

Suppliant Guests : Hikesia and the Politics of Asylum

This paper discusses the Greek concept of hikesia – the granting of sanctuary to strangers – against the background of current debates on refugees and asylum. By looking at ancient Greek textual and iconographical depictions of hikesia which features frequently in the extant corpus of Greek tragedies on the one hand, and at Elfriede Jelinek's text *Die Schutzbefohlenen* on the other I will argue that the ritual of hikesia then and its current manifestation as political asylum now place considerable pressure on the polity confronted with the dilemma of according strangers/refugees sanctuary.

The argument is framed by a theoretical discussion of Derrida's essay *Hostipitality*.

Key Words: asylum, Elfriede Jelinek, Greek tragedy