scene. As it transpires, he also entered the Buffer Zone illegally but in his case to collect wild asparagus. He explains that he habitually crosses into the Buffer Zone and the north and came to Kirklar only to take a nap, but this time he overslept and they woke him up. Disregarding his own hypocrisy, Rikkos challenges him to explain himself, reminding him that Rallis voted NO to the Annan Plan and in the coffee-house discussion Rallis appeared to be totally against settlement and reunification of the island. Indeed so, Rallis replies. He was fully against reunification and wanted Cyprus to remain divided because he did not trust politicians to make it work and, more importantly, the division was the only way to maintain the Buffer Zone and the natural habitat in this area. If there is a settlement, this whole area will be developed and he would not be able to forage freely and illicitly as he did now. This was the determining reason he voted NO, and did not care one bit for the Greeks, the Turks, or the Linobambakoi, like Rikkos, who like to pray to the Holy Forty. Rikkos and Raif are lost for words and look perplexed.*

So what if another *horkatos* is possible? Does another *horkatos* also mean that another world is possible? In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon underscored the importance of working to cultivate the imagination so as to resist the coloniza-

tion of thinking and help to develop a distinctive 'national consciousness'. Imagination was very much responsible for challenging global inequality, the colonial way of doing things, opening up political space and creating other worlds. Every new story, every new episode challenging the dominant colonial thinking should function as a 'real invocation', revealing new possibilities, 'channeled in every direction'. In giving 'free rein to his imagination', the storyteller need not employ great philosophers and scholars but can 'use unlikely characters for such a transformation, social misfits such as outlaws or drifters, are rediscovered and rehabilitated.'⁷⁵

Imagining and living the postcolonial possibility, national consciousness would thus progressively mature, leading to social and political consciousness, to a new humanism. That is why, for Fanon, 'national consciousness, which is not nationalism, is alone capable of giving us an international dimension' and ultimately 'international consciousness'.⁷⁶ What is at stake, therefore, is becoming conscious of the imaginary signification one gives to the nation, the creation and recreation of the nation in different spatiotemporal contexts, rather than remain content with the problems and pretences of the fixed 'imagined community' as projected by urban theorists and founding fathers. In appreciating how dominant projections of the nation cement specific political pursuits, the emancipated human can potentially flee from the nationalist frame, escape towards a more international and cosmopolitan consciousness.

The untimely death of Caesar Mavratsas denies us the opportunity to test this fictional but, I would insist, realistic episode of *Vourate Geitonoi* – a real invocation evoking and redeeming *horkatos*. Mavratsas was a great and open interlocutor, and I trust that he would have gone along with the idea and even built on the plot of this *other horkatos*. I don't know whether he would have been persuaded to recognize an alternative peasant consciousness that struggles for autonomy from urban agendas and central authority demands. Nor, if he would have found convincing the possibility of a rustic politics that challenges through *infrapolitics*, i.e., indirectly and invisibly, the dominant language and predicates of nationalism. One expects that if he had the chance to respond to this critique, he would have had good answers and counterarguments. I also have a feeling he would have laughed, probably shake his head, and let the peasant in me be.

⁷⁵ F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 174.

⁷⁶ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 179-180.

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