

**Biography:**

Stephanos Stephanides was born in Cyprus but he left the island as a child and lived in several countries for more than thirty years before returning there in 1992. By that time he had taken undergraduate and graduate studies at University of Wales, Cardiff (BA 1973 and PhD 1981) and specialized in Hispanic Studies and English Literature. Having a knack for languages and fluent in English, Greek, Spanish and Portuguese, he had also trained in professional translation and conference interpretation at Georgetown University, USA (1985). Nowadays he combines his work as a translator and academic with writing poetry. Selections of his poetry have been published in about ten languages, and have received several prizes and awards. As Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Cyprus, he does research in comparative literature, literary and cultural studies, post-colonial literature, translations studies, anthropology and ethnography, and is active in international networks dealing with these areas of study.

After this very brief introduction I'd like to read part of a prose text by Stephanos posted on Excerpta Cypriana, which may bring us a bit closer to the person and poet behind the name.

**Excerpt from: Whatever my soul desired (taken from Excerpta Cypriana)**

“We come to know the world through its secret spaces – it is not only great monuments that count but seeing and hearing what has been made invisible or silenced by circuits of global exchange. Travelling for me has been an ever shifting relationship between familiarity and strangeness, a challenge to cultural narcissism. The word made flesh and the body made porous and vulnerable to the world's touch, becoming an object of its gaze, its affects, its desires – almost like a kind of sexual promiscuity – in my twenties I travelled with libidinal excess to Barcelona, Lisbon Amsterdam, Thessaloniki, Marrakesh and many places in between with a sleeping bag in hand ready to lay down anywhere, speak and listen to everyone, accept the kindness of strangers. I settled for a while in Barcelona in 1977 enjoying the euphoria of post-Franco Spain and decided it was time for my second Odyssey, beyond Hesperia, looking for the potential to disrupt my vision of the world as I knew it”.

[http://iwp.uiowa.edu/91st/vol6\\_n3/articles/stephanides\\_stephanos\\_souldesired.html](http://iwp.uiowa.edu/91st/vol6_n3/articles/stephanides_stephanos_souldesired.html)

As an experienced traveller and literature specialist, it is not surprising that Stephanos is a poet whose sensitive perspective on the world has critically engaged with Cypriot reality, Europe's most southern and perhaps most postcolonial outpost. A strategic location in the Mediterranean and once a bountiful resource of copper—which may have given the island its name—it has been occupied by many cultures which have all left their imprint on the island: the Greeks, Arabs, Egyptians, Persians, Franks, Venetians, Ottomans, British and as of the late 1960s, the Turks. Since the Turkish invasion of 1974, the country has been divided into the Turkish north side and Greek-Cypriote south side, creating a tense cross-cultural interface. A UN-patrolled border cuts right through the capital Nicosia, and defines and divides Europe from Asia along an unsettling but fascinating stretch of no-man's land where armed soldiers, blue and white painted barrels, ruins, car wrecks and dead-end streets strategically block the view of 'the Other side'. A few years ago, a corridor was finally opened that connected both sides of Nicosia on a day pass basis, allowing people to explore, however briefly, a different world. I happened to be in Nicosia exactly one year ago to attend the latest ACLALS congress, admirably organized by Stephanos. Strolling about Nicosia's centre and shuttling back and forth its cross-cultural corridor, I also had the opportunity to hit physically upon those "secret spaces ... looking for the potential to disrupt my vision of the world as I knew it". I certainly experienced Cyprus as something "familiar[-] and strange[-], a challenge to cultural narcissism" and an unsettling though enticing crucible of cultures. I suspect Stephanos' talk today, entitled "Writing from No Man's Land: literature in post-colonial Cyprus", will lead us along a similar road of postcolonial experience. Please help me welcome Stephanos with a warm applause.