

Welcoming Strangers: Hospitality in American Literature and Culture

by

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For my mom, Deva Devi

&

In memory of my father, Gopal Ram

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Preface:

Guests in Unexpected Places: Hospitality and American Studies¹

I sometimes expected the Visitor who never comes. The Vishnu Purana says, "The householder is to remain at eventide in his courtyard as long as it takes to milk a cow, or longer if he pleases, to await the arrival of a guest." I often performed this duty of hospitality, waited long enough to milk a whole herd of cows, but did not see the man approaching from the town.

- Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

America Global

In *Walden*, Thoreau reveals that he observes a Hindu ritual of hospitality according to which the householder awaits the arrival of a guest everyday at sunset. Thoreau redraws the boundaries of the household and re-conceptualizes self through hospitality, which, for him, provides the ground of his critique of dominant institutions such as the state.² His critique is premised on his deployment of hospitality and his reinvention of the figure of the host and the guest and their relationship to the household, community, nation and the international. The duty of hospitality, namely, awaiting the arrival of the visitor who may never arrive makes the household a home, and the householder a host.

While as a hermit with "his insufficient person" (Howell 59) awaiting the arrival of the visitor who may never arrive, Thoreau evokes hospitality as welcoming strangers, I

¹ The title of this preface echoes Phillip Deloria's *Indians in Unexpected Places* in which Deloria makes "a hard turn from anomaly to frequency and unexpectedness" in exploring actions by Native Americans (6).

² Thoreau's readers have noted the oppositional and critical nature of Thoreau's works. For Shawn Chandler Bingham, he critiques "the American government as a dominant institution" trampling "on individual conscience" (3); for Sam McGuire Worley criticism for Thoreau is "an act of interpretation and redefinition" (x); for Stanly Cavell *Walden* is "a withdrawal; it is a confrontation, a return, a constant turning upon his neighbors" (xv); for Sattelmeyer, Thoreau is the "cynosure of the oppositional canon" (18).

seriously doubt that a Boston Brahmin like him has in mind a person such as myself when he awaits a visitor at Walden while performing the duty and rituals of hospitality prescribed by the *Vishnu Purana*. A Hindu, but not a believer, a South Asian but not an Indian, and a person from the East, but a student of Western literature, culture, and philosophy, I least expect a welcome from the America of authors such as Thoreau, Emerson and Whitman, whose orientalist “passages” to “India” and Hinduism seem unlikely to offer hospitality to an eccentric visitor such as myself.

Why, then, am I writing a dissertation on writers who would not have acknowledged or recognized me as a guest? In the beginning, I deferred the question by asking instead if it would be an important question to ask and reflect upon. I assumed the reason for my choice of the topic was simply personal interest – my genuine interests in both American literature and hospitality, which would amply justify the “area” and topic of my dissertation. After all we live in a world where American literature enjoys the role of global literature taught and read by scholars all over the world.³ Furthermore, my “disciplinary” location within the Program in American Culture, and English Language and Literature seemed to validate my interests, for I thought hospitality in American literature would be the most spontaneous choice for me. If culture means hospitality, and if a culture cannot exist without the laws, practices and “duty of hospitality,” as Thoreau

³ A very recent inquiry into the issue of American literature as global literature is Paul Giles’ *Global Remapping of American Literature* (2011) which argues that American literature is a global phenomenon not only because it could “imperial claim the whole world as its rightful sphere,” but also because American literature has “imaginatively mapped itself in relation to global domain over the past three hundred years” (1-2). A few years before Giles, Wai-chee Dimock reached at similar conclusion but through a different route. In the introduction of *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*, Dimock argues that historical and ecological event of the World Trade Center and Katrina have demonstrated that America and American literature must be seen as a subset within “an infinite number of larger aggregates that might count as its embedding ‘set.’ . . . [A]nd these aggregates would have to rest on a platform broader and more robustly empirical than the relatively arbitrary and demonstrably ephemeral borders of the nation” (5). For Dimock, planetarity – a concept she borrows from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Paul Gilroy – would provide that platform. I will return to the concept of planetarity in the concluding chapter of the dissertation.

puts it, what else can be a better topic for dissertation for a student of American culture than the analysis of hospitality in American literature? ⁴

On second thought, however, I believe the question may deserve a serious response, for a reflection on it may not only illuminate the arguments, methods, perspectives, and the critical stances I have employed in the dissertation, but it may also enable us to examine the movements of/in American literature, culture, ideas and ideologies across the globe. Tracing these movements is precisely the objective of my dissertation. As Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari remark, each of us is always several, therefore writing a book, or in my case this dissertation, already involves quite a crowd. ⁵ To claim that it is solely guided by my own personal interests would not only be egocentric but also disingenuous about the historical moments to which my project is a witness, and also to the historical processes of which it is a part, a product, an assemblage. As we know, Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* define assemblage as a collective enunciation and a machine of desire of which men and women are part "not only in their work but even more so in their adjacent activities, in their leisure, in their loves, in their protestations, in their indignations, and so on" (81). It is these activities – love, leisure, and anger – as well as the lines and movements

⁴ As Raymond Williams confesses, "Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language," and its root is Latin *colere* meaning "to inhabit," "cultivate," "protect," and "worship with honor" (87). My reference to culture here echoes Jacques Derrida's description of culture as hospitality in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, where he claims that "[h]ospitality is culture itself," thereby implying that one cannot think of culture without hospitality (16).

⁵ Deleuze and Guattari open *A Thousand Plateaus* with this confession: "The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd" (3). This admission reveals and illustrates the collective nature of all writing, which is all the more true about academic and critical writing.

traversing across lives, histories, territories, and temporalities that I intend to trace in this preface.⁶

I particularly love Edwards and Gaonkar's "Introduction," for as a student of transnational America, their theorization of globalizing American studies resonates with my own encounter and experience with America and American studies. Transnationalism in American literary studies is at least as old as Randolph Bourne's classic essay "Trans-National America (1916) in which Bourne proposed a visionary idea of America as a "Beloved Community" grounded not in the melting pot but in the cosmopolitan ideals of dual citizenship (Bourne 123). While Bourne's classic model of transnational America is migration, Edwards and Gaonkar's transnationalism underscores the circulation and consumption of what they call "America global," by which they mean the popular cultural archive of America, which includes Hollywood, MTV, and news and digital media. Thus when I critique their approach, which I think we must, I do so not without implicating myself in the critique, or not without making myself half the target of the critique.⁷

⁶ The genre of the preface or introduction, coincidentally, is very important in American studies. Often the ideological and discursive battles in American studies are fought in and through prefaces and introductions. One of the frequently quoted sites of prefatory battles is Amy Kaplan's introduction to her acclaimed anthology, *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, in which she deconstructs the preface of another key American studies text: Perry Miller's *Errand into the Wilderness*. Without intending to compare my "preface" to these "founding" texts of American studies, yet definitely seeking to extend and contribute to this "genre," I would like to recall in this preface yet another introduction, a recent addition to the ongoing battle of prefaces in American studies: Brian T. Edwards and Dilip P. Gaonkar's introduction to *Globalizing American Studies*.

⁷ I discuss Edwards and Gaonkar's text without implying that it is the only study addressing the issue of transnationalism in American studies. One of the implicit arguments in the preface is that America has always been transnational; and if we have to choose to a text we should go back not only to Randolph Bourne, but also to Thoreau's *Walden*, which provides the philosophical ground for Gandhi's movement against colonialism in India. It is one of the books that inspired Gandhi to practice non-violence as a mode of resistance and as the moral ground for decolonization. Many Americanists have written extensively on the so-called transnationalist turn in American studies. Some of the noted voices included Shelley Fisher Fishkin, who evokes the "endless process of comings and goings that create familial, linguistic, and economic ties across national borders" (24). In the inaugural issue of *The Journal of Transnational American Studies*, Laura Doyle notes that we must "think through the transnational and the intersubjective

Edwards and Gaonkar argue that in revisiting and revising Miller's "jungle epiphany" Amy Kaplan exposes the exceptionalist paradigm of American studies by pointing out that Miller's awakening to the meaning of America on the banks of the Congo writes Africa out of his errand. Edwards and Gaonkar, however, accuse Kaplan of unwittingly reinstalling the exceptionalist America for she also retains the dyadic arrangement of arrival and return, thereby failing to conceive of "America as a cosmopolitan node, or a turnstile in the global flows, where America is pivotal but not the singular moment of arrival and departure" (9). Beyond the dyad of Miller's "vernacular" exceptionalism and Kaplan's cosmopolitan exceptionalism, and also beyond the triad of American studies, American exceptionalism, and the American century, Edwards and Gaonkar propose a tripartite cosmopolitanism that begins with the dyad of arrival and return but culminates in the America global or America as an agentless archive of non-return (31).

I seek to move beyond their understanding of transnationalism, and towards a more critical and other-oriented transnationalism. I use the term critical transnationalism not only because it allows us to critique nation and nation-state as the location of hospitality, but also because it enables me to articulate and engage with the transnational movements in American history and culture – such as the Peace Corps and the Fulbright – that cannot quite fit the narratives of globalization, cosmopolitanism and postmodernism. In contrast to the mythical notion of America, Edwards and Gaonkar

together" by engaging with "existential phenomenology's account of the-person-in-the-world" (2). In *Transnational America*, Inderpal Grewal explores the production of neoliberal subjects through the entanglement of the national and transnational on the one hand and biopolitics and geopolitics, on the other. In the Introduction of *Reframing the Transnational Turn in American Studies*, Donald Pease argues that the term transnational has "replaced 'multicultural,' 'postcolonial,' and 'postnational' as the most frequently invoked qualifier" (1).

propose a cosmopolitan or America global assembled through its archive of “the jetsam and flotsam of popular culture, business reports and news” (39). In the absence of any master narrative about America, America global constituted from the fragments of the traveling archive ensures that “everyone can and does know America, everyone is an Americanist” (39). This form of non-return is what constitutes for Edwards and Gaonkar globalizing American studies or provincializing the vernacular myth of America.⁸

Edwards and Gaonkar’s understanding of American studies, and by extension cosmopolitanism, is narrow, for they think America is an archive evenly available for circulation and consumption. Though the flow of America global is too heterogeneous to consider the United States as the center or origin of circulation, it creates a condition so homogenous that there is no one that is not an American, and no place that is not America. In other words, America global leaves no place for the emergence of strangeness and difference. This homogeneous notion of both America and the process of its “reception” abroad, especially in the Global South, in fact efface the most significant aspect of cosmopolitan America: arrival and reception of Americans abroad and America’s reception of the foreign in the United States. This double-movement of people (and also of ideas, ideologies, texts, cultures, and cultural artifacts) from and towards the United States makes the question of the encounter, contact, welcome and denial of welcome, in short the question of hospitality, central to American history and culture.

⁸ Unlike theorists of cosmopolitanism such as Geeta Rajan and Shailaja Sharma, who in the introductory chapter (“Introduction” once again!) of their anthology *New Cosmopolitanisms: South Asians in the US* argue that the location of “new cosmopolitanism” lies in the formation of a new class of immigrants in the U. S. who are the in-betweens (3), like Inderpal Grewal, who in *Transnational America* claims that as a superpower “America produce(s) subjects outside its territorial boundaries through its ability to disseminate neoliberal technologies” (3), Edwards and Gaonkar shift location to the Third World itself.

This question of alternative movements of or as hospitality is what I explore in this dissertation.

Edwards and Gaonkar posit as alternative the media and capital-driven globalization often criticized by many as globalization from above.⁹ They characterize as “non-return” the very capital-oriented network of movies, TV, music and the internet, which in fact bank on the principle of profit and return through global consumption and circulation of popular culture. As Jean-Luc Nancy in *The Creation of the World or Globalization* shows, this process only represents “the exponential growth of globality (dare we say *glomicity*) of the market – of the circulation of everything in the form of commodity – and with it of the increasingly concentrated interdependence that ceaselessly weaken independencies and sovereignties” (37).¹⁰ If the capital-driven globalization is exclusionary (for it excludes places and people who have no or limited access to commodity culture) and it eventually leads to the destruction of the world and to the alienation and estrangement of the subject, then it is imperative to trace, invent and resurrect relations that are not exclusively capital-driven or worlds which are not nations

⁹ In *Globalization from Below* Brecher, Costello and Smith note that globalization from above has increased the power of global corporations and markets. It has empowered international institutions, which may not have any democratic accountability. As a result it eventually dis-empowers people (33-34). In *Predatory Globalization*, Richard Falk describes all capital-driven forces as globalization from above. Falk goes to the extent of accusing globalization from above of “encouraging a resurgence of support for right-wing extremism” (132).

¹⁰ Nancy argues that the circulation of everything (including, in our case, “America” and American studies) as commodities diminishes the world, especially “its capacity to ‘form a world’ [*faire monde*]: it seems only to have gained the capacity of proliferating to the extent of its means, the un-world [*immonde*]” (34). This network of proliferation of commodities around the planet, a proliferation that includes the band of satellites and their debris “deforms the *orbis* as much as the *urbs*,” thereby invading and eroding “what used to be thought as *globe*, and which is nothing more now than its double, *glomus*” (33-34). What seems like a proliferation and world enlargement, in fact is world-shrinking, and eventually destruction of world-formation. Globalization as the condition of postmodernity shrinks the world, and instigates what David Harvey famously calls the “travails of time-space compression” (350). Time-space compression, he explains, “always exacts its toll on our capacity to grapple with the realities unfolding around us” (306). Thus instead of knowing America and assuming the position of authority of the Americanists, America global impedes the very passage of the subject into self-knowledge.

or cosmopolitan spaces. In order to truly attend to an alternative transnational American studies, we must move from a homogeneous theory of the movements of cultural objects in which such objects have a life of their own¹¹ to alternative sites of interaction between America and the rest of the world as well as between different institutions and “agencies” that constitute the heterogeneous America.

Edwards and Gaonkar take the concept of “archive fever” from Jacques Derrida without however citing him. Derrida opens *Archive Fever* with a suggestion that we must not “begin at the beginning, nor even at the archive” for the concept of the archive shelters in itself its doppelganger, Arkhê, which “names at once the commencement and the commandment” (12). In other words, Edwards and Gaonkar’s stress on the archive of America global in fact reinstalls America as the origin of the objects of popular culture, and the source of authority and commandment as to their consumption. Derrida further warns us that insofar as an archive is an institution or command, it is violent. Archive is eco-nomic and is dominated by the principle of repetition and return. It “keeps, it puts in reserve, it saves, but in an unnatural fashion, that is to say in making the law (*nomos*) or in making people respect the law” (1). Archive is nomological for it has the force of law, which is the law of the house (*oikos*), of consignment, and repetition. Yet it is not an archive if it cannot be reproduced and repeated. So long as it belongs to a house or an institution, an archive naturally gives birth to exteriority. This exclusionary aspect of the archive makes Derrida remarks that there is “no archive without an outside” or without the archive fever (14). In other words, a move towards the archive fever takes us to those structures and agencies that are recalcitrant to the archives of “America global.”

¹¹ I refer here to Arjun Appadurai’s anthology, *The Social Life of Things*, especially his introduction in which he argues that the circulation of commodities in society tells us that “commodities, like persons, have social lives” (3).

Volunteers, Visitors and Guests:

It is my exposure to this archive fever of American studies that I owe the answer to the question I began with: “How is it that I, a Nepalese by citizenship, am writing a dissertation on the topic of hospitality in American literature and culture?” I would like to instantiate and discuss this alternative transnational American studies through a personal narrative of my encounter with an American Peace Corps volunteer, who arrived in my elementary school in the remote village of Melauli in Nepal to teach us English. Unlike the cozy cosmopolitanism of media, popular culture, and the internet that Edwards and Gaonkar explore as the transnational archive fever of America global, the arrival of the Peace Corps volunteer in my village without electricity, roads or telephone constitutes the rough and redoubtable narrative of transnational America. This kind of narrative is seldom taken up by Americanists to be the standard narrative of American studies. The arrival of the Peace Corps volunteer in my village, and her reception by the school, students, and the village as a whole in fact constitute an alternative narrative or a narrative that does not get picked up by theorists of globalization precisely because its location lies beyond the pale of a certain kind of globalization and cosmopolitanism.

The volunteer’s arrival in the village also belongs to the principle of non-return because it is not guided by the logic of the capital. I do not think, as do some critics, that the Peace Corps is a secular monastic order in which the volunteers take “a vow of poverty and a heroic devotion to the service of others” (McBrien 208).¹² Yet I agree with Mortiz Thomsen, an ex-Peace Corps volunteer, who reveals that a Peace Corps volunteer was “expected to live at the level of the people with whom he worked and they would be

¹² There are many who believe that the Peace Corps volunteers are missionaries in modern guise, who, as one writer puts it, “take a voluntary vow of poverty and go out to work the alleviation of the suffering of the world” (Bellah 225).

poor (3).¹³ Most of the students had no idea of the archive of America global or of any other world outside the walls of mountains that surrounded us. The volunteer herself had no idea before she arrived in the village that there could be any place like the village so cut off from all kinds of communication and travel.

The Peace Corps volunteer was my first introduction to America and to hospitality. I was one of the students in the elementary school where she taught English; and since my father was a High School English teacher in the village, hence one of the few people the volunteer could actually talk to, my family was a sort of host to her. She was neither a visitor nor a tourist. Visitors and tourists would not venture as far as my village; for the exotic areas lay either in the cities or in the north-eastern region of Nepal; and unlike my village, these tourist areas were more connected to the world by road, telephone, and other amenities.

As many critics including a few former Peace Corps volunteers have shown, the agency was conjured by John F. Kennedy to countervail Soviet influence in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.¹⁴ In fact, it was touted as America's New Frontier, and even as a program of American cultural imperialism.¹⁵ In *Imperial Brotherhood*, Robert Dean

¹³ In *New Frontiers for American Youth*, Albertson et al note that the terms and conditions of service in the Peace Corps included “[h]olding the gap between living standards of the United States volunteers and host country nationals at the grass-roots level to the minimum consistent with maintaining health and effectiveness” (102).

¹⁴ In *Peace Corps in Cameroon*, Julius Atemking Amin argues that the Peace Corps Agency was “flexible response to communism” in which the volunteers were assigned the role in the Cold War to “help Third World countries to leap into the twentieth century without falling prey to communism” (177).

¹⁵ Some of the texts that discuss the vexed issue of imperialism in the Peace Corps include Jonathan Zimmerman's *Innocents Abroad* (2006); Larry Grubb's *secular Missionaries* (2009), and DaShanne Stokes' thesis, “The Peace Corps and the American Empire” (2008). In *Linguistic Imperialism* Robert Phillipson sees the Peace Corps, whose official aim is to “to promote a better understanding of Americans among the people served” (159), as part of American promotion of linguistic imperialism. R. Day in “ESL: A Factor in Linguistic Genocide?” goes to the extent of comparing the Peace Corps with genocide. Day asks a rhetorical question: “[A]re Peace Corps Volunteers who teach English merely teachers, or are they agents of linguistic and cultural imperialism – an imperialism which may conceivably result in linguistic and cultural genocide?” (78).

argues that Kennedy asserted for the Peace Corps a role “in the management of America’s unique postcolonial empire” (196). Dean notes that the first director of Peace Corps, Sargent Shriver made the agency conform to the “elite masculine ideal of toughness” to create a New Frontier image of America abroad (195). No doubt that the Peace Corps is one of the agencies that represents and implements the foreign policy of the United States government. However, the Peace Corps would look imperial *tout court* only when looked from a nativist point of view; that is from the point of view of the United States, especially from the perspective of those who wanted to reinvent the Peace Corps in the image of the frontier. The Peace Corps would yield a different and more complex picture when seen in the context of the socio-political and historical developments around the world which gave birth to the agency, and from the point of view of the “host” nations, and the people who actually “received” the volunteers.

According to Elizabeth Cobb Hoffman the Peace Corps was born out of the anxieties and tensions of the politics and cultures of the 1950s, which not only witnessed the beginning of the Cold War, McCarthyism, and Civil Rights Movement at home, but also the unfolding of the movement of decolonization in the Third World. Hoffman acknowledges that Kennedy called the Peace Corps the new Frontier, which evoked “a subliminal metaphor for all that America had lost,” especially the fact that “success of capitalism” in the United States “had eliminated the need to strive against nature” (17). Hoffman recalls that Americans often faced criticism abroad or at home from visitors from the decolonizing world that “the United States was on the wrong side of the color line, and making little attempt to reach out” (28). This anxiety of not doing enough about racism and freedom at home, and about decolonization in the Third World led Kennedy

to call upon the Senate to respond to the process of decolonization in Africa and elsewhere. “Call it nationalism,” he said “call it anti-colonialism, call it what you will, the word is out and spreading like wildfire in nearly thousand languages and dialects – that it is no longer necessary to remain forever in bondage.”¹⁶ Kennedy’s call to respond to the process of decolonization impels him to form the Peace Corps program as if he wanted America’s arrival in the Third World to be “proper.” As the editorial in *The New York Times* (March 5, 1961) claims, the Peace Corps hearkens back intellectually to William James’ “The Moral Equivalent of War” (1911) in which James proposes “conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of army enlisted against *Nature*” (James 530). Only through the conscription of “[o]ur gilded youths” would be possible to even out injustice, instill military ideals of hardihood and discipline, and to restore “man’s real relations to the globe he lives on” (530-31). If James’ vision of conscription of the youths in order to restore “men’s” real relation to the globe was the intellectual inspiration behind the Peace Corps, culturally, the Peace Corps also recalls and seeks to redress, to cite Hoffman again, America’s odd positioning vis-à-vis the color line which, around the same time as James, W. E. B. DuBois prophesied to be the problem of 20th century (27).

Thus when on October 13, 1960 at about 2 in the morning, J F. Kennedy asked the students at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor if they would be willing “to spend [their] days in Ghana,” upon which he said would “depend the answer of whether a free society can compete,”¹⁷ he was neither speaking metaphorically nor was he oblivious of

¹⁶ Quoted in *JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why it Matters* by James W Douglass (New York: Touchstone, 2008) p. 212.

¹⁷ *John F Kennedy in His Own Words*, p. 36.

the implications his reference to Africa had for the Civil Rights Movement at home.¹⁸ Not taking into account this transnational movement generated by the Peace Corps, and interpreting it simply as another manifestation of U. S. imperialism would be to overlook the difference between U. S. military interventions (for example in Vietnam or Iraq and Afghanistan now, in which the exceptionalist and imperial sovereignty of the U.S. manifests itself in order to destroy or temporarily suspend sovereignty of other nations), and a singular moment of sharing sovereignty with other nations in order to work for constructing a truly cosmopolitan world. These movements of volunteers across the world defines shared sovereignty or a hospitable relationship of proper arrival and proper “taking place” between the volunteers and the host countries or host institutions.

I borrow this notion of shared sovereignty from three different and distinct theoretical sources: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s critique of modernist sovereignty in *Empire*; George Bataille’s revision of sovereignty as “life *beyond utility*” (198); and Derrida’s re-conceptualization of sovereignty in *Without Alibi* as “the possibility of the impossible” (xx).¹⁹

¹⁸ In his book *Innocents Abroad*, Zimmerman notes that the Peace Corps volunteers often sought connections between biases they observed abroad and the ones Americans were facing at home. Zimmerman recalls an advertisement for the Peace Corps which reads: “Have you been arrested five times in the last five months for sitting in? Do you think we should ban the bomb, integrate Mississippi into the United States, abolish the State Department, and turn the Met over to folksinger? The Peace Corps is just your cup of espresso” (quoted in Zimmerman, p 98). Hoffman and Zimmerman not only situate the Peace Corps in the larger historical and political context in order to flesh out these anti-colonial roots of the agency, but they also identify within the Peace Corps attempts to re-imagine our true relationship to the globe by exposing injustice and biases both at home and abroad.

¹⁹ Hardt and Negri believe that American republic and democracy provide an alternative to the transcendental notion of sovereignty as democracy leads to the multitude “born not from a transfer of the title of power and right, but from an arrangement internal to the multitude, from a democratic interaction of powers linked together in networks” (181). In *The Accursed Share*, Bataille posits “the ordinary subject who upholds sovereign value against the object’s subordination, *shares* the value with all men (emphasis added)” (239). Derrida’s *Without Alibi*, Derrida calls sovereignty a fable, a phantasm, an “as if” (xix) He argues that it is possible to deconstruct and combat sovereignty. Derrida believes that sovereignty of the nation must be deconstructed “even while recognizing that all the fundamental axiomatics of responsibility or decision (ethical, juridical, political) are grounded on the sovereignty of the subject” (xix). This aporias

When seen from the perspective of the host nations and the people who receive the volunteers, a more complex picture of the Peace Corps emerges in which its movements resemble sharing of sovereignty rather than the exceptionalist concentration of sovereignty. Perhaps not very long after J. F. Kennedy announced the Peace Corps at the University of Michigan's Union in 1960, Barbara Wylie, a volunteer from Ypsilanti, Michigan, joined the Peace Corps and was assigned Nepal as her host country. I could not locate through published documents and directories the exact dates or location of her service in Nepal, but the visual records at the Kennedy Presidential Library suggest that in her spare time project, she taught English to the children of domestic help and untouchables in Kathmandu.



Figure 1: Barbara Wylie with children of untouchables and servants in Nepal

leads to a shared notion of sovereignty which is “undivided, unshared or it is not” (xx), must give way to a shared notion of sovereignty, which Derrida elsewhere in his works relates to the gift, friendship, the event and above all, hospitality.

Wylie's project – teaching English to children from especially economically and ethnically “segregated” families – blurs the lines between the domestic and the foreign, and seeks connections, as Zimmerman believes the Peace Corps in the 1960s often did, between the biases at home and abroad. By responding to J. F. Kennedy's call to go to Ghana, Wylie interrogates the politics of race and segregation at home. And, as a volunteer in Nepal, by teaching those students who may not have any means to attend a formal school or due to the rigid rules of caste and class, might not be allowed to enter school premises, Wylie also puts the national politics of the host country in question.

The Peace Corps volunteers in fact arrive in uncanny places (like my village or the Kathmandu of Wylie's students), and live among these “resident aliens.” For them, life in the village or among the poor and the untouchables is neither an epiphany in solitude nor merely a video game or a news report. The volunteer who arrived to teach us English had chosen a school so remote or had chosen the “students” without any school to teach them. Even Nepalese English teachers from the city would find such a move too big a risk for their career. Wylie and her students, and the volunteers who taught me constitute this critical transnationalism, which cannot be mapped by any narratives of the nation or globalization. If my village is an unincorporated territory to the national politics of Nepal, Wylie's students were unincorporated in the fabric of the city's social and cultural life. Paving a way to these unincorporated territories and lives is what makes the Peace Corps a transnational agency.

American Studies beyond the New Critical Deconstruction, and Postcolonialism

A few more volunteers succeeded the first one as teachers of English and Sciences, subjects for which local teachers were in short supply. One of the volunteers

invited my father to join the Peace Corps program in Kathmandu as a Nepalese language trainer for the volunteers. My father's new job with the Peace Corps required my family to move from the village to Kathmandu, where I would eventually go to college, and receive a graduate degree before being hired by Tribhuvan University to teach at the Department of English. By inviting my father to join the Peace Corps, the volunteers, as it were, also invited and initiated me into the world of English language and literature.

During my lectureship at the Central Department of English, at Tribhuvan University, I had the opportunity to meet and interact with Americanists including Paul Lauter and Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, who visited Nepal in order to help the University start a program in American Studies intensified my interest in and broadened my knowledge of American studies. During her visit to Nepal, Shirley Lim discussed postmodernism and cultural studies in relation to ethnic American literature, especially Asian American literature to which she herself, both as a creative writer and critic, has made a significant contribution. At the time of her visit, ethnic American literature was a field relatively unknown to Nepalese students and scholars. Lauter, on the other hand, acquainted us with Amy Kaplan's introduction to *Cultures of United States Imperialism*. He had also circulated his own work-in-progress on Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*, an essay which he later included in his book *From Walden Pond to Jurassic Park*. He argued that American studies must redraw this boundary, and include texts such as *Jurassic Park* in its syllabi. Lauter emphasized the need to locate the global circulation and consumption of *Jurassic Park*, but unlike them he encouraged us to expose the inherent contradictions in the content and the process of circulation and consumption of this text. By calling it the Stephen Greenblatt moment of American studies (and, here I quote from Lauter's book),

he notes that American studies must place “the work of art back into the world in which it is actually produced, circulated and consumed” (103).²⁰ Lauter and Lim’s seminars formally inducted me into American studies, and their emphasis on ethnicity, class, culture, and context while reading literature and popular cultural texts drew a number of young faculty including myself to American studies. What lured me to America and American studies is not the vernacular or mythical version of America as the land of the plenty or promise, but this other America which we see in Kaplan’s critique of Empire, Lauter’s critique of capital, or Lim’s ethnic literature, and the America that the Peace Corps volunteers first brought to my elementary school. The America that reached my village or my University in Nepal by dismantling the thick walls of temporal, geographical, socio-cultural and national disjuncture awakened me to the alternative movements, arrivals and receptions of America in a transnational framework.

With the recommendation and encouragement of Paul Lauter, and that of my Nepalese mentor, Shreedhar Lohani, who first initiated the dialogue on launching an American studies Program at Tribhuvan University, I applied for a Fulbright fellowship to further study this transnational America. The sponsorship of two Fulbright fellowships brought me to Western Michigan University, and then to Michigan State University, where I not only completed a Master’s degree in American studies, but also had the opportunity to be the guest or “Resident Alien” (to use the legal term prevalent in the United States) of America. As if completing the circle, I arrived in Ann Arbor to pursue

²⁰ He argues that though one of the major points of the movie is to critique the immorality of turning science and technology into commodities, the movie itself grossed over \$950 million excluding \$5.8 million in India and \$110,000 in Pakistan. Debunking theories of innocent globalization and its so-called non-return, Lauter instead urged American studies practitioners to introduce class and capital as critical categories in the analysis of cultural texts and artifacts.

my Ph. D. degree in American literature and culture at the University of Michigan: a student taught by American Peace Corps volunteers in the remote mountains of Nepal arrived at the very place where 50 years ago John F. Kennedy announced the Peace Corps program.

These crisscrossing movements of people, images, ideas and ideologies constitute the alternative narratives of transnational America, which I study in this dissertation. The America I explore in my study is not the vernacular or mythical America, nor the America of globalization, but the one I welcomed in my village, and of which I continue to be a guest. Being a guest or host of this America enables me not only to make a two-fold critique of the nation-states at both-ends of the movement, but also to trace the emergence of what I call the figures of the guest/host-stranger. These figures complicate the guest-host binary, and by locating subjects engaged in movements beyond the mythical and imperial paradigms of interpretation in American cultural and literary studies, they enable us to see a radically different practice of hospitality.

At the turn of the century when Paul Lauter, Richard Rorty, and Shirley Lim visited Nepal, the Department was under the spell of the New Criticism and deconstruction; and at times it felt like *déjà vu* as if I had been transferred from the provincial world of my village to the disconnected ivory tower of literature and literary criticism. While postcolonial theory seemed to be the only link between the literary texts we read and the actual world we lived in, it would relate to our context only indirectly, for Nepal never had a direct colonial experience, hence theories of the empire writing back, mimicry, postcolonial subjectivity all sounded no less abstract and alienating than

J. Hillis Miller's New Critical and deconstructionist scenarios of reading in which every critic is a guest/host or parasite of a literary text.²¹

If Miller's deconstructionist criticism is too textual and Eurocentric to let in the world, especially other "worlds" such as mine (if they can be called one), postcolonial hospitality as theorized, for example, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Resident Alien," which I expected would be more homely and hospitable, is no less uncanny, for Spivak restricts her analysis to British empire, which in turn makes her approach strictly Indo-centric that theorizes hospitality in the context of colonialism in India.²²

I was introduced to American studies at the time when I was gradually growing uncomfortable and impatient with J. Hillis Miller's New Critical deconstructionism, and Spivak's hospitality as post-colonial resistance from below. What American studies does for me is to provide a discursive space to critique power at both ends of the spectrum – Miller's American version of deconstruction in the United States, and Spivak's "postcolonial resistance" in South Asia, which eventually serves the logic of the elites.

²¹ In fact, my first encounter with theories of hospitality occurred in a graduate seminar in which we read J. Hillis Miller's classic essay, "The Critic as Host." In the essay, Miller describes poetry as an ambiguous gift, a host to be broken, passed around and consumed by the critic or the guest. He argues that the task of deconstructionist criticism is to show how a poem is "parasitical in its turn on earlier poems, or contains earlier poems as enclosed parasites within itself . . . It must have been a cannibal consumer of earlier poems" (446). In Miller's hermetically sealed poetics of hospitality, a poem lives on other poems that antedate it as if it were a cannibal guest that feasts on the host. The textual diachrony – a pseudo-history of poems consuming other poems in order to come into existence not only disregard what lies outside of the pale of the Western tradition, but also the context or the world in which the poems, both eating or eaten, are located.

²² Spivak traces the figure of the Resident Alien in the works by the Indian Nobel Laureate Rabindranatha Tagore, who she thinks rewrites Rudyard Kipling's "Kim," who in turn is rewritten in Mahfuj's translation of his own work *The Truth about Russia and England*, and in Mahasweta Devi's "The Hunt." She claims that her own legal status as the Permanent Resident of the United States also makes her a Resident Alien. Beyond this link and a brief reference to the War on Terror in South Asia, especially in Afghanistan, Spivak restricts her analysis to British Empire. Spivak critiques "contemporary metropolitan philosophers" such as Charles Taylor and Etienne Balibar for confining the ethics of hospitality to the arrival of postcolonial subjects in the metropolises of the West. Spivak finds that even Derrida's figuration replicates migratory model of hospitality as it remains limited to the fact of arrival or return [*arrivant* and *revenant*] of the migrants and undocumented workers in various metropolitan centers in the West (47).

When I place American studies between Miller's deconstruction and Spivak's postcolonialism as a critical transnationalism that critiques elitism, nativism, and autochthony, I do not assume that there is a real "below" as some easily identifiable constituency. Nor do I propose American studies as the only critical method or tool to get to the "below." What I do assume is that the "below" from which Spivak urges us to look at the foreigner, or to put more accurately for our context, to welcome the foreigner, does not exist without the two-fold movement of the critique of the nation-state. In fact, this double-movement creates a rift between "America" and "studies."

Whether understood as a critical method, practice of criticism or a politics, accent in the phrase "American studies" always falls on the first half of the phrase, "American." In underscoring this emphasis American studies reasserts its roots in the vernacular tradition, especially the latter's obsession with the question: What is an American? The practitioners of American studies overlook the other half of the phrase, "studies," which haunts the phrase like its doppelganger, its stranger, latent shadow of a "manifest" subject. By foregrounding "studies" in the phrase American studies, I would like to underscore not only reading or critiquing. I would also stress the process of receiving, learning, unlearning or undoing, which I trace in the exchanges initiated by the Peace Corps and the Fulbright.

Unlike those who argue that the Peace Corps is imperialism masquerading as teaching, I contend that when seen from the perspectives of the actors involved in teaching and learning, the Peace Corps emerges as a more complex and critical pedagogical practice. It may not be the pedagogy of the oppressed, yet the Peace Corps initiates a process in which, to recall Paulo Freire's description of the pedagogy of the

oppressed, “culture of domination is culturally confronted” (54). The Peace Corps volunteers primarily consist of young and usually fresh-out-of-college students, hence its pejorative soubriquet: Kennedy’s kiddy corps or its acronym: BAGs – BA Generalists.²³ As in her “Foreword” to a collection of essays on the Peace Corps as a cultural frontier, Margaret Mead notes, the youthfulness of the volunteers capitalizes uniquely “on the American tendency to speak with the loud, sure voices of children,” and provides “a magnificent alternative to the scolding, setting-the-world-to-right voice of the schoolmarm, which we sometimes adopt abroad” (vii-viii). By confessing that America sometimes adopts this voice of a scolding and silencing schoolmarm, which contributes to what critics sometimes dub as “America as global policeman,”²⁴ Mead posits the Peace Corps as a magnificent alternative to the authoritative and imperial voice of America abroad. Against a speech in which the schoolmarm speaks from top down at students, the Peace Corps’ youthful voice records a contact and conversation from “below.”

Revisiting Thoreau’s Uncommon Lyceum

It is this figure of the learner or student in Thoreau’s work that draws me to his book, *Walden*, which, by his own admission, is addressed to “poor students” (1). On the one hand, there is no doubt that Thoreau follows the dictations of the scripture while observing the law of hospitality. For Thoreau, Wylie’s poor and stigmatized students appeal not to our hospitality but to what he famously calls “hospitality,” which is an

²³ In *High Risk/High Gain*, Alan Weiss reveals that the Peace Corps volunteers were “[u]nspeakably, unthinkable young” (11). Speaking of the first decade of the Peace Corps program, Fritz Fischer notes that the Peace Corps actually sought to capitalize on the youth and inexperience of the BA generalists. By targeting not the specialists but the generalists, the Peace Corps made its work force more “more lucrative and abundant” (34).

²⁴ For an analysis of the rhetoric of America as a global policeman, see Annita Lazar and Michelle Lazar’s essay in *Discourse, War and Terrorism* where they examine the vocabulary of policing in, for instance, George Bush’s post-9/11 speeches, which abound in terms such as “search,” “find” and “hunt” (51).

appeal “to be helped” from those who “are resolved never to help themselves” (121). Helping oneself and cultivating oneself or self-reliance are key themes in *Walden*. The text begins with an emphatic announcement that when he wrote the book he “lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which [he] built [himself], on the shore of Walden Pond” (1).²⁵ This Emersonian self-reliance no doubt has its roots in, to cite William Spanos’s *American Exceptionalism*, the mythical “idealization of the perpetual frontier (a violent forwarding that always already renews the spirit of the settlement)” (66).²⁶ Some critics see confluence between Emerson and Thoreau’s notions and practices of self-reliance, others locate clear differences by emphasizing Thoreau’s “critique of the American economy” (Bingham 23-24) and his association with the abolitionist movement.

Like the Peace Corps volunteers or the Fulbright visitors, Thoreau was a teacher, a lecturer. He not only taught a variety of students, he also emphasized that teachers must be fellow students with the pupil. His pedagogy included “informal talks” on topics including design of the universe, rotations of the seasons, “nature, beauty, and the indigenous people who first occupied the land” (Mercogliano 114). With his reformist educational ideas and radical pedagogical techniques, Thoreau approximated and anticipated Mead’s distinction between the voice of children and the voice of the

²⁵ Robert Richardson in *Henry Thoreau: a Life of the Mind* sees a parallel between Emerson’s self-reliance and Thoreau’s idea of economic and spiritual autonomy in *Walden*. He argues that while Emerson was proofreading “History,” “Self-reliance,” and “Friendship,” “Thoreau’s journals are filled with parallel observations” (98). Philip Cafaro, however, believes that Thoreau’s self-reliance differs from Emerson’s because the former “attempted greater independence from conventionally defined economic needs” and “pursued a limited economic autarky, seeking to build up an economic cushion, not of money as la Emerson, but of hardiness and indifference to wealth and possessions” (110).

²⁶ For some critics, Thoreau’s self-reliance belongs to the same mythical representation of self-reliance defined by “the self-help and the mind power movements, by Horatio Alger stories of ‘self-made men,’ by Hollywood images of western cowboy and space cowboy, and by many other American traditions of individual power in autonomy” (Cosgrove 71).

schoolmarm. As Stanley Cavell notes, Thoreau not only aspired to produce a genuine Scripture, he also wanted to “alarm his culture by refusing it his voice” (xv).

Thoreau’s *Walden* is an experiment not only in living but also in speaking and listening. In the section called “Sounds,” Thoreau “looks” out for sounds “more indigenous even than the natives” (102). He hunts for the hum of bird and pine needles that produces “a vibration of the universal lyre” (98). For Thoreau, voice, sound, speaking and listening constitute the art of good living itself. In the chapter entitled “Visitors,” Thoreau makes speaking – and the right pitch and intonation of the voice – essential to welcome and hospitality. Arguing that compared to the big mansions where visitors look like vermin, cottages such as his give reception a more human look, he notes that if “we are merely loquacious and loud talkers, then we can afford to stand very near, cheek by jowl, and feel each other’s breath, but if we speak reservedly and thoughtfully, we want to be farther apart, that all animal heat and moisture may have a chance to evaporate” (112). In other words, it is impossible to talk softly, with substance and thoughtfulness if one is too close to the addressee. Paradoxical as it may sound, it is even impossible to hear what the addressee says when one is too close for only loud talking – such as shouting, lecturing, teaching, scolding – is possible in close distance. Lofty thoughts disappear as soon as there is shouting. It is impossible to welcome one’s visitor in such a noisy environment.

Cavell’s insightful analysis of Thoreau’s critical neighborliness (which at once denies neighbors his voice in order to turn upon them) enables us to critique the culture of conspiracy and silence in Concord; yet this nativist approach overlooks Thoreau’s evocations of Hinduism, Buddhism or Confucianism, on the one hand, and on the other,

his talks on indigenous population, and his ability to hear an ancient explosion during which all but one Native American named “Walden” survives. Thoreau reveals that it was after the native that the pond might have been named, and the very Native American is in a sense the titular protagonist of Thoreau’s text as well. The nativist approach may emphatically underscore Thoreau’s radical critique of the state, yet what may still go unnoticed is Thoreau’s transnationalism both in its interactions with Native Americans and with the Eastern and Egyptian religious and spiritual practices.

If the New Critical or deconstructive readings ignore Thoreau’s transnationalism, “postcolonial” readings correct this shortcoming by pointing out his borrowings from non-Western philosophical traditions and by critiquing his orientalist representations of the East. They could also seek connections between Thoreau’s civil disobedience and Gandhi’s non-cooperation during India’s independence movement. However, their reaffirmation of his conversations with either Brahminism or with postcolonial nationalism cannot articulate other voices, which only a certain kind of American studies enable us to do. Only at that moment will we be able to welcome the foreigner from below. As Thoreau makes it clear, thinking at the level of the nation is only thinking about its “unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense” (73). While a nation thinks that it is talking through a telegraph, and riding thirty miles an hour, this communication and speed by no means reaches those who lie buried under the railroads. “We do not ride on the railroad,” he adds, “it rides upon us” (75). “Did you ever think,” he asks, “what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man, an Irishman or a yankeeman. The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and cars run smoothly over

them” (74). The task of his book is to unearth what lies below the progress that we call the nation.

Thoreau himself is not the stranger, even though in *Walking* he calls himself a saunterer – a person *sans terre* or home (8). But he conjures Walden as a site where the stranger is heard, received and welcomed. This reception of the stranger becomes possible only when we emphasize hospitality in *Walden*. Thoreau underscores this receptive dimension of *Walden* when he calls for turning villages into universities (87). “Let the reports of all the learned societies come to us,” he remarks, “and we will see if they know anything. . . This is the *uncommon* school we want” (88).

Thoreau believes that a nation progresses not by inviting the hum-drum of the railroad, but by receiving and critically analyzing the news reports from the world and by boarding and welcoming teachers in order to practice the singular and uncommon education. Bringing these voices to the village or to provincialize these voices would be the only way out of provincialism. American studies, when looked at from Thoreau’s “Walden,” is more “studies” than “America,” the nation. It is a village which has become universities, a place of critical reflection and reception of the stranger. My dissertation seeks to trace similar sites, scenes and subjects welcoming the figure of strangers in American literature and culture.

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Introduction

The bosom of America is open to receive not only the Opulent and respectable Stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all Nations And Religions; whom we shall wellcome to a participation of all our rights and previleges, if by decency and propriety of conduct they appear to merit the enjoyment.

- George Washington ²⁷

Hospitality involves welcoming strangers – not just the rich and respectable strangers, but also the oppressed, persecuted and absolute strangers. At the heart of my dissertation lies this founding impulse of American democracy (as articulated by George Washington in the epigraph above) that hospitality worthy of its name must be extended to strangers who may not possess much to share or with whom one may not always have much in common. Welcoming these strangers implies creating relationships where apparently no ties seem to exist. The basic assumption underlying my discussion of hospitality in American literature and culture is that an element of surprise and unexpectedness surrounds all acts and events of hospitality. Two pop-cultural texts best illustrate my point – Stanley Kramer’s *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* (1967) and Nick Tomnay’s *The Perfect Host* (2010). If Kramer’s classic film, which reflects the change in attitude and perceptions regarding African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement, depicts the arrival of an unexpected guest in the form of Dr. Prentice, Tomnay’s psychological thriller grapples with an unexpected turn of tables when a fugitive from justice seeks refuge in the house of Warwick Wilson, who is himself a “cannibal” host. If

²⁷ This epigraph comes from *George Washington, 1732-1799. The Writings of George Washington*, available at the Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library. Subsequent references to George Washington’s speech are from this text (<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/WasFi27.html>)

the guest often exceeds the host's expectations, the host also is no less strange to the guest as well as to himself or herself. However, both the strangers must risk their resources and their lives so that the performative of welcome could take place. By moving beyond the simplistic binary of guest and host, my dissertation explores the underlying violence in all acts of hospitality.

The first critical terms that come to mind when deploying hospitality as an analytical category are guest and host. The narratives of hospitality in American literature, however, reveal another layer to the ambivalent relationship between these actors in the performative of hospitality. Integral to yet distinct from the strangeness of the host and the guest is another form of estrangement, which takes place even before one meets or knows who the guests or hosts are. This fundamental estrangement occurs not only when we as hosts open our homes, resources and selves to the guests, who with their appeals, entreaties and moral claims and rights for admission and reception impose themselves on our conscience, psyches and personal and political spaces. The very act of extending hospitality or demanding a welcome entails appropriating the space, role and identity of the host to receive the guest, and of the guest to be received by the host.

Hospitality not only requires that we as hosts open our home and selves to strangers; it also implies closure, finitude, exclusion and violence. Every act of welcome involves assuming the role of the host, and recognizing and establishing oneself as host by violently appropriating the place in or to which one receives the guest. It also requires that we exclude those who are not or do not qualify as guests so that we could welcome those we consider admissible. This violent foundation renders every act of hospitality incomplete. Hospitality remains incomplete because extending a welcome accompanies a

potentially inhospitable act of appropriating the place, identity and role of the host or guest.

The violent foundation upon which an act of welcome takes place not only makes the act of hospitality incomplete, but it also implies that someone or something still remains to come beyond the present figures of the guest or host involved in the act of hospitality. This incompleteness of hospitality complicates and destabilizes any sense of perfection or complete presence of the guest or the host at the time of welcome. I call this figure the “guest/host-stranger.” This figure not only complicates the easy binary of host and guest by exposing the violent foundation of hospitality [initiated by the host’s “this is my house, you can or cannot enter it;” and the guest’s “I have the right or moral justification to be received”]; the figure also enables us to reinvent hospitality by reformulating our conceptualization of identity, self and our relationship to the place of welcome and to one another. I trace this tentative, divided, self-contradictory and critical figure of the guest/host-stranger in American literature.

Why is this figure important? Any analysis of hospitality will remain incomplete without attending to the figure of the guest/host-stranger. Tracing this figure is crucial for understanding the question of hospitality in American literature and culture at least for three reasons. First, as a figure exposing the violent foundation of hospitality, it complicates the conventional or mythical understanding of hospitality in America, which depicts America as the mother of exiles extending an expansive welcome. This figure foregrounds multiple processes of estrangement underlying the mythical vision of America as a place where everyone is welcome. Second, as a split subject embodying hospitality as incompleteness, the figure of the guest/host-stranger reveals the multiple and

disjunctive sites, scenes and subjects of hospitality in American literature and culture. Unlike anthropological accounts of hospitality which study the customs and practices of hospitality of a particular (usually non-Western) culture, discussion of hospitality through this figure enables us to see the multiplicity of cultures and discourses of hospitality in America.²⁸ Third, besides enabling the critique of violence and multiplication of the sites, scenes and subjects of hospitality, the figure of the guest/host-stranger also embodies a subject of decolonization, signaling a new conceptualization of self and identity, and new relationship to the place of reception and welcome. The figure of the guest/host-stranger provides a critical paradigm which is able to engage with the two aspects of the phrase “welcoming strangers.” On the one hand, the figure exposes the estrangement or loss of home and alienation of self or identity caused by colonialism, empire and slavery. On the other, this figure enables us to trace hospitality as decolonization by foregrounding internally torn, divided and split subjects.

In order to understand hospitality as the culture and ethics of decolonization, we must first distinguish it from the politics of completion implied by both the mythical and empire studies paradigms of interpretation in American literary and cultural studies. In his 1783 speech to volunteers from Ireland, George Washington thanks the Irish for their “Hospitality and Benificence” (sic) to “our Brethren who have been Prisoners of War” during the War of Independence against Britain. He incites the volunteers to wage a

²⁸ The anthropological discussion of hospitality can be found in Marcel Mauss’s *The Gift*, where he uses the term *potlatch* to describe the Polynesian practices of exchanges such as banquets, rituals, festivals, and fairs. Mauss argues that the practice of *potlatch* is regulated by another Polynesian concept, *mana*, which gets exchanged through the feasts and gift-giving, and one must “reciprocate these gifts under pain of losing that *mana*” (11). Similarly, Andrew Shryock in his study of hospitality among the Jordanian Bedouin notes that the *karam* or compassionate reception of gift among the Balga Bedouin requires that the host fear the guest and entertain him (36). While these anthropological studies provide a unified and total picture of the practices of hospitality in a particular culture which has specific roles for guests and hosts, one cannot locate such totalized pictures of hospitality in America.

similar war in Ireland by insinuating that if “the Example of the Americans successfully contending in the Cause of Freedom” can be of any use to the Irish and the rest of the world, he “shall have an additional Motive for rejoicing at so prosperous an Event.”²⁹ Welcoming the Irish volunteers is not merely a reciprocal act of returning Irish beneficence towards the American prisoners of war, but also a declaration of war by another means against the inhospitality of the British Empire. Washington implies that receiving the Irish volunteers in the United States is not merely reciprocity but also a deliberate act intending to further the cause of freedom and independence. It continues the war against colonialism, for hospitality is not only expected from nations in search of independence or nations that have recently achieved independence, but that only such a reception can consolidate conviviality between the colonized or “postcolonial” nations.

Writing a decade after Washington’s speech, Immanuel Kant in *Perpetual Peace* invokes hospitality as one of the few ways to achieve perpetual peace among nations. In this foundational discourse on hospitality in Western philosophy, Kant distinguishes his notion of perpetual peace from the “false” notion of peace formulated in the so-called peace treaties signed among European colonial powers. For Kant perpetual peace implies end of all hostilities and beginning of conviviality (whereas peace treaties merely signify a truce); however, the end of hostilities does not imply the end of encounters or run-ins with strangers. Kant defines hospitality as “the right of a foreigner, in consequence of his arrival on the soil of another, not to be treated by him as an enemy” (19). Hospitality to

²⁹ In “Beyond the Line: On Infinite Decolonization,” Alberto Moreiras locates what he calls the U.S. ideology of “infinite decolonization” in the period after World War II. According to him, after World War II, the U.S. hegemon supported infinite decolonization as a “movement of the world toward national popular liberation” (586). We may argue that the American ideology of “infinite decolonization” starts with the U.S. claim after the War of Independence that it is an independent, anti-colonial and, indeed, a postcolonial nation.

strangers may end hostility but not fresh encounters with those who could otherwise be enemies. Kant is especially concerned about the way European imperial powers travel to other parts of the world (for instance, America, Africa, the East and West Indies and the Pacific), in order to colonize them:

If the inhospitable behavior of the civilized, commercial states of our portion of the world be compared with this barbarian inhospitality [of Barbary States or the North African states of Tripoli, Tunisia and Algeria], the injustice which they show when they go to foreign lands and peoples (for they consider their arrival the same as conquest) becomes simply horrible. America, the Negro lands, the Spice Islands, the Cape etc., were considered by them, when they discovered them, as belonging to nobody. For the inhabitants they counted as nothing. Into East India, under the pretext of simply establishing trading posts, they introduced men of war, and with them oppression of the natives, instigation of the different states of the country to widespread wars, famine, insurrection, treachery, and so on through the whole category of evils which afflict the human race. (20)

Hospitality for Kant, as for Washington, is not only a fight against colonialism and empire, it is also a means to achieve through cosmopolitan rights a state of world-citizenship and a hospitable republic in which strangers share the rights and privileges of citizens, who cultivate a form of welcome directed not only towards the opulent strangers but also towards the oppressed and persecuted of all nations and religions.

Washington not only underscores the centrality of hospitality in American history, he also presents it as a contentious issue in American culture. His reference to “America’s bosom” welcoming the oppressed reveals the following three presuppositions examined in this dissertation: i) America is anti-imperial and anti-colonial; ii) by the very virtue of its independence from the British empire, it is post-colonial; iii) and, as it seeks to protect rights and privileges of the oppressed and persecuted, it is cosmopolitan.

In Washington's strategic war of independence and anti-colonialism, hospitality not only defines what America is or who the American is and who the strangers or the oppressed are; it also perpetuates the fight for freedom and independence, in short, for a post-colonial world.³⁰ If the space of hospitality begins with an independent and post-colonial nation and ends in the production of a postcolonial world, as a postcolonial subject himself or herself, the host must welcome other anti-colonial or post-colonial subjects. Thus, for Washington, hospitality not only marks the way nations and individuals relate to one another, it also determines whether nations are cosmopolitan. Some critics, however, have waged a discursive "war" against this anti-imperial, post-colonial, democratic and cosmopolitan interpretation of American culture by claiming that a subtext of imperialism and colonialism runs behind America's revolutionary, and by extension, post-colonial and democratic projections. The hospitable "bosom" which Washington posits as a symbol of American beneficence toward the oppressed and the colonized represents, for these critics, an exceptionalist paradigm of being in which the imperial subject is "left alone with America." For these critics, America's claim to being infinitely hospitable is not only inhospitable, but an expression, to cite one of them, of "the inevitable [colonialist] destiny of the nation" (Behdad 8).

In her introduction to *Cultures of U.S. Imperialism*, Amy Kaplan exposes the construction of a monolithic and coherent national identity predicated on the denial of empire in U.S. history. Taking the readers to an earlier colonial moment, Kaplan notes that merely focusing on the arrival of the Pilgrims and other early immigrants as the

³⁰ Though Washington does not use the term "post-colonial" to describe the post-revolutionary America, I borrow the term from Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, who in the Introduction of *The Empire Writes Back* argue that like the literature of other British colonies, the "literature of the USA should also be place in this [post-colonial literature] category" (2). The authors add that perhaps due to its current position of power and its "neo-colonizing" role, "its post-colonial has not been generally recognized" (2).

foundational narrative of the nation exemplifies being “left alone with America” rather than Washington’s welcome to the oppressed or the colonized, which, for Kaplan, would prove “antithetical to the historical experience of imperialism” (4). Kaplan multiplies Washington’s revolutionary and post-colonial site of hospitality by not only recalling the colonial moment before the revolution (thereby suggesting that empire and colonialism in America involve other wars) and before Washington’s expression of solidarity with the oppressed and the colonized, but also by turning the tables on Washington’s anti-imperial and post-colonial paradigm by detecting in it the same inhospitable element of imperialism against which the early immigrants waged a war for independence.

A Tale of Two Paradigms

American literary and cultural studies have been taken hostage by these two interconnected yet distinct discursive wars: the anti-imperial, post-colonial and democratic paradigm claims that American literature and culture are narratives of anti-imperialism, democracy and post-coloniality; the empire studies paradigm, however, seeks to expose this interpretation by demonstrating that as an exceptionalist culture, America believes, to cite William Spanos’s *American Exceptionalism in the Age of Globalization*, in the “ideology of renewing frontier” in order to expand empire and reaffirm “the ontological and racist foundation” of the nation (Spanos 207). In a similar vein, Donald Pease’s *The New Exceptionalism* shows how Americans deployed the “fantasy of exceptionalism,” especially during the Cold War, “to negotiate the ideal identification with the national dimension of the imperial Thing [in the Lacanian sense that signifies condensation of the place of the primal and traumatic scene into a non-phenomenal object] by dis-identification with the fantasm of the Russian Empire and by

disavowing the American imperial Thing” (20). For these critics, America repeats and extends the Old World paradigm of empire and colonialism.

My dissertation seeks to release American literary and cultural studies from their “captivity” in the revolutionary or post-colonial paradigm of infinite hospitality and its counterpart in empire studies by choosing a different line of flight which I call “hospitality as decolonization.” This dissertation would have been impossible without the insightful and critical works produced in the field of empire studies. I make their critique of empire my point of departure to locate a different discourse of hospitality revolving around the figure of the guest/host-stranger. Unlike Washington’s anti-colonial host and unlike the “critical subjects” of empire studies devoted to exposing U.S. cultures of imperialism, this figure of the guest/host-stranger attends to the work of nurturing the ethos of welcoming strangers. In short, I propose a shift in interpreting American culture and literature from the critique of colonialism and empire to the cultivation of the politics and “ethics” of decolonization. By ethics I do not mean some deontology of hospitality, but the tending of the “ethos” or the familiar place, land or home, essential to every act of hospitality.

While both the mythical and empire studies paradigms presuppose ethos or home as at once open to strangers yet enclosed as a territory, Contradictory as it may sound, both paradigms underscore critique of imperialism, and as an antidote prescribe a universalist model of hospitality in which strangers from all nations and religions (as Washington would say) or the multitude of the globe (as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri would say) are welcome. If their universalist and totalizing view of hospitality and co-existence presupposes identifiable and classifiable hosts and guests, “my” guest/host-

strangers are split subjects not only internally divided but also “strangers” who are by turns guest and host or simultaneously both guests and hosts. Impossible to categorize as indivisible subjects or “individuals,” the fragments that they are, they put all autonomous concepts of subjects (citizens, strangers, others, foreigners) in question and interrogate all incorporated and contiguous concepts of space such as home, nation, globe or empire.

I trace this figure of the guest/host-stranger in literary works by authors including James Fenimore Cooper, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Willa Cather, Leslie Marmon Silko, John Dominis Holt and Toni Morrison. Belonging to different time periods, and writing with distinct styles on varied subjects with specific objectives and concerns in mind, these authors remind us that American literature is not a homogenous body of work which yields a linear and univocal narrative. Nor can it be interpreted with a fixed set of critical perspectives or analytical tools. A discussion of hospitality in American literature requires that first of all we be receptive to its bewildering plurality and disorienting diversity. In choosing authors who belong to different time periods and have different aesthetic persuasions and political or cultural convictions, my aim is to unsettle myself and my audience so that we awaken to the uncanny nature of their works, and after being thus dislodged from our “at-home-ness” with a particular narrative of American literature or a particular theoretical and critical orientation, we receive these works in their hospitality-obsessed singularity. This element of surprise constitutes the first step of hospitality, which in turn differentiates it from the industry of critical reception fueled by routine and predictable theoretical interpretations.

As we open the texts by these authors, we enter in each a singular site of hospitality with different hosts and guest and different laws and rituals of welcome. On

the one hand, attending to the multiplicity of the scenes of hospitality reminds us that we cannot have a unified theory of hospitality in which guests and hosts play irreversible roles. On the other hand, we begin to see repeating patterns and figures, and recurring issues and concerns in their works. Cooper's scouts gone wild, for example, may not communicate well with Whitman's free flowing savages or with Melville's unsettled and unsettling subjects; but each time we encounter them, they surprise us, like unexpected guests, with their particularity, even eccentricity. If Silko's psychics, Cather's "queer" subjects, and Morrison's specters interrupt the cozy continuum between citizens and strangers, natives and foreigners, and hosts and guests, Holt's islanders interrogate the very notion of contiguous spaces of the nation or the frontier, especially when they move from one island to the other, from one ranch and valley to the other.

My dissertation explores these singular *sites*, *scenes* and *subjects* of hospitality in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature by pursuing the following tripartite trajectory:

a) *multiplying histories and sites of hospitality*: While Washington's revolutionary and mythical notion of hospitality, and Kaplan and others' paradigm of empire studies represent the official narratives or Histories (with the capital "H"), my dissertation attends to "minor" events and alternative histories deemed negligible or rendered invisible by the grand-narratives of the nation or empire. Instead of addressing the founding events of the official History – such as the birth of the nation or empire, frontier in the conventional sense, America as an immigrant and cosmopolitan nation – the historical and aesthetic moments I examine in the dissertation are constitutive of apparently minor but singular "scenes" of welcome or hospitality to strangers. These

scenes also engage with singular sites of receptions as spaces of hospitality, thereby exploding the enclosure implied in the notion of nation, empire and multicultural cosmopolis as self-contained totalities.

b) *reinventing post-coloniality*: Both paradigms of interpretation identify with and relate themselves in their own unique way to a certain notion of post-coloniality, which is coterminous with the critique of empire, independence and democracy. Instead of using the rather counterproductive term “post-coloniality,” which marks “a tangible break or temporal shift” implying a period after colonialism (King 4) as if the war against imperialism or colonialism were over, I deploy the term “decolonization” in order to discuss hospitality as a decolonizing process of cultivating the art of welcoming subjectivities estranged by colonialism, nation or empire building. Even though some critics use postcoloniality and decolonization synonymously (Kohn and McBride 7; Betts 1; Rothermund 2), many others distinguish them by arguing that unlike the temporal shift implied by the post-colonial, decolonization “entail(s) the intellectual activist project of assailing the antidemocratic policies of imperialism along the global color line and developing new and more egalitarian society” (Luis-Brown 4). In *White Mythologies*, Robert Young relates decolonization to deconstruction (50). Following Young and others who understand by decolonization a process of deconstruction, I seek to reinvent post-coloniality by distinguishing it from its appropriation in the official history of the United States and by deploying it to trace subjectivities involved in welcoming strangers, imagining worlds or spaces of hospitality and inventing new ways of relating and responding to strangers. We must distinguish decolonization from mythical and revolutionary postcolonialism, and from the recent studies examining “postcolonialism as

a methodology or as a practice wherein the local and the international, the provincial and the global, interact and inform each other in their various overlappings and interminglings” (Schueller and Watts 9). While I agree with these critics, I believe their version of postcolonialism, like other versions, devotes its energy to giving “voice to the colonized populace that voiced their resistance long before 1898 *and* to explore the local entanglements of the colonial and postcolonial entanglements” (Schueller and Watts 11). Hospitality as decolonization shifts focus from the resistance model of empire studies to attend to the emergence of subjectivities, spaces and relationships estranged by colonialism and empire.

c) *reconfiguring the stranger*: The revolutionary and empire studies paradigms both put forward a concept of the stranger, which they employ in order to define America and the American. While Washington defines America as a place where the stranger is welcome, the empire studies critics believe that acknowledging and exposing U.S. imperialism reveal the true, wholly unfamiliar and parasitical nature of America from beneath its democratic and beneficent visage. Even when these critics refer to the stranger, it is primarily to explain how empire works and how empire leads to the violent estrangement of people including Native Americans, African Americans and immigrants. While they invoke strangers either to extol or to expose American exceptionalism in order to define what America or the American is, I propose to think about American culture in relation to the figures of the stranger. If the first path leads to a clear demarcation between the American as host and the stranger as guest, the second course complicates the binary by revealing that instead of being an easily identifiable, classifiable autonomous category, the stranger is a split subject who opens the space of hospitality through the very divide

he or she embodies. Instead of sticking to a term or concept to describe this figure, I employ phrases such as guest/host-stranger, host-stranger, guest/host, ghost/guest, or host/ghost not only to mark the ambivalent and complex nature of hospitality in American literature, but also to show the frequent reversals of roles between hosts and guests. Perpetually reversing roles, as Hegel, Fanon, Memmi and others have shown, best illustrates the relationship between citizens and aliens, master and slave, and colonized and colonizers in a context of colonialism, slavery, capitalism and empire. As Emile Benveniste demonstrated long ago, the etymological roots of the term hospitality combine both guest and host. In Latin, for example, “*guest is called hostis and hospes*” (71). Benveniste explains:

The basic term, the Latin *hospes*, is an ancient compound. An analysis of its component elements illuminates two distinct notions which finally link up: *hospes* goes back to *hosti-pet-s*. The second component alternates with *pot-* which signifies ‘master,’ so that the literal sense of *hospes* is the ‘guest-master.’ (72)

Deploying the compound phrases guest/host or guest/host-stranger not only echoes the complex etymological formulations of the term “hospitality,” it also attempts to express or put in words the difficulty inherent in “welcoming strangers.” The various compound syntaxes I use to refer to hospitality in American literature illustrates the unease, uncertainty, uncanniness, ambivalence and even terror involved in thinking about welcoming, invoking and receiving strangers.

The “war” between the democratic and the empire studies paradigms of interpretation permeates American literary and cultural studies in myriad and subtle forms. Leo Marx’s *The Machine in the Garden*, for example, presents the debate in the form of a dialectic between the pastoral and the industrial motifs in American literature,

which, according to Marx, culminates in “two states of feeling” to be reconciled for an “an enlargement of meaning” (29-30). *Love and Death in the American Novel* by Leslie Fiddler presents another front of this war. Fiddler locates in American canonical novels a struggle between love and death in which eventually love gives in to pave the way for gothic horror and creates a “boyish literature” without the “bulwark of women” (xxi). The American novel *sans* love but haunted by death presupposes an author who is forever *beginning* (xix). In *Achieving Our Country*, Richard Rorty locates the war between what he calls the Whitmanian impulse of hope and Poe’s gothic darkness, which for him, resurfaces in literature as two warring projects of national hope and national self-disgust or national self-mockery represented by *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Almanac of the Dead*. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt’s *Empire* depicts another site of this war by distinguishing between Imperialism and Empire. They locate this battle in the U.S. history, which is imperialist as opposed to “imperial” U.S. Constitution, which marks the passage to Empire as it is “constructed on the model of rearticulating an open space and reinventing incessantly diverse and singular relations in networks across an unbounded terrain” (182).

The democratic and postcolonial paradigm of interpretation contains three major currents: *the discourse of the always-already* represented by Lawrence Buell’s claim in “American Literary Emergence as Postcolonial Phenomenon” that as “the first colony to win independence” America is already postcolonial (411). Lawrence diagnoses America’s postcolonial condition by tracing the critiques of exceptionalism found in American Renaissance texts, which, for him, resists the colonial rulers, like texts from other postcolonial nations such as India, from within the psychological limits set by the

rulers themselves (415); *teleology* exemplified in Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land* culminating in the image of the Garden, or in F. O. Matthiessen's detection of "devotion to the possibilities of democracy" in mid-nineteenth century American literature (Matthiessen ix); and *radical new beginning* shown in R. W. B. Lewis's concept of the American Adam as a national character or poet emancipated from history and torn with the ironic and tragic optimism (5, 7) or in Richard Slotkin's regenerated being through violence.

The empire studies paradigm, in contrast, exposes Slotkin's regenerated hero by showing that instead of regeneration, the march of empire in the U.S. bred the "metaphysics of Indian hating" (Drinon 463). The imperial America seeks to control the global resources such as oil, for, to cite David Harvey's *The New Imperialism*, it knows "the global oil spigot can control the global economy" (19). In *Multitude*, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt discuss American exceptionalism in relation to the concept of the exception, and they conclude that after 9/11 and the war on terror we live in "a global state of war," which has become a "*regime of bio power*" (13).

While these two paradigms of interpretations offer as spaces either the virgin land/the garden or the camp produced by the global state of war, my dissertation explores other spaces, frontiers and scenes of contests and contacts, which result from the encounters between strangers. These encounters do not culminate in the totalizing imperial or postcolonial spaces of the garden or the camp. Unlike Hardt and Negri's "multitude" (who they define as the immanent monsters of the flesh producing the "common" to be shared and communicated), I trace the figures of the guest/host-stranger

who may not share any “common” space nor is communication with the figures easily possible.

From Enchantment to Estrangement

I underscored the word “captivity” while describing the two imposing paradigms of interpretation, and referred to the concept of the camp in relation to these two paradigms in order to mark a supplementary significance besides its standard denotation: “imprisonment.” These two competing critical paradigms have not only “imprisoned” American literary and cultural studies, they also have a captivating hold on the critics. While the “anti-imperial” paradigm deploys mythical enchantment to advance its claim that America is the Promised Land, the city upon the hill, the land of plenty, and the land of freedom, democracy and refuge; the imperial paradigm implements its own charms not only by seeking to bust on the mythical view, but also by producing an equally enchanting and all-encompassing critique of and grand-narrative about empire.

The obsession of enchantment and spectacles in critics who believe that America is an empire is well known. Michael Rogin, for example, distinguishes between the historic and the postmodern empire in terms of spectacles. He notes that the “secret” mechanisms of American empire are hidden in plain sight as spectacles such as movies (Rogin 499). In her equally captivating work, *The Transit of Empire*, Jodi Byrd equates colonization to “states of enchantment.” Recalling Mark Twain’s nostalgic description of Captain Cook in *Roughing It* and the larger context of Cook’s voyages to the Pacific, Byrd remarks that as “death omen and dead man, in his state of enchantment as well as his state of possession, [Cook] exemplified the magical thinking of European imperialism that sought to resurrect “discovered” lands into imperial ownership” (22). Edward Said is

subtler in his captivating analysis of the ascendancy of America as empire. After having demystified the Orient himself from its European invention as a magical place of “romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” in *Orientalism* (1), in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said complains that scholarship now faces “demystification of all cultural constructs” to the extent that we “cannot speak of history today” without employing theoretical jargons, which themselves are only abstractions or demystifications bypassing “the confluences between their [the theorists’] findings and the liberationist energies [source of enchantment and authenticity] released by resistance cultures in the Third World” (Said 304).

By seeking “release” of American literary and cultural studies from the captivating hold of these two critical paradigms – the revolutionary, post-colonial or democratic paradigm and the imperial paradigm – I do not mean seeking a utopic space of hospitality. Rather I wish to open their totalizing structures so as to extend and re-address three of both paradigms’ primary concerns: a) their relationship to post-coloniality, which they also propose to be the model of relationship between nations and individuals; b) their claim that they have produced or intend to produce a post-colonial, democratic and cosmopolitan world; c) their invocation of the figure of the stranger who is not only instrumental in defining themselves as post-colonial and democratic but also an agent of creating a democratic world. In other words, when they invoke the stranger, they use this figure as an instrument either to achieve universal hospitality (in the mythical and post-colonial paradigm) or to acknowledge empire (in the empire studies paradigm). The stranger in these paradigms is a ritual for “welcoming oneself,” that is welcoming oneself as universally hospitable or critical of imperialism. To break their

captivating hold would be something like the Levinasian move of “escaping,” which, in *On Escape*, Levinas defines as “excedence” or the “need to get out of oneself, that is *to break that most radical and unalterably binding chains, the fact that I (moi) is oneself*” (55). Escaping involves a movement in which the stranger precedes the “I,” that is, the stranger is the host, who receives the “I” as a guest.

In order to reconfigure the guest/host-stranger, I recall here three theoretical approaches to the stranger. In his frequently cited essay, “The Stranger,” Georg Simmel distinguishes the stranger from the wanderer, who “comes today and goes tomorrow” compared to the stranger, “who comes today and stays tomorrow” (Simmel 361). For him, the stranger is one who “is fixed within a certain spatial circle – or within a group whose boundaries are analogous to spatial boundaries” even though the stranger’s position within the boundary or group is that of an outsider who brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it” (361). Simmel’s concept of the stranger resembles Washington’s understanding of the stranger, for they both believe that the stranger is an outsider who potentially becomes a member and in doing so enriches the community or nation by bringing in something that does not exist in the community before. In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Julia Kristeva presents a more complex psychoanalytical dynamic involving the stranger. Drawing from Freud’s analysis of the unconscious in terms of “the other scene” within us, she notes that psychoanalysis enables us to experience “the journey into the strangeness of the other and of oneself” (182). She asks, “How could one tolerate a foreigner if one did not know one was a stranger to oneself” (182)? If Simmel’s stranger is a member coming from outside and enriching the community, Kristeva’s stranger institutes an internal fissure in the psyche

of a subject, thereby making it difficult to decide where one's self ends and the "self" of the stranger begins. Yet Kristeva restricts one's relationship to the stranger to tolerating, living together and knowing. In contrast to both Simmel and Kristeva's characterization of the stranger as a possible member or agent to enrich the already self-contained society or self, Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch's "phenomenology of the stranger" offers a more complicated picture of the figure. They write:

The Stranger is the *mi-lieu* between the *non-lieu* of the nameless and the *lieu* of the named. It occupies the liminal in-between spanning the poles of Foreigner and Other. The Stranger may be radically Other at one point in a relationship and identifiable Foreign at another. As Other, it is so unexpected and transcendent that it eludes our knowledge. It becomes radically unseeable and unforeseeable. At this point masks slip, the Foreigner loses face, absents itself without leave, absolves itself from habitation and name, it ceases to be recognizably foreign and becomes totally alien. (5-6).

By positioning the Stranger in the continuum between an identifiable foreigner and transcendent Other, Kearney and Semonovitch make it impossible to "place" or "identify" the figure as a guest, an immigrant, or as the same who shares my rights, privileges or my world.

Kearney and Semonovitch's understanding of the stranger derives from Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida's meditations on the subject, especially their works dwelling on hospitality. Following Derrida's argument in *Of Hospitality* that the stranger or foreigner holds the key to the domicile of the host, thereby becoming "the host's host" (123), in the dissertation, I trace in American literature the figure of the guest/host-stranger, who leads us to a radically different line of argument than the ones imposed by the post-colonial and the imperial paradigms of interpretation. In the term "guest/host-stranger," the solidus or back-slash implies the split subjectivity of the stranger, whereas the hyphen signifies that the stranger is a being always in relation to

others, to the world, and also to different constitutive parts of himself or herself. I propose this figure as an antidote both to the mythical understanding of hospitality in American culture, which distinguishes between the old immigrant as host and the newcomer as guest, and to the characterization of the immigrant as guest in postcolonial theory. This term, “guest/host-stranger,” which is literally more than one term, strung together by an impossible equation or relation, enables me to visualize scenes of welcome in literary texts that cannot be categorized neatly either as post-colonial or imperial.

While my dissertation project is indebted to Derrida and Levinas’s theorization of hospitality, my approach differs from theirs in one key aspect: while Derrida’s conceptualization of hospitality *culminates* in constructing “the cities of asylum” providing “unconditional welcome” to writers; and while Levinas’s “cities of refuge,” as he proposes them in *Beyond the Subject*, aspires to be “a science of society” leading to the “longing for Zion” (52), thereby making them wholly transcendent and utopic, my understanding of hospitality in the dissertation is “grounded” not on one structure of welcome but many, and all of them in relation to the hegemonic structures such as nation and empire. Cognizant of the fact that both Levinas and Derrida underscore the relationship between their cities and the world, I see that their rendition of this relation leads them to imagine a utopic and cosmopolitan world and (in Levinas’s case) an exclusively religious world. Tracing in literature the figure of the guest/host-stranger, his or her relationship to the world, to history, to time, and to others make it impossible to conjure up any one or a utopic world. As my reading in the following chapters will show, the issue of hospitality in American literature is smeared in blood and tears (as we will

see in Cooper's texts) and haunted with demonic figures (as in Morrison's texts). It roams through the ruins of history and wanders around the frontiers of resistance and reception.

Two particular texts have helped me extend both the modernist and deconstructionist notions of hospitality: Tracy McNulty's feminist revision, *The Hostess*, and Mireille Rosello's *Postcolonial Hospitality*. Yet, while McNulty teaches me to heed the question of the sexual difference in hospitality by moving beyond Levinas's equation of home, hospitality and woman, her focus on the feminine as extralegal "thing" restricts her from treating the question of gender and sexuality by moving beyond the contestatory gesture of analyzing the "thingly" quality of the feminine, or as she puts it, femininity as "a possession or property 'internal' to man" (xxvii). Similarly, Rosello helps me see through the supplanting of hospitality by the economic interests of the West, which treats immigrants as guest workers and "obscures the fact that the reason why they were 'invited' had nothing to do with hospitality" (Rosello 9). While I agree with Rosello's exposition, but I believe that her discussion of hospitality in the context of European legal provision for postcolonial guest workers is not wholly applicable to immigrants in the United States, nor does it help us engage with sites and subjects of welcome even within the immigrant narratives.

In moving from Simmel and Kristeva through Kearney and Semonovitch, we also move to a more complicated conceptualization of the stranger which starts from a notion of an outsider-foreigner searching admission into the group to Kristeva's internally divided foreigner who puts any stable and sovereign notions of home and self into question, to Kearney and Semonovitch's phenomenology in which the figure of the stranger heads towards an unidentifiable, unforeseeable and transcendent being eluding

our attempts to categorize and even internally lodge him or her. To these analyses of the figure, I would add that the stranger not only takes us to the limits of our knowledge and our sense of time and place, thereby estranging us from our sense of self and being at home; in its most intense and compelling “appearance,” the figure of the stranger also represents the shifting “ground” for all beings and every mode of belonging. By appearing at the limits of our knowledge and sense of spatiality and foreseeability, this figure bewilders and dislocates us; and instead of endowing us with the sovereign power of the host (*contra* Washington’s measuring of the stranger’s worthiness for admission), through his or her unexpectedness and facelessness (faceless to us), he or she estranges us and renders us homeless. In short, instead of just being a guest, the figure of the stranger is also a host, the one who promises us welcome and refuge. In fact this figure, whom I call the guest/host-stranger, is a stranger precisely because he or she opens a space of indistinction that cannot be claimed by the conventional notions of host and guest. Himself or herself without a world, without any recognizable or identifiable form of identity and subjectivity, this figure of the guest/host-stranger is inextricable from any welcome or from any space or threshold of hospitality. Hospitality, in this sense, implies welcoming this figure of the guest/host-stranger who not only dictates, *pace* Washington or Kaplan, the terms of our relationship with him or her, but also reveals the space or world of hospitality, which cannot be subsumed by or conflated with any notions of community, nation or empire.

Chapter Division

The Preface of the dissertation, “Guests in Unexpected Places,” narrates my personal introduction to American literature and culture and to hospitality through

American Peace Corps volunteers, who arrived in my village in Nepal to teach English. I situate this personal encounter in the larger historical and theoretical contexts, and discuss the Peace Corps program in relation to discourses of transnationalism and global America emerging from the works by Americanists including Amy Kaplan, Paul Lauter and Brian Edwards and Dilip Gaonkar. This chapter seeks virtual connections among transnationalism, the Peace Corps program and Thoreau's concept of the uncommon lyceum, and reads *Walden* as a transnational exchange of ideas, ideologies and peoples in which hospitality plays a crucial role. I locate two contradictory impulses and figures in Thoreau: an elitist and settler colonial figure who intends to "nativize" himself as the sovereign host at Walden; and a strange host who is himself also a guest, a "guest/host-stranger" who opposes materialism, expansionism, slavery, and by implications, settler colonialism.

This personal overture paves the way for the first chapter, "Poetics of Hospitality in American Literature," which locates the contradictory impulses to nativize as a sovereign host and to evoke the decolonizing figure of a "guest/host-stranger" in Walt Whitman and Lydia Sigourney's poetry. The chapter probes how both Whitman and Sigourney relate hospitality not only to nation-building but also to its colonial and imperial contexts. The second chapter, "Tears of Welcome: Mourning and Hospitality in Cooper, Bird and Silko," takes the question of welcoming strangers by at once critiquing colonial estrangement and evoking a decolonizing figure of the guest/host-stranger to the terrain of affective hospitality. It revisits notions of American Jeremiah, sentimentalism and theories of mourning in order to examine scenes of mourning and locating the dead in Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, Bird's *Nick of the Woods*, and Silko's *Almanac of*

the Dead. Though not strictly a nineteenth century novel, Silko's *Almanac* chronicles the history of colonization and frontier in the Americas. I argue that hospitality coincides with the politics of mourning indigenous Americans in Cooper, Bird and Silko's narratives.

The third chapter, "Hospitality in Melville and Holt," opens again a transnational site of encounter and hospitality between Americans and Pacific Islanders in order to discuss Herman Melville's travel narrative, *Typee*, and John Dominis Holt's *Waimea Summer*. Melville's semi-autobiographical *Typee* critiques Euro-American imperialism in the Pacific; yet his romanticization of the cannibal islanders fails to reciprocate the islanders' hospitality, thereby weakening his discourse of decolonization in the Pacific. Holt's semi-autobiographical narrative, in contrast, narrates how indigenous Hawaiians attempt to come to terms with their alienation from land, history and culture in the wake of Hawaii's annexation. Chapter four, "Un-furnishing Hospitality in Willa Cather's Novels," uses Cather's notion of the unfurnished novel in order to rethink the figure of the immigrant as a subject who "un-furnishes." As opposed to the conventional understanding of the immigrant as pioneering settler or ingredient to the multicultural melting pot, Cather redefines her as a "guest/host-stranger," who redraws her relationship to the frontier and to the nation by imagining America as an un-furnished space haunted by loss and absences. "Welcoming One's Own: Hospitality in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" concludes my dissertation by examining Morrison's spectral hospitality. I argue that Morrison conjures up *Beloved* as revenant for Sethe to welcome back what she (Sethe) lost to slavery.

Situated at the intersection of multiple disciplines including literature, history, philosophy and cultural studies, my dissertation engages four different critical discourses – theories of hospitality, theories of empire, American studies and postcolonial theory – in order to examine the distinct yet interconnected sites of hospitality across historical periods and geographical locations. Besides illuminating a hitherto overlooked aspect of American history and culture, the dissertation provides a new direction to the study of American literature by working at the interface of critical theories, cultural studies and comparative ethnic studies, and introduces a new terminology for becoming more aware of the complexity of decolonization.

Chapter I:

“A meal pleasantly set”: Poetics of Hospitality in American Literature

This is a meal pleasantly set, this is the meat
and drink for natural hunger
It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous
- I make appointments with all
I will not have a single person slighted or left away
The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited
- the heavy lipped slave is invited,
the venerealee is invited,
There shall be no difference between them and the rest.
- Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman is perhaps the first American poet for whom poetry is an invitation to a “national” feast. The “table” of celebration and feast, which Whitman pleasantly sets to showcase his cosmopolitan conviviality in *Leaves of Grass*, also demonstrates the centrality of hospitality in American literature and culture. While “nativist” writers such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman believe that America is already too much hospitable, and condemn anyone with a cosmopolitan point of view as “a man of peculiar tastes,” who “wants to turn his home either into an asylum or a melting pot” (Gilman 290), for Whitman the feast to which “all” are invited is part of the concert that is America. For Whitman, hospitality – like the pleasantly set meal for “natural hunger” or like the grass that grows without boundaries – is naturally and organically related to America (Whitman 32).

This organic relationship between hospitality and America distinguishes Whitman's notion of hospitality from the existing discourses on hospitality in the West.³¹ From antiquity to the present, from biblical times to contemporary philosophical discourses on the figure of the stranger by thinkers including Immanuel Kant, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida, hospitality in the West is almost exclusively restricted to the figure of the foreigner. In the Hebrew Bible, for instance, Abraham represents a nomad "blessed with extending hospitality to strangers;" and in the New Testament, Jesus relates hospitality to human mercy (Luke 10.20-37) while at the same time himself "enjoying the hospitality of private homes" (Malherbe 293).

While the Biblical notion of hospitality functions as an interpersonal and moral act, Kant's cosmopolitan hospitality, as he develops it in *Perpetual Peace*, is a political tool to ensure peace among nations by safeguarding the rights of the foreigner. Derrida's deconstructionist hospitality moves beyond Kant's legal mechanisms and toward "unconditional hospitality," which is primarily devoted to figures – "exiles," the deported, the expelled, the rootless, the stateless, lawless nomads, absolute foreigners" – that are excluded from the conventional legal protection of the state (Derrida 87-89).

Though different from one another, all of these concepts of hospitality refer to the figure of the foreigner. Besides continuing this tradition of welcoming foreigners, Whitman also raises the additional question of domestic hospitality i. e., hospitality among people belonging to the same nation or community. In fact, Whitman conceives of

³¹ Comparing hunger to hospitality and eating or feasting to welcoming illustrates Whitman's organicism. Richard Harter Fogle, who describes the poet as "the most extreme, the most expansively daring of vital organicists" (Fogle 90), explains that Whitman not only identifies art with life and nature, but for him art is word made flesh, and that flesh or body in turn is America. Fogle notes that the "archetypal organic body of Whitman's vision is America," which is grounded on the very "organic dogma: that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (93).

hospitality as a way of belonging to one's community and nation, to one's self and the other, and to the world and the universe as a whole. While Whitman's understanding of hospitality encompasses both the interpersonal or ethical dimension of hospitality (as seen in the classical and Biblical concepts of hospitality) and the political aspect of hospitality (as seen in the cosmopolitan and deconstructionist hospitality), it also reinvents the politics and ethics of hospitality by extending the discourse to include nation and subjectivity. Whitman teaches us to re-imagine and re-contextualize the interpersonal and moral understanding of hospitality (which is directed toward the figure of the foreigner) by redirecting our attention to domestic and political issues such as nation, slavery, citizenship and democracy. As I show in this dissertation, by evoking hospitality as the politics, aesthetics and ethics of belonging to the nation, American literature as a whole calls for a critical examination of various sites of hospitality traversing the spaces and events of colonialism, empire, slavery, and immigration. In other words, the critical lens of hospitality not only enables us to understand the nation, national character and empire, it also reveals the way American literature reinvents the politics of belonging by engaging with the multiple sites of hospitality and by invoking the multiple subjects of hospitality such as citizens and strangers, and guests and hosts.

In this chapter I locate in Whitman's poetry four distinct sites of hospitality or abuse of hospitality in the frontier, slavery, immigration and the extension of frontier in the Pacific. While I acknowledge that Whitman's evocation of the elusive "I" frequently changes roles and moves from being the host to strangers to being the guest; yet his ambivalent poetics of hospitality attempts to consolidate a cosmic subject as the host aspiring to and capable of containing strangers. As a result, Whitman's poetics fails to

attend to the figure of the guest/host-stranger, for which I revisit Lydia Sigourney's poetry. Sigourney address the guest/host-stranger as a being-in-question, therefore yet to arrive or yet to be be made fully present.

"Song of Myself," the first long section in *Leaves of Grass*, opens with the speaker announcing that he wants to "sing" and "celebrate" himself in the poem. And that celebration takes place not only by inviting the speaker's soul, but also by welcoming the readers and everyone else represented by the generic addressee, "you":³²

I celebrate myself, and sing myself
And what I assume you shall assume
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you
I loaf and invite my soul
I lean and loaf at my ease observing a spear of summer grass (26).

Even though a few of Whitman's readers have noted that *Leaves of Grass* "was conceived in a spirit of universal hospitality" (Selincourt 94), none of them systematically considers and examines the question of hospitality in his poetry. As we see in these opening lines of the text, for Whitman, celebrating "myself" entails hosting a collective and intimate poetic performance to which he invites all including his soul and his readers.

Numerous critics have examined the structural and thematic patterns of *Leaves of Grass*. In *Reminiscences of Walt Whitman*, William Sloane Kennedy compares *Leaves of Grass* to a musical symphony or trilogy "celebrating the Body, Democracy, and Religion" (Kennedy 100). In *Leaves of Grass: America's Lyric Epic of Self and*

³² The question of direct address to the audience in Whitman's poetry has been thoroughly discusses by many critics including Kerry Larson, who calls this body of poetic enunciations the "Whitman's second person poetry" (7). Larson also points out that the question of addressing the audience through the second person poetry is more than just an address as it reveals Whitman's investment not just in "didacticism" (Larson 7), but also in establishing contact with the other (Larson 10). Denis Donoghue notes that a "life of continuous intimacy, a life of contact, is Whitman's ideal human image" (33)

Democracy, James E. Miller argues that the basic tripartite structure of the epic consists of the creation of the Prototype of the New World Personality; its engagement with the time and land in the nineteenth century America; and the preoccupation with the spiritual law (33). John M. Nagle contends that each section in “Song of Myself” begins with a conflict, reaches a climax and ends with fulfillment. According to him, “Song of Myself” starts with the poet’s focus on the self, his initial “penetration” of the world out there, and identification of the poet; and it ends with the poet’s revelation of Being, his flight into the Unknown and his satisfaction (Nagle 27-28).

These critics and many others who follow them, unravel some of the predominant themes and preoccupations in *Leaves of Grass*, and they show that Whitman’s celebration of “myself” has a political, sexual and spiritual context in which “myself” includes at once America and the poet himself. Yet they overlook one of the key structures of the poem: a series of scenes of welcome; Whitman’s construction of the lyric “I”, its multifaceted transactions with “You,” on the one hand, and with America on the other; and his projection of a transcendental subject capable of containing or hosting multitudes. In this chapter I examine Whitman’s “Song of Myself” by tracing various scenes of hospitality, including welcoming the New World, the newly independent nation together with its new subjectivities and the new form of poetry, which is essential to chant songs celebrating the new nation. By structuring *Leaves of Grass* around hospitality Whitman not only celebrates the arrival of a brand new nation, new poetics and new self, but he also suggests that relating to others, opening to others and being exposed to others, which are crucial aspects in all acts and scenes of hospitality, constitutes the central experience in America.

Leaves of Grass is structured around this hospitable relationship to others. This relationship with others moves from being a travel companion, looking at and listening to, sharing with and contacting others, to establishing more intimate contact and experiences with others. Such an intimacy may include a range of experiences from intimate knowledge of and sympathy for others, explicitly physical and sexual relationships, to embodiments and mergers of selves and religious and mystical unions with one's soul, god, nature, land, people and spirits.

The speaker begins his song as a host who wants to celebrate by inviting everyone and equally sharing his joys as well as resources with everyone: "For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you" (26). Shortly before Whitman describes the meal pleasantly/equally (depending on the edition of *Leaves of Grass*) set "for the wicked just the same as the righteous," and to which the speaker invites the kept women, sponges, the thief and the heavy-lipped slave, Whitman makes his poetry a site of hospitable sharing:

These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands,
They are not original with me,
If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing or next to nothing
...
This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is,
This is the common air that bathes the globe. (40)

Whitman welcomes the wisdom of all ages and all lands, thereby defining the scene of writing as an invitation and reception of thoughts from all over the world. "These" in the stanza above refers to Whitman's inclusive vision of the feast, a vision which the poet imposes on America. What the speaker receives from all ages and lands, he duly shares with his readers: "if they are not yours as much as mine, they are nothing." This poetics

of hospitality constitutes the basis for Whitman's vision of shared earth symbolized by the grass, which grows "wherever the land is and the water is."

Welcome through sharing, and its gradual intensification towards the embodiment of and merger with the other are even more unequivocal in another important scene of hospitality in "Song of Myself" – the speaker's welcome of a fugitive slave:

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside
I heard his motion crackling the twigs of the woodpile,
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak
And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him,
And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and bruise'd feet,
And gave him a room that entered from my own, and gave him some
coarse clean clothes
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles (34)

Welcoming the fugitive slave provides a poetic alternative to the historical act of the capture of a fugitive slave, Anthony Burns, in Boston, and his subsequent return to captivity in Virginia in 1854 due to the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.³³ Through this scene Whitman not only defines hospitality as sharing, he also suggests that it involves caring and nursing. The fact that the speaker boards the runaway slave in the room "that entered from [his] own" implies that the host receives the guest as if the latter were the "master" of the house. Besides sharing his house with the slave, the speaker also nurses the wounds of the exhausted fugitive. The speaker fills the bath tub for him to wash the fugitive's sweated and bruised body, and puts plaster on the galls of his neck and ankles. The bruised, excoriated, and wounded body of the fugitive finds an echo in the speaker, who feels exposed to the wounds of the runaway slave. This exposure to the

³³ Whitman's biographer David Reynolds notes that the poet was "appalled by the Burns case" and was compelled to satirize the federal dragons for their "tyrannical violation of the idea of liberty" (n.p.).

other impels him to keep his door half-open as if the speaker was expecting the fugitive and waiting for his arrival. By recalling that through the “swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak,” Whitman’s speaker makes waiting, witnessing, nursing and caring essential to the act of hospitality. This intimate reception of the fugitive also leads the speaker to another key aspect of welcome – merging with and embodying the other, which leads him to announce a few sections later in the poem that he is the slave himself:

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs,
Hell and despair are upon me, crack and again crack the marksmen,
I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore dribs, thinn’d with the ooze of my
skin,
I fall on the weeds and stones. . .
Agonies are one of my changes of garments,
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself become the
wounded person. (58)

Kenneth Price notes that Whitman’s announcement that he is the hounded slave “enacts” the “process of sympathetic identification” (Price 107). In fact, the speaker’s embodiment of the fugitive slave is more than just the process of sympathetic identification. He seldom expresses sympathy for he is “[n]o sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart from them” (46). Sympathizing, even the kind that connects the sympathizer to the sympathized, also sets the two apart. The speaker, in contrast, never asks the wounded how he feels; instead, the speaker endures the violent “whip-stocks” of the riders (58). In other words, in embodying the fugitive slave – giving room to the slave in his own body – the speaker exposes himself to the violence of the slave catchers.

In the first scene of welcoming the fugitive, the speaker performs his duty as host, while at the same time acting as if the guest were the master of the house in which the host is more like a nurse, a caretaker. In the second scene of merger and embodiment, the host himself embodies the guest, thereby conflating the host-guest, and by extension, the

master-slave binary. Instead of a simple process of sympathetic identification, the speaker's becoming guest represents physical exposure to the other: the speaker is literally touched by the violence of the horse riders. Whitman has already shown that he deploys his voice in order to welcome the other through new modes of embodiment. "Speech is the twin of my vision," he claims, adding that his own speech "provokes [him] forever, it says sarcastically: *Walt you contain enough, why don't you let it out then*" (48)? Whitman's voice reaches where even his vision cannot, for with "the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volumes of worlds" (48). In encompassing the world and embodying people by reaching out through his voice, Whitman again equates the site of writing or chanting with that of welcoming. Whether he embodies by letting out what he contains or by listening to every sound in order to "accrue what [he] hears into this song" (48), Whitman confesses that a "tenor large and fresh as the creation fills [him]" (49), for his is not a self-enclosed entity:

Mine is no callous shell
I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or stop
They seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me. (50)

Comparing himself, albeit anachronistically, to an amphibian cyborg with porous shell covered by instant conductors that "seize" every object to "harmlessly" lead it through him, Whitman projects himself as a threshold or door through which he welcomes everything and everyone.³⁴ It is his porosity or openness and exposure to the world outside that allows him to embody the wounded and hounded slave.

Through me many long dumb voices,
Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves,
Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs,

³⁴ Harold Aspiz locates various scientific and medical sources Whitman uses to create his powerful poetic persona (41, 126). Robert J. Scholnick thinks that Whitman makes "use of scientific ideas to support his extraordinary conception of the scope and power of the poet" (386).

Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,
And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and of the father-
stuff. . .
Through me forbidden voices,
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigured. (46)

In *The Pragmatic Whitman: Reimagining American Democracy*, Stephen John Mack interprets these lines, connecting them to Whitman's claim that his speech reaches where his vision cannot. Mack argues that the poet's pragmatic and revolutionary notion of language constitutes the very basis of American democracy. Whitman's "awareness of the constructed nature of all representation" enables him to "invent a democratic mythology" (Mack 5). For Mack the mythological language of representation is inextricable from democracy. More than serving this representational purpose, however, the act of listening to the voices animates the mechanical "I." In other words, the speaker does not represent the prisoners, the slaves and the voiceless generations of outlaws; instead their voices brings him back to life. In translating and transfiguring their voice, the speaker also enlivens himself. The touch of these voices awakens new identity:

Is this then a touch? Quivering me to a new identity,

Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,
Traacherous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,
My flesh and blood playing out lightening to strike what is hardly different
from myself
On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs
Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip
Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial
Depriving me of my best as for a purpose,
Unbuttoning my clothes, holding me by the bare waist (50)

The touch of the other, the voice of the other and one's exposure to the other constitute the basis for one's self or identity. What is conventionally understood as Whitman's

“lyric I” or the “national character”³⁵ functions here as the threshold or the horizon of expectation where the other appears or arrives and creates the possibility of welcoming and reception. For Whitman, the lyric I or self remains impossible to imagine without first the touch or voice of the other or without submitting oneself to the other’s licentious liberty and even violence. It is this threshold or possibility of hospitality that Whitman characterizes as “kosmic” or cosmopolitan in section 24 of “Song of Myself”:

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,
Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding,
No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart from them,
No more modest than immodest
Unscrew the locks from the doors!
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs! (45-46)

In presenting himself as a new self – cosmopolitan and fully and sensually alive – Whitman suggests that there is no self without first embodying the voice of the other or without first being touched by the other. The chanting and celebration with which Whitman started his song, thus, culminates in the announcement or arrival of this new self born from the touch and voice of the other. Whitman celebrates the awakening of this new self or identity for which his song becomes the chant of welcome; yet, as soon as the new identity emerges, the speaker assumes the role of a menacing visitor for whom the whole world must keep its doors open: “Unscrew the locks from the doors! Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs.” As soon as the new identity is born, the speaker assumes this new role of a visitor who seeks entry into homes even if that involves forcefully and invasively unscrewing the doors from the jambs.

Whitman further describes the violent arrival of the new visitor by evoking a giant sea monster clutching the whole world under its grasp:

³⁵ “The formation of a noble national character,” argues Dowden “to be itself the source of literature, art, statesmanship, is that which above all else he [Whitman] desires” (Dowden 66).

My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-gaps,
I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents
I am afoot with my vision. (53)

The vision that drives the menacing visitor demanding forced entry gives way to the catalogues – list of names and activities associated with westering and colonizing. The speaker is afoot with the vision of log huts, camping, gardening and farming, prospecting, gold-digging, sugar plantation, and hunting. So much so that he announces his arrival as the savior of the world:

Magnifying and applying come I,
Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,
Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,
Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his grandson,
Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha
In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf, the crucifix
engraved. (65)

Unlike the earlier host who welcomed the thoughts from all over the world to compose his song, the new “host” or “visitor” emerging here represents a transcendental subject who claims to encompass and enclose the whole world. In contrast to the new identity quivered by the touch and voice of the other, the speaker’s transcendental subjectivity overwhelms him with his expansionist desire to cover all continents and seize all seas. How does this drive to expand and enclose shift Whitman’s poetics from hospitality to empire and manifest destiny?

As early as the 1940s, readers identified this imperial tendency in Whitman’s poetry. In “Walt Whitman and Manifest Destiny,” Henry Nash Smith argues that from the first appearance of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855 to the end of his life, Whitman “returned again and again to the themes of the imperial mission of the United States and the peculiar role of the West within American society” (Smith 373). For Smith the theme of

Westward movement exposes the imperial tendency of Whitman's poetry; for Quentin Anderson, it lies not in his recurring theme of westering but in his notion of a totalitarian self. Anderson argues that even though many historians believe that a national impulse drives the imperial project of the United States, in fact, "[o]ur dreams of empire have had to do with imperial selves" (18), which he defines as a literary cultivation of desocialization in which a sense of self emerges whose primal inquiry shifts from "What role shall I be given?" to another, "What world am I to possess?" (4). Whitman's poetry, for Anderson, espouses imperial self because it "is a case of all or nothing: a total imaginative victory or a total artistic and personal defeat" (93). To "make use of the world was to render it tributary to the empire of the self without giving any hostages" (93). In Anderson's view, Whitman's fascination with welcoming the multitudes resembles hostage-taking rather than hospitality, for the imperial self that Whitman resurrects in his poem concerns more about possessing the world than about sharing it.

Betsy Erlikka's essay "Walt Whitman and Imperialism" also unravels the paradox of democracy and imperialism in Whitman's poetry. Erlikka contends that at the very moment when Whitman "seeks to be most inclusive, universal, and democratic, his poetry becomes most powerful – and most powerfully dangerous – in silencing and denying rights, liberties, and differences of others" (57). For Erlikka, Whitman's celebration of an ideal artisan republic of strong, healthy, and virtuous farmers and laborers is inextricable from "a national imperial policy of expansion, conquest, and violation" (57). While Smith and Anderson locate in Whitman a direct association with imperialism, Erlikka's reading makes the connection subtler by exposing a contradiction: the moment Whitman champions the cause of the artisan and the working class, his

poetry becomes at once powerful and dangerous in the sense that it neutralizes the purported difference between American democracy and empire.

Whitman's desire to skirt sierras, put palms over continents, western and colonize by assuming the magnified dimensions of divine and sovereign figures resembles what Lacan would call the drive (*Trieb*). In *Écrits* Lacan defines the drives as our myths, cautioning that the drives as myths are not unreal, rather "it is the real that the drives mythify" (724). However, as Lacan in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* points out, the drives mythify reality, but they should not be understood as "a reference to some ultimate given, something archaic, primal" (162). Whitman's mythified notion of cosmic self emanates from the drive (*Trieb*). This reference to Lacan here is neither a theoretical imposition nor a discursive diversion. Lacan himself cites Whitman while elaborating his concept of the *Trieb*. In *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan juxtaposes Freud's notion of the drive and Whitman's notion of bodily union and harmony with the world. Lacan argues that Whitman dreams of "a total, complete, epidermic contact between one's body and the world," and the poet hopes "for a revelation of harmony following the disappearance of the perpetual, insinuating presence of the oppressive feeling of some original curse" (93). Though Lacan distinguishes Whitman's "dream" of total contact or harmony between one's body and the world from Freud's notion of sublimation (which, for Lacan, is the source of the unconscious as well as the drive), Whitman's dream, in fact, works more like the Lacanian drive. While hoping for this revelation of harmony what the "dream" reveals the lacunae between the hope of harmony or hospitality and its "mythical" drive. "The

satisfaction of the *Trieb*,” Lacan explains in *The Seminar*, is “paradoxical, since it seems to occur elsewhere than where its aim is” (111).

Lacan dismisses Whitman’s desire to transfigure as mythical figures such as Zeus, Jehovah, Hercules or Brahma by calling it Whitman’s poetic dream of total harmony with the world. Lacan believes that it differs from what he calls the drive. His interpretation of Whitman’s desire for harmony simply as the latter’s dream of total contact with the world, however, risks overlooking the internal contradictions underlying the poet’s drive towards mythical transfiguration. Exposure of these contradictions is possible if we examine Whitman’s desire for total harmony as the drive and its sublimation. Whitman’s lyric “I” undergoes mythical transformation, for as Lacan reminds us, drives “mythify” the real. On the one hand, the drive evokes the heroic and mythical transformation of the person; on the other hand, it initiates a circuit in which the drive fails to bring satisfaction as it occurs or takes place where its aim is not. In other words, the drive toward mythical transfiguration for total contact or harmony with the world misses its aim through sublimation.

The “satisfaction” of Whitman’s desire for absolute harmony or hospitable oneness with the world remains frustrated and partial because the satisfaction seems to occur elsewhere than where its aim is. In other words, Whitman’s desire ends not in the achievement of harmony and hospitality with the world in which the mythic hero or transcendental subject covers the continents, but in a frustrated drive for possession. The frustrated drive not only renders the fulfillment partial but it also elevates the object of the possession into the Thing (*das Ding*) itself. Instead of being the Thing itself, Whitman’s drive for welcoming the world through embodiment and his dream of

universal and cosmopolitan hospitality merely represents the “mythified” version of the real.

As Lacan clarifies in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, the Thing (*das Ding*), which is the “absolute Other of the subject” can only be found “as something missed” (58). The Thing is at the center of the subjective world only in the sense that it is excluded. Lacan adds that ‘in reality *das Ding* has to be posited as exterior, as the prehistoric Other that is impossible to forget” but also impossible to know, in short, something strange to me, although it is at the heart of me (71). Whitman’s drive for total contact and harmony is in fact a missed encounter with the Other, the prehistoric stranger, who resides at the heart and yet who remains unknown. If Whitman’s lyric I represents America itself, what it “excludes” in its drive for total contact is indigenous Americans. Whitman not only excludes the Native American, he displaces this “pre-historic” stranger.

Maurice Kenny points to Whitman’s indifference to Native Americans. He writes that Whitman “closed his ears and shut his eyes to the Indian’s death cries” (113). The “exclusion” in the Lacanian sense of the term that I locate in Whitman differs from Kenny’s charges, for the satisfaction of the drive resulting in exclusion reveals not indifference but Whitman’s libidinal investment and obsession with “Indians.” As Ed Folsom’s insightful inquiry on Whitman’s complex relationship with Native Americans reveals, the poet was “aware that the civilization that repressed the savage or that pretended that savage did not exist within its boundaries was an artificial and self-blinding nation” (61); and Whitman’s America is not a self-blinding nation, for it does “absorb the Indian” via poetry (98). Recalling an instance from Whitman’s report on the Indian Bureau in which the poet introduces himself to a Native American gathering as

“poet-chief,” James Nolan argues that Whitman not only felt “universal solidarity” toward “American tribes” (61-62), he also admired Indian wise men or shamans, who function as a “close-parallel” in Whitman’s poetics (62). James adds that “American Indian poetics served as a model for the poetry of Walt Whitman” (4). While Folsom finds that the figure of the “savage” inhabits Whitman’s poetry, Nolan believes that its form is grounded in Native American poetics. “Indians” represent that absolute Other or *das Ding* in Whitman, whose solidarity, friendship and hospitality the poet highly covets; and when he fails, through catalogs, repetitions, direct addresses, and shifting desires desire for merger and union with multitudes, he repeats his drive for total contact. Section 39 of “Song of Myself” illustrates Whitman’s drive for the companionship, intimacy and hospitality of Indians:

The friendly and flowing savage, who is he?
Is he waiting for civilization, or past it and mastering it?

Is he some Southwesterner rais’d out-doors? Is he Kanadian?
Is he from the Mississippi country? Iowa, Oregon, California?
The mountains? prairie-life, bush-life? or sailor from the sea?

Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire him,
They desire he should like them, touch them, speak to them,
stay with them. (63-64)

In this section, Whitman not only desires the friendship, intimacy and hospitality of the Indian, he also realizes that that is precisely what is missing in his relationship with the savage, hence the series of questions he asks about the identity and location of the savage. As Larson clarifies, when Whitman asks questions, he does “not expect answers, only assent,” for Whitman’s soft spoken and “coaxing interrogations bear witness to a certain pre-emptive impulse” (Larson 12). His questions about Indians are pre-emptive in

the sense that they are raised not to interrogate his assumptions but to demand assent. He not only knows what people want from the savage – they accept and desire him – he also knows what the savage should want: he should touch them, speak to them and be hospitable to them. Whitman’s drive for contact, intimacy and hospitality of the savage only ends in demanding assent and consensus, which rules out the possibility of difference and strangeness. Through his transcendental self absorbing the savage Whitman reduces the stranger to what Emmanuel Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* calls the “imperialism of the same” (39). Speaking about the ontology of imperialism grounded on the relationship between “I” and “we,” Levinas notes that the stranger is the absolute other, for the stranger “escapes my grasp” as he “is not wholly in my site” (30). Instead, as Levinas clarifies in my “being in the world,” “my place in the sun,” and “my being at home” leads to “usurpation of spaces belonging to the other man whom I have already oppressed or starved, or driven out into the third world” (82).

While Henry Nash Smith, Betsy Erlikka and Quentin Anderson locate [through their rather crude analysis] a project of imperialism in Whitman’s poetry; with the help of Lacan’s drive theory, Levinas’s notion of the stranger, and Larson’s concept of consensus, I trace an anti-imperialist impulse in Whitman which expresses itself through his drive for total contact with the other. It results not in the crude imperialism of Smith or Erlikka but in the ontological imperialism, which reveals the failure or aporia of one’s ethical relationship to the other.

The incomplete and partial nature of Whitman’s hospitality can also be seen in another section of *Leaves of Grass* in which the poet calls upon the readers to remember hospitality. As in the section where a new magnified and transcendental identity emerges,

in this section “Poem of Remembrances to a Girl or a Boy of These States” (which appeared in the 1856 edition of *Leaves of Grass* and was dropped from all subsequent editions) Whitman elevates “nation” to the level of the Thing, which is all inclusive and welcoming. He begins by calling upon Americans to remember “the hospitality that belongs to nations and men” (275).³⁶ By setting the festive meal in celebration of cosmopolitan America, and by defining hospitality in relation to this “nation of nations,” Whitman simultaneously foregrounds hospitality in/as America yet restricts it as a belonging of nations and men.

Writing at a time when the issue of slavery had divided the whole nation and brought the Union almost to the brink of dissolution, Whitman urged Americans to recall the founders, and the founding values of America, which, for him, included life, liberty, equality, and hospitality. He posits the organic compact of the Union as a natural corollary of hospitality, and cautions that forgetting hospitality would deal a fatal blow to the nation: “Do you see death, and the approach of death?” (276). He suggests that only such ideals as rights, life, liberty, sovereignty of the people, equality, and hospitality can save the Union from fast approaching death and dissolution.³⁷ For Whitman, hospitality defines America; in fact any nation without hospitality is impossible. What distinguishes America from other nations is that with their undemocratic cultures, they are not hospitable, and, by extension, not nations in real sense of the term. Hospitality

³⁶ I cite here from the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* (New York, 1856), and all subsequent references are to this edition of the text.

³⁷ Even though in this particular poem Whitman describes the approach of death in a negative way, his understanding of death, as Lionel Trilling explains in *Prefaces to the Experience of Literature*, is more complex, for the poet believes that “passion itself arises from death” and it is “the mother of all life” (Trilling 259). In asking if the audience see the approach of death, Whitman in this section also might have been referring to the all encompassing and welcoming power of death.

distinguishes America from the rest of the world. It makes America unique and exceptional:

Remember the hospitality that belongs to nations and men
(Cursed be nation, woman, man, without hospitality). (275)

Whitman not only identifies hospitality as one of the core values that constitute American exceptionalism, he also puts a new twist on the way hospitality is perceived in the West. Unlike the Homeric and Biblical understanding of hospitality in which one individual extends welcome to another, Whitman's hospitality is indivisible from nation as a political community. The "individual" and interpersonal nature of hospitality in ancient Greece is discernible in the ritualistic reception of the stranger by the host that includes catching sight of the stranger, washing the stranger's feet [which Eric Auerbach calls "the first duty of [Homeric] hospitality" (1)], seating, feasting, bed, bath and farewell blessing.³⁸

If hospitality conventionally belongs in the West to the domain of the domestic, interpersonal, and moral, what are the implications of thinking about it at the level of the nation, as does Whitman? As we see in the epigraph to this chapter, Whitman compares his poem (which starts with "Poem of Walt Whitman, An American" by extension, the song of the nation), to a meal pleasantly set, a feast to which everyone, including the kept-woman, sponger, thief, the heavy lipped slave, and venerealee, is invited. Whitman is not the only one who makes hospitality a nation's responsibility and prerogative. As

³⁸ In *The Stranger's Welcome: Oral Theory and the Aesthetics of the Homeric Hospitality Scene*, Steve Reece provides a comprehensive list of steps taken in welcoming a stranger in ancient Greece. Some of the steps are: waiting at the threshold, supplication, reception that include catching sight of the visitor, host rising from the seat, approaching the visitor, attending to the visitor's horse, taking the visitor by hand, bidding the visitor welcome, leading the visitor in, seating, feasting, after dinner drink, and then identification (Reece 6-7).

we discussed earlier, in *Perpetual Peace*, Kant evokes universal hospitality that legally grants “right of visitation” to foreigners. He explains that hospitality “signifies the right of a foreigner, in consequence of his arrival on the soil of another, not to be treated by him as an enemy” (19), thereby implying that his cosmopolitan hospitality involves the visitor and the state. Kant distinguishes “right of visitation” from “right as a guest;” for unlike the “right of visitation” to a foreign land, “right as a guest” requires “a special friendly agreement to consider [the visitor] for a time as a member of some household” (19). In contrast, though Whitman also regards hospitality as the responsibility of the state, unlike Kant’s right of visitation, Whitman’s space of hospitality conflates images of the domestic sphere of the household and the state. The result is that hospitality represents intimate and private as well as contractual and political relationship to strangers.

Whitman’s “confusion” of the national as a domestic space neither romanticizes nation as home or homeland nor champions the cause of what was known in his time as the cult of domesticity. Prevalent in the fiction and nonfiction of women writers from 1820 to 1860 (Wegener 1), the cult of domesticity represented women as “more moral, nurturing, concerned about others, [and] committed to harmony than men” (Wood 69). Though Whitman’s hospitality “belongs” exclusively to nations and men, Whitman does not advocate for women’s separate sphere. Whitman’s nation as the domestic space of hospitality, then, differs from Kant’s universal hospitality regulated by state laws; it includes the domestic sphere represented as nurturing and welcoming by the cult of domesticity, but it also expands this sphere. What follows in this chapter is a critical reading of Whitman’s “Poem of Remembrances to a Boy or a Girl of These States” in

which Whitman locates the origin of hospitality in “America” in the performative act of the Declaration of Independence, thereby at once presenting the nation as hospitable, yet making this national space of hospitality oblivious to scenes of welcome and abuse of hospitality during the colonial period. Later in the chapter, I will contrast Whitman’s cosmopolitanism, which originates from the nation to an alternative scene of welcome in a poem by Lydia Sigourney.

Writing at the time when the Union’s very existence was in question, and the so-called “Back to Africa” movement was in full swing,³⁹ Whitman posited hospitality of the nation as the only solution for slavery, immigration, and gender discrimination. Whitman calls for hospitality in his characteristically cosmopolitan voice that extends welcome to slaves, thousands of new immigrants sailing towards the United States, and to the new race of women.⁴⁰ By presenting the performative act of the Declaration of Independence as the origin of hospitality in “America,” Whitman restricts the space of hospitality to the nation. Even though he acknowledges that “founding” the nation was the performative act of the “Old Thirteen” states, that moment of founding, which, for him, is also the originary moment of hospitality of the nation, is not only the United States, but also the continental America and beyond.

Whitman makes the “Old Thirteen” represent the United States, which in turn represents “America,” a term that Whitman deploys not in the hemispheric sense but in the “nativist” one to denote the nation. His “nativist” approach drives Whitman to view hospitality as a “belonging” to the nation. Whitman’s nativism is not the nativism of

³⁹ The “Back to Africa” movement started in 1820 by the American Colonization Society, which returned a group of freed slaves to West Africa in the spring of 1822. The total of returnees to Africa under the auspices of the Society alone is estimated at 15000 in 19th century (Copeland 33).

⁴⁰ Whitman’s cosmopolitanism is well-known especially after he is said to have famously observed to Horace Traubel that “the best of America is the best of cosmopolitanism” (Traubel ix).

Whitman's contemporaries who opposed immigration during the mid-19th century. Nor is it simply what John Higham, the historian of American nativism, calls "an intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., un-American) connections" (4). In the preface to the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman defines America (which he uses interchangeably with the United States) "not merely as a nation but a teeming nation of nations" (50). His nativism lies in his belief in the democratic origin of hospitality; and he conceives of its origin as an eternal presence, which can be repeated, but cannot be historicized. For Whitman the founding of the United States, and in particular, the performative of the declaration, is the origin of hospitality. This origin of hospitality is eternally present, and can be repeated and recalled, but cannot be historicized. The performative of "the declaration" cannot be historicized because, like all founding myths of the origin, it is also the origin of history; the originary event of the declaration is exactly when "American" history begins. Everything else is related to this origin without it being related to anything but itself. That is why in spite of being the origin, therefore "organically" related to the structure, it is also quite external to the structure.

For Whitman hospitality belongs to the nation both as expendable property (something which can be possessed, calculated, circulated, exchanged for profit, and transferred as inheritance), and as its inalienable part, as one of its own organs. This organic relationship between the nation and hospitality seems evident in Whitman's poem, which evokes hospitality while illustrating and extolling "the organic compact" of the Union in 1856, a few years before the Civil War. Whitman's hospitality is at once an inalienable yet external part of America. It constitutes the core of America's interiority as

well as its appended exterior. America has both objective and subjective relationship to hospitality: subjective because America cannot extricate itself from hospitality, for hospitality constitutes its very being; objective because it cannot help but spend, expend, use or misuse hospitality. America, which has always sought to distinguish itself from the cursed nations without hospitality, forgets its natural and constitutive part, and needs to be reminded of its forgetfulness. America forgets hospitality because it periodically lapses into amnesia with regard to hospitality (as was the case, for Whitman, during the Civil War), and therefore needs to be reminded of its repression; it needs a project of memory such as Whitman's in this poem, which reminds the "just maturing youth" of America to be hospitable.

If memory is what a nation needs to be hospitable, how deep is the memory of Whitman's America? The answer in the poem is: "Recall ages" for "one age is but a part," yet the American nation begins in the poem with the "organic compact" of the States established by the founders at the moment when the old thirteen states pledged to "the rights, life, liberty, equality, of man." That originary moment for Whitman's speaker is not one age among many, but an absolute whole, which defines all ages that precede and follow it.

Remember what was promulged by the founders,
ratified by the States, signed in black and
white by the Commissioners, and read by Washington at the head of the
army!
Remember the purpose of the founders! - Remember Washington! (275).

If one age is but a part of the other, then why does Whitman start with the founding moment of the United States, and not with the arrival of the Pilgrims in America in search of a home and hospitality? The memory of a nation often begins and ends with its

founding myth, the historical and legal moment of the origin of the nation, which annuls and forecloses all other memories of the time and place before the nation, before it became a nation, and the way it became a nation. Even in the section of *Leaves of Grass* titled “With Antecedents,” Whitman asks yet another rhetorical question in parenthesis: “(Have I forgotten any part? any thing in the past?/ Come to me whoever and whatever, till I give you recognition)” (202), he immediately sets the condition for recognition: “In the name of these States and in your and my name” (202), thereby implying that one can be recognized only in relation to the nation or these States. Whitman’s nation to which hospitality belongs begins with the founders, and the founding moment of the Declaration of Independence, and ratification of the Constitution by “These States.” By the very act of its founding, it erases the time, place and people that precede the nation – the Native Americans. He recognizes them in their name, but only in relation to the nation.

Whitman’s poem urges the youth to recall the ages, and “the angers, bickering, delusions, superstitions, of the idea of caste;” it urges readers to recall the “bloody cruelties and crimes” committed in the name of “caste.” Such memories of the crimes and cruelties of the past, however, need to be recalled not in order to redress any past violence, but in order to distinguish the founding of America – the moment of the nation’s beginning – from those ages of delusions and cruelties. After all, caste belongs to India, not America, and cruelty belongs to the accursed nations without hospitality. Branding those crimes of the ages before the nation as “foreign” would make the origin or the beginning of the nation at once pure, infinitely open, boundless and hospitable, but also exceptional, radically different from the cruelties of the past, therefore finite, limited and absolute.

Remember the copious humanity streaming from every direction toward
America!
Remember the hospitality that belongs to nations and men!
(Cursed be nation, woman, man, without hospitality!) (275).

Beginning with the founding of the nation helps Whitman portray America as eternally hospitable, as an all-welcoming host that receives copious streams of immigrants from all over the world. At the same time, it limits hospitality to the immigrants of the nation at the expense of the history of Native Americans, and their hospitality received by earlier emigrants from Europe. By declaring “caste,” Whitman’s code for slavery, as an un-American practice, and distinguishing America from nations that promote the idea of caste, Whitman at once acknowledges yet refuses to directly address slavery. By “foreignizing” slavery as “caste” Whitman’s acknowledgement of slavery fails to fully recognize those who were brought against their will to America, and held hostage to the economic and political interests of its citizens.

According to the poem, the reason that copious humanity streams to the United States from all over the world is the “organic compact” of the Union grounded on the Constitution and the social contract – the legal basis of the Union – “which pledges to the rights, life, liberty and equality of man” (275). Hospitality belongs to this pledge at the foundation of the nation, which distinguishes the United States as an exceptional nation from the ages of anger, cruelty and crimes, and from the nations without hospitality. What opens America to the copious humanity or what makes it hospitable to the people streaming in is its pledge to the rights, life, liberty, and equality of “men.” At the same time, this pledge or “promise” of hospitality that belongs to the American nation draws an impermeable boundary between itself and the legacy of its colonial beginning.

Instead of using terms such as “ethnic Americans,” “minorities,” “immigrants” “guests” or “foreigners,” I use the term “stranger” to critique Whitman’s cosmopolitan nativism, and to evoke the other hospitality directed towards strangers. Most of these terms denote distance and difference from the nation, yet they are defined in their relationship to the nation. The “other” implied by these terms is always the other of the nation or the national character, a fact tellingly revealed in Whitman’s reassurance in the scene of the feast, where he announces that there shall be “no difference between them [the kept woman, thief, sponger, venerealee and the thick-lipped slave] and the rest” (32). For Whitman’s cosmopolitanism there remains no “difference” other than the one presupposed by the distinction between these others as guests, and “the rest” that invites and includes them. An ethnic is the ethnic of the nation. Nativism imposes varying degree of foreignness on ethnic population. When we restrict hospitality to the nation, a guest is the guest of the nation, a minority is minority to the national majority, and a foreigner is foreign to the nation, its culture and border.⁴¹ A stranger, on the other hand, is both estranged from the nation, someone who undergoes estrangement from the nation, but, as a transnational and cosmopolitan figure, also a stranger to the nation. A stranger could be a guest to be welcomed, but could have also been a host before the nation was formed. A stranger as well could be a complete stranger to the guest-host equation of nativist hospitality.

Completely overlooking national consciousness and nation as the location of hospitality would run the risk of conjuring up cosmopolitanism that advocates world

⁴¹ Whitman’s cosmopolitan nativism works like the modernist nativism Walter Ben Michaels examines in *Our America*. If Michael finds the modernist nativism of the 1920s animated by what he calls “a certain fantasy about the sign” (2), Whitman’s nativism thrives on the fantasy of the nation, which, of course, he defines in the most cosmopolitan terms.

government of one giant state, without however, the legal and political mechanisms to implement the practices of hospitality. More importantly, the idea of nation itself, as many postcolonial critics have shown, is associated with resistance to European imperialism.⁴² A certain aspect of Whitman's celebration of American Independence results from the emergence of national consciousness in a nation which succeeded in gaining freedom from the colonial yoke of the British Empire. In opposition to a trend in American literary studies to unambiguously brand Whitman's poetry as a project of imperialism, we must recognize in his oeuvre as part of what Lawrence Buell calls "one of the major modern postcolonial strategies" (Buell 421). One of the arguments in this chapter is that while adopting "post-colonial" strategies Whitman fails to develop it into a poetics of decolonization. Nation, national subjectivity and consciousness might be the product of decolonization, however, nation itself, as we have seen in Whitman's poem, can be exclusionary as it represses what precedes it, and domesticates what follows it. Nation alienates itself by forgetting what it is. Limiting hospitality by making it the property of the nation, and the rights and laws of the nation, Whitman excludes the colonial history that antedates the establishment of the nation. Even when he defines America as a nation of nations, and aims for the total contact, intimacy, friendship and hospitality of the world, indigenous nations remain strangers to his poetics of hospitality.⁴³

⁴² In the introduction of *Decolonization: Perspective from Now and Then*, Prasenjit Duara notes that the process of decolonization was "accompanied by the appearance of *national* historical consciousness" (Duara 1). Even though the process of decolonization he describes belongs to the period after World War I, and the historical consciousness he mentions is the one among the colonized nations of Asia, Africa and the Americas in the mid-twentieth century, the crucial relationship between decolonization and the emergence of national consciousness can also be applicable to a certain aspect of Whitman's glorification of the American nation.

⁴³ In *Walt Whitman's Native Representation*, Ed Folsom argues that Whitman was aware that "American Indians would need to be part of the song of himself," but he was also aware of the contradiction that

“Landing of the Pilgrims, 1620” is the Italian artist Causici’s relief depicting the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth in 1620. Unlike Whitman’s national project of hospitality in which poetry functions as the musical invitation, Causici renders a minor scene of hospitality in the “prosaic” sandstone. It is minor because it involves not the founding fathers or the nation as a pleasantly set meal, but a Native American extending welcome to, and bringing nourishment for the Pilgrims. Causici supplements Whitman’s origin of American hospitality by extending the movement back to the arrival of Europeans in 1620. In Causici’s relief hospitality does not belong to the nation, it rather belongs to individuals; even belonging would not be a right word for what takes place in the sculpture.

inclusion might create in his poem, for “his celebration of America’s progressive expansion undermined any easy celebration of the natives that that expansion was displacing” (70). In other words, recognition of Native Americans lies beyond the logic of Whitman’s project.



Figure 2 Landing of the Pilgrims, 1620 by Enrico Causici, 1825 (Source: www.aoc.gov)

Causici captures both the guest and the host in the act not of taking stock of their belonging but in “deterritorializing,” gifting and leaving behind. In this scene of welcome neither the Pilgrim-guests nor the Native American-host is close to their “belonging.” The scene is taking place at the border where the sea meets the land, and at the moment when the Pilgrims are already far away from home, thus deterritorialized; and though not as far away as the Pilgrims, the Native American is also away from his village, and alone on the beach. One of the feet of the Pilgrim is already out of the boat, and

correspondingly the slightly prone figure of the Native American is caught in the act of extending welcome by pointing to the land, and offering corn to the guests. This movement sculpted at the fluid moment of American history remains “foreign” and invisible to Whitman’s national project of hospitality.

The subtlety of this alternative movement can also be seen in the difference of addresses in Whitman and Causici. Unlike Whitman, whose speaker addresses “a Boy or a Girl of These States,” Causici’s “address” consisting of the host gesturing welcome and gifting nourishment to the guest is directed to strangers. It is directed towards the stranger lurking between the guest and the host as if the one bidding welcome to the guest is not the host, but the stranger in him. This brings us to one of the crucial questions that I will be exploring in this chapter: who can say welcome, and with what authority? Can one really say “welcome” without first stepping out of one’s home i.e., without first divesting oneself of the power associated with being the “master” of the house? Unlike the address of the stranger in Causicic, the address or welcome of Whitman’s speaker, like the arc of memory he draws, comes back to himself.

In what follows I examine the scene of welcoming Native Americans in Lydia H. Sigourney’s poem, “The Indian’s Welcome to the Pilgrim Fathers.” In moving from Whitman’s notion of hospitality as intimate contact (caring, nursing, sacrificing), contract and consensus (nation) for absolute harmony with the world to Sigourney’s question of welcoming Indians, I underscore a shift in the address to Native Americans. Whereas Whitman posits a transcendental, mythical and messianic subject (Zeus, Jehovah and Brahma) in order to achieve total *contact* with the world, Sigourney, in contrast, begins and ends with a *question* regarding the Pilgrims’ failure to reciprocate Native American

hospitality. If Whitman's messianism appropriates the place of the host to welcome the world, Sigourney invokes a figure of a stranger, which cannot be reduced to the rhetoric of the same. While Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* is the "poem of the future for which there is no present poem, only a pre-figuration" (Riddel 55), in short the future made present or prefigured as a trope, Sigourney's poem invokes future, especially the future of hospitality to Native Americans, as incompleteness or still to come.

Welcoming Strangers

Lydia H. H. Sigourney's "The Indian's Welcome to the Pilgrim Fathers" (1835) illustrates what I call in the dissertation "welcoming strangers." The poem begins with the description of the lives of the Pilgrims in the wilderness surrounded by "a stranger sky," "the sterile plain" and "the wrathful main," (Sigourney 47). A "red-browed chieftain" with eyes "like kindling flame" as if to burn the intruders alive, appears "sudden from the forest wide" to further unsettle and bewilder the Pilgrims (47).⁴⁴ Yet, instead of drawing the Pilgrims to the "dark ambush" (47), as they fear he may, the chieftain extends a hearty welcome to them, which proves to be the Native American's undoing because the Pilgrims fail to reciprocate. The poem ends with a gesture towards renewing contact with Native Americans for which the poet invokes a figure of the stranger, who would be able to do what the Pilgrims could not: respond to the chief's welcome. The poem complicates the notion of response and reciprocation by leaving it as a question. Instead of providing an answer to how Native Americans' hospitality to

⁴⁴ The fear of being burnt alive, like being scalped, by "Indians" was one of the common perceptions among Europeans in 19th century. *The Last of the Mohicans* details Magua's plan to burn the captives, Cora, David, Duncan and Alice. Cooper calls it a "well known and vulgar means of torture" among Indians: "The vengeance of the Hurons had now taken a new direction, and they prepared to execute it with that barbarous ingenuity with which they were familiarized by the practices of centuries. Some sought knots, to raise the blazing pile; one was riving the splinters of pine; in order to pierce the flesh of their captives with the burning fragments. . ." (Cooper 122).

Europeans should have been reciprocated, Sigourney ends the poem with an open-ended question to suggest that reciprocity to Native Americans' welcome is impossible because the guests had no means to reciprocate insofar as they themselves were guests of the natives. Any attempt to reciprocate would lead to claiming more land, displacing more natives, and then extending hospitality as hosts to the displaced Native Americans.

In *Of Hospitality* Jacques Derrida calls the stranger a being-in-question. He argues that the stranger is first of all "*the one who* puts the question or *the one to whom* you address the first question [a]s though the [stranger] were being-in-question" (3). It is this figure of the stranger that I trace in Sigourney's poem in which she invokes a different "founding" moment of America. She recalls the story of a red-browed chieftain, who appears at Plymouth Colony in 1622 to say, "much welcome, English, much welcome, Englishmen" (Sigourney 47), and the chieftain receives no proper response to his welcome from the colonists. The Native American's curious address to the colonists in his broken English (in which he seems to welcome both the colonist and their language – "welcome English, welcome Englishmen" – as if to suggest that an address and response to the stranger are inextricable rituals of hospitality), goes entirely unreciprocated. Instead the colonists respond in a language too far from his practice of hospitality: they "swept [Native Americans] from their native land" and make them outcasts in their own home (Sigourney 48).

The Pilgrim fathers, themselves stranger in a strange frontier, cannot connect to Native Americans, for they allowed the Chief's welcome to go unreciprocated. By not reciprocating his hospitality, the Pilgrims became strangers to themselves, to their professed faith and beliefs. They acted not like a group of civilized Pilgrims but, like "a

weak invading band” (Sigourney 48), who resembled the image they themselves portrayed of Native Americans. By calling the Pilgrims “a weak invading band,” Sigourney seems to suggest that European caricature of Native Americans as savages is only a mirror image of what European themselves became in the “wilderness.” Unlike Whitman, who shares food and home with the visitor, Sigourney’s Native Americans give up in hospitality the lordship and sovereignty of their streams and waves, their land of infancy and ancestral graves, thereby becoming strangers in their own land. Estrangement resulting from the Pilgrim Fathers’ unwillingness to reciprocate Native Americans’ hospitality culminates not in contact, but in invasion and colonization.

Yet, after describing the colony in the first three stanzas, the poetic persona of Sigourney’s poem shifts the narrative from the colonists to the chieftain himself in order to address him directly as if to start the dialogue and contact with the Native American to which the Pilgrims declined to respond.

That welcome was a blast and ban
Upon thy race unborn.
Was there no seer, thou fated Man!
Thy lavish zeal to warn? (Sigourney 48)

By directly addressing the chieftain, the narrator replaces outworn, stereotypical and colonialist binaries such as the civilized *vs.* the savage, and subject *vs.* object with an “I-Thou” relationship, literally lifting the Pilgrim Fathers’ “savage” to the level of the universal Man – “thou fated Man” (a move that has its own limitations, but must have been strange in the days when Native Americans were depicted by Sigourney’s contemporaries as mere savages). By addressing the chieftain directly, the speaker also suggests that listening and responding to the stranger are the first step towards

establishing contact with the stranger, and towards creating a space to receive and welcome the stranger.

As Martin Buber in his treatise on the I-Thou relationship remarks, “when Thou is spoken, the speaker has no *thing*, he has indeed nothing. But he takes his stand in relation” (12). The speaker’s address to the chief as “thou,” therefore, differs from the reduction of wilderness and its inhabitants to a “thing” merely representing, to quote Frederick J. Turner’s definition of the frontier, “unlimited resources open to all men for the taking” (307). Addressing the chief directly by using “thou” not only humanizes the addressee, but it also transforms the addressor. As Buber remarks, when a speaker uses “thou” he or she has nothing; in fact the address itself dispossesses the addressor; it makes the addressor give up what he has, and stand in relation with the addressee. The speaker’s address to the chieftain functions as the missing door of language not resorted to by the Pilgrim Fathers, who, in their unwillingness to respond, descend to colonial violence against Native Americans. Sigourney makes the address the very door through which the stranger arrives. Closing the door of reciprocation and response, of addressing and dialogue leads to colonial violence. In other words, the violent removal of Native Americans from their homes is one of the consequences of the Pilgrim Fathers’ inability to respond to the chieftain’s welcome.

Sigourney builds this linguistic threshold, represented in the poem by the speaker’s direct address to the chieftain. Yet this discursive space is not enough to receive and welcome the outcast:

Was there no seer, thou fated Man!
Thy lavish zeal to warn?
Thou in thy fearless faith didst hail
A weak, invading band,

But who shall heed thy children's wail,
Swept from their native land? (Sigourney 48)

The speaker of the poem, who seems at this point to bifurcate herself in two, as the narrator of the poem, and the “seer” in the poem, can only address the outcast, or like the seer again, can only admonish for letting the outcast vanish without being spoken to. But the speaker cannot herself welcome the outcast. She does not know how to say welcome to the Chieftain, who has been an outcast for centuries since the incident in 1622.

Sigourney, who was writing the poem in 1835, must have in mind the Indian Removal Act signed by President Andrew Jackson on May 28, 1830, which eliminated Native American titles to land, and led to the trail of tears.

If responding to the outcast is a step towards hospitality and towards decolonization, how should one respond to the stranger? How can one establish contact and proximity with the stranger? I borrow the terms contact and proximity from Levinas, who, in *Otherwise than Being*, defines contact as proximity, which is “an exposure to others, a vulnerability and a responsibility” (77). Being in contact and proximity for Levinas is first responding, which he calls “saying” and distinguishes it from the “said,” i.e. the thematized and objectified knowledge of the other. Responding and saying (which as we saw are also essential in Sigourney’s notion of welcome – “Say, who shall welcome thee?”), for Levinas imply exposure, openness and denuding of the self to the other. That’s why someone, like the chieftain, who says “welcome!,” makes himself vulnerable. Contacting strangers is a problem at the center of American literature, and my dissertation seeks to address it by examining how literary and cultural texts and artifacts

“respond” to strangers or call for taking responsibility of the abuse of hospitality to the strangers.

By “strangers” I refer to figures that emerge at the limits of relationships shaped by the politics of colonialism, nation-building, and slavery. And by “limits of relationship” I mean colonial encounters or meetings in the frontiers and contact zones that do not operate in true sense of the terms meetings or contacts. Meetings or contacts with the strangers would imply a shift from “I-It” to “I-Thou” relationship that, as we saw in Buber, dispossesses the addressor, exposes him or her (in Levinasian sense) to the call of the addressee. It would make the addressor a stranger; not the kind he or she was while in estrangement produced by colonial violence, which transformed the Pilgrims into an “invading band.” This stranger is not only an alienated subject produced by colonialism, but also a stranger who is foreign to the structure of identity grounded in colonialism and empire. A stranger is not a transcendental or sovereign “I” of the nation, who, like Lewis’s “American Adam” is free of history, race and ethnicity (Lewis 5); rather, she is a transnational subjectivity always in relation, open and even exposed to the address of the other.

This figure of the stranger is what John Caputo, in a different context, calls a “polymorphic diversity” that imposes on us “the absolute secret of not knowing” (130). It is the arrival of this secret and not knowing it that Caputo urges us to prepare for. However, any preparation for the coming of the secret stranger can only be expressed in a question: “How to prepare for the coming of one for whom the only preparation is to be prepared for anything, for whom the only preparation is to confess that we cannot be

prepared for what is coming” (56)? Caputo evokes hospitality, which he defines as “being a good ‘host’” or preparing for the unexpected arrival of the stranger (57).

Sigourney also evokes this absolute sense of not knowing when she asks: “But who shall heed thy children’s wail?” She is aware of the fact that one cannot but respond to the outcast, and address the outcast. Yet she does not know how to respond or address. This dilemma of not knowing how to respond to the outcast even when it is absolutely necessary that she must raises a concomitant question for her. And that question is – “who” can respond to the outcast? Sigourney’s poetic persona knows that she cannot respond to the outcast, for that will amount to being “the host” to the outcast. Assuming the position of the host is literally impossible for her because that would mirror Whitman’s call to remember the hospitality of the nation. Saying “welcome” to the outcast would be to present herself as the transcendental ego that embodies the hospitality of nations and men. The issue of responding to, and receiving the outcast takes Sigourney to the limit of her knowledge and capacity in spite of the fact that she knows that lack of a response would mean repeating the same cycle of violence and estrangement as was unleashed in the wake of the Pilgrim fathers’ unwillingness to respond to the chieftain’s hospitality. Is someone who can identify himself or herself as an “I” really the one to respond to and receive the stranger? Tied to the question of how one can contact the stranger or respond to the stranger’s call, therefore, is another, equally important question that begins by putting the questioner in question: who can respond to the stranger? Or in Sigourney’s words: “*Say, who shall welcome thee?*”

But who to yon proud mansions pil’d
With wealth of earth and sea,
Poor outcast from thy forest wild,
Say, who shall welcome thee? (emphasis original) (48)

By concluding the poem with this question, Sigourney puts a stranger – *who shall welcome thee?* – who is not present yet, who has not yet arrived, who is not “now” nor “here” yet, who has not been recognized yet as such, in the “place” of the host to welcome the outcast. The welcome of this stranger, who is not present yet, cannot belong to the nation. In fact, it cannot belong to any place, for the host that remains “to come” resists territorialization, and represents the cosmopolitanism of strangers without whom, however, there cannot be any “room” or “place” for the guest and for hospitality.

This stranger cannot be the Pilgrims, who declined to respond to the chieftain’s welcome, and consequently reacted by invading and appropriating the chieftain’s sovereignty. The Pilgrims missed the opportunity to respond to the chieftain’s welcome in 1622. Nor can it be the seer-narrator, who can only address the outcast, the Native American chief. The speaker, who is also a seer in the poem, can take the first step towards welcoming by addressing the chief, but cannot appropriate the place of the host. Sigourney doubts the capacity of the seer-narrator even to say “welcome” to the outcast – “But who to yon proud mansions pil’d . . . *Say, who shall welcome thee?*” Instead Sigourney invokes a stranger, who is different from the outcast or the chief, but also resembles him in the sense that, like the chief welcoming the Englishmen by letting the latter share the lordship of the chief’s land and sea, the stranger now needs to welcome the outcast back by putting himself or herself in question, by putting his or her place of the master of the house in question. It is in this sense that Sigourney’s stranger is a being-in-question: “*who shall welcome thee?*” It is a being without the agential and sovereign “I,” but also a being without whom there is no agency, no sovereignty. The stranger in

question is a being who still remains to come. Sigourney suggests that if one really wants to be hospitable to the outcast or the chief, how can one already set rules of welcome, without first seeking the approval of the outcast or without first asking the outcast how he wants to be welcomed? Only the outcast, if anyone, can say who can welcome, and how?

Thus, for Sigourney it is impossible to welcome the outcast without first welcoming the stranger-in-question. Only the stranger-in-question will be able to welcome the outcast, to be host in true sense of the term; i.e. without claiming to be the sovereign master of the house. The stranger-in-question, who is not co-present with us, who still remains to come, always in question, and should be invoked and welcomed first in order to receive the outcast, transcends the binary of guest and host. It is also this figure that makes Sigourney's hospitality not a conditional one, which is based on reciprocation alone – she was hospitable to me that is why I should welcome her – but a truly “unconditional hospitality”⁴⁵ to be extended only by the stranger, i.e. by the stranger who welcomes by extending hospitality without reducing herself to the roles of guests and hosts. It is through the invocation of this figure of the stranger-in-question that Sigourney seeks in this poem to restore the estranged tradition of hospitality in American culture.

“Welcoming Strangers” not only invokes this cosmopolitan figure of the stranger-in-question but also the intertwined concept of twofold welcoming: to welcome the stranger, the outcast or in the context of Sigourney's poem, Native Americans swept by colonial violence from their homeland; and the stranger-in-question, who can say

⁴⁵ I take this phrase “unconditional hospitality” from Derrida, who in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* defines it as the Law of hospitality “offered *a priori* to every other, to all newcomers, *whoever they may be*” (22). He distinguishes it from the conditional hospitality, which is “control by the law and the state police” (22).

“welcome” without invading or appropriating the singularity, difference or strangeness of the outcast. It is this tentative figure of the stranger-in-question that makes hospitality possible, but also impossible to extend, for it requires a fundamental transformation of the grounds of our identities, and demands cultivation of the politics, aesthetics and ethics of responsibility.

Chapter II:

Tears of Welcome: Mourning and Hospitality in Cooper, Bird, and Silko

*Remorse – is Memory – awake
Her parties all astir –
A presence of Departed Acts –
At window – and at Door –*

- Emily Dickinson, LXIX

At the end of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, scout Hawkeye and Chingachgook shake hands over Uncas' grave. Bidding a tearful farewell to the young Mohican, both woodsmen seek comfort and refuge in their mutual friendship:

Chingachgook grasped the hand that, in the warmth of feeling, the scout had stretched across the fresh earth, and in that attitude of friendship these two sturdy and intrepid woodsmen bowed their heads together, while scalding tears fell to their feet, watering the grave of Uncas like drops of falling rain. (439)

For many readers of antebellum American literature this scene epitomizes the myth of the vanishing Indian. According to them, mourning in texts such as *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *Metamora: the Last of the Wampanoag* (1829), and *Song of Hiawatha* (1855) “moved antebellum audiences to sentimental tears as they lamented the fate of the dying race” (McGarry 71). These critics also relate sentimental tears to “imperialist nostalgia” of missionaries (Stevens 16) and their “desire to save Indians” (19). They believe that collective mourning of early American novels “contemplate the possibility that the power of genuine sympathy could revivify a broadly inclusive vision of democracy” (Stern 2). The rush of tears in antebellum literature shores up contradictory yet complementary waves of emotions that at once evoke or imply sympathy for Native Americans,

imperialism and democracy. Sentimental tears reveal the tension and contradiction in European attitude toward Native Americans in which lamentation over vanishing Indians is instrumental for achieving empire and democracy in America. In the course of examining the tensions and contradictions of mourning, these critics tend to overlook another apparently less prominent but equally important side of the emotional interface between Europeans and Native Americans: scenes of mourning that depict intense terrain of affects and create a space for friendship and refuge in antebellum literature.

Hawkeye and Chingachgook's friendship, for instance, is sealed not, as critics tracing sentimentalism in the novel would argue, just through the sentimental touch, lamentation or the creation of a middle-ground, but also through the mutual refuge both seek in shedding scalding tears for Uncas.⁴⁶ The middle-ground on which the sentimental touch takes place in this scene is literally Uncas' grave. By shedding scalding tears on his grave, the scout and the Mohican chief not only mourn the death of young Uncas, they also elevate him to the position of a grievable life thereby converting loss into the spectral remains of the young Mohican. As loss is inseparable, to recall David Eng and David Kazanjian's formulation, from what remains, the scout and the Mohican's mourning ensures that Uncas is not merely a subject for lamentation; rather, he lives with them and in them as if the mourners are in fact hosts embodying the remains of the

⁴⁶ In *The Sentimental Touch*, Ritzenberg argues that sentimentalism in American novels works through touching, for the "gentle hand engaged in a sentimental touch is the anti-dote to the brutalizing hand" of power and violence (13). Likewise in *Moving Encounters*, Laura Mielke argues that the moving encounter or affective intimacy between Europeans and "Indians" flowers in the antebellum American novels including Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* as "a recreation of the lost middle ground" (7).

dead.⁴⁷ The tears they shed in mourning expose them and open them to Uncas' memory, thereby rendering the tears of mourning indistinguishable from the tears of welcome.

The scene of mourning from *The Last of the Mohicans* yields two divergent modes of affects and by extension two distinct modes of reception – both in the sense of reading and welcome or hospitality. On the one hand, the scene reveals contradictory movements of vanishing and emergence: emergence of American empire and democracy predicated upon the vanishing of Native Americans.⁴⁸ On the other, it evokes mourning as welcome of what persists or remains in the wake of both the vanishing of Indians and the emergence of empire or democracy. An examination of the complex relationship between vanishing and emergence, and empire and democracy produce a critical discourse or reading, which, to borrow from Eve Sedgwick's formulation, can be called the hermeneutics of suspicion or paranoid reading.⁴⁹ In contrast, foregrounding mourning as hospitality leads us to what Sedgwick calls a reparative reading, which she believes is practiced with "reparative motives" that include pleasure, love, and hope (22). In other words, in this chapter I shift the focus from the hermeneutics of suspicion and its paranoid determination about "the logic of the last" (to use Jonathan Elmer's terms) to a site of reparative return of what I call in the dissertation "guest-stranger" through mourning. I intend to practice both paranoid and reparative readings by turns, and I contend that a reparative reading of the frontier and Native American narratives enables

⁴⁷ In the introduction of *Loss: the Politics of Mourning*, Eng and Kazanjian note that loss is inextricable from remains, for "what is lost is known only by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read, and sustained" (2).

⁴⁸ Unlike Stern's claim that sentimental tears in antebellum literature lead to inclusive democracy, Robert Berkhofer argues that like the eighteenth century idea of republicanism based on Indian removal, nineteenth century notion of democracy was also not very favorable to Indians. "The emphasis on individualism and liberal institutions," he writes, "placed Indian tribalism in direct opposition to Americanism even more under democracy than under republicanism" (Berkhofer 155).

⁴⁹ I would like to thank Professor Patricia Yaeger for introducing me to Sedgwick's essay on reparative reading.

us to locate affective hospitality that exceeds the binary of lamentation over vanishing Indians and the emergence of empire or democracy and to envision a “poetics” of hospitality.

In locating and exposing the contradiction between sympathy for Native Americans and lamentation over their vanishing, the critics of antebellum literature engage in a hermeneutics that exposes the latent current of imperialism in the manifest content of sympathy or democracy.⁵⁰ As Sedgwick explains, the paranoid reading of the hermeneutics of suspicion involves “demystifying parody” and the detection of “hidden patterns of violence and exposure” (21). In this sense, hermeneutics of suspicion “represents not only a strong affect theory but a strong negative affect theory” (23). The hermeneutics of suspicion restricts itself to the discussion of strong but negative affects because it exposes the hidden pattern of empire underneath the sentimental tears for vanishing Indians, thereby portraying Native Americans as “lamentable casualties of national progress” (Byrd xx). To read from a reparative position, to cite Sedgwick again, is to “surrender the knowing, anxious paranoid determination” that rules out all surprises so that readers can “experience surprise” (24).

In this chapter I read Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, Bird’s *Nick of the Woods* and Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* in order to trace what I call affective hospitality or welcome through the embodiment and incorporation in mourning. Following its illustration in the scene of mourning in *The Last of the Mohicans*, affective hospitality, for me, implies: i) a space of welcome and reception marked at once by loss and

⁵⁰ In “The Mechanism of Paranoia” published in *Three Case Histories*, Freud explains the role latent perception and manifest content in relation to paranoid projection. He notes that symptom-formation in paranoia takes place through projection, which he defines as the suppression of “internal perception” and its subsequent reappearance though distorted as “external perception” (142).

remnants, destruction and apparitions; ii) birth of a subject that bears, encompasses, embodies, incorporates and inhabits this space (it heralds the birth of a guest-stranger who is host but not the one that claims to possess and be the sovereign master of the house but the one that embodies the loss through mourning); and iii) establishing a relation with the other or the dead through mourning, thereby announcing a politics of mourning and hospitality.

Against the myth of the vanishing Indian that Cooper's novel is said to be propagating, I posit affective hospitality or tears of welcome in which the mourner incorporates the dead, thereby welcoming or making room for the dead *in* him or her. Mourning as hospitality differs from the sympathy of sentimentalism precisely because sympathy presupposes a top to bottom relation between the sympathizer and the sympathized. Tears of welcome, on the other hand, open the mourner to the dead, and let the mourner be haunted by the dead so that instead of vanishing or being substituted and displaced, the dead returns as a revenant. Tears of welcome, therefore, differ from the Freudian notion of mourning in which the process of mourning represents a means to overcome the loss. Mourning as overcoming the loss of the object of love can be seen, I contend, in Bird's *Nick of the Woods*. I will visit Nicholas Abrahams and Maria Torok's revision of Freud's concept of mourning in order to develop my idea of tears of welcome in which I believe the mourner incorporates the dead so that the latter lives in him or her. I will also recall Derrida's theory of mourning and spectrality, especially his notion of the "revenant," which, I argue, is the theme of Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*, a complex narrative about locating the dead and invoking and welcoming the spirit of the dead.

Discussion of hospitality in relation to Native Americans in American literature often begins with the narratives of first contact and Thanksgiving. While these narratives depict one of the dominant sites of hospitality (i.e., arrival of the colonists in America and their reception by Native Americans), they confine themselves to experiences of initial contact, thereby failing to illustrate the complex relationship between Native Americans and settlers as it unfolded over the colonial period and beyond. Frontier narratives and many sentimental novels of the nineteenth century act as manifestos of the cult of the vanishing Indian; as a result they seem to have little to say about hospitality. Yet, they engage the question of hospitality in a curious and complex way. On the one hand, these narratives reflect the often violent process of colonialism by depicting Native Americans and Europeans through their changing roles of hosts and guests. Native Americans, who are portrayed as hosts to colonists in the narratives of first contact, become “vanishing Indians” in frontier narratives and sentimentalist novels. The colonialist arrival of Europeans, to recall Kant’s terms, converts Native Americans into “visitors.” On the other hand, by depicting Native Americans as “vanishing Indians,” as if to mourn their vanishing and death, these narratives evoke hospitality through mourning. These narratives seek to retain the memory of the dead alive through mourning. In fact, as in every work of mourning, they seek to incorporate the dead in the living, thereby making hospitality an interminable work of mourning through which Native Americans remain, survive, and return, instead of vanishing forever.

Contradictory as it may sound, mourning not only seeks to revive the memory of the subject of mourning, but it also signifies retention of the subject. In a work of mourning, the mourner tries to keep the memory of the lost subject alive, thereby turning

the subject into a figure who is at once dead and alive, therefore, a revenant or returnee. We must, therefore, distinguish between the work of mourning as hospitality from what goes by the myth of the vanishing Indian, for while the latter underscores disappearance of the subject, the former, in contrast, emphasizes the affective return, (re)arrival and reception of the one who survives. This figure of the revenant must be distinguished from the tenacity of the myth of the vanishing Indian exemplified in the fascination with and persistence of *The Last of the Mohicans* as a literary, visual, and cultural trope for American nostalgia for a romantic or golden past.⁵¹

As Robert J. Miller has shown, the cult of the vanishing Indian is the discursive counterpart of a legal doctrine: conquest through discovery or “the Doctrine of Discovery,” which posits that “the discovering country automatically gained sovereign and property rights in the lands of non-Christian, non European peoples” (9). The cult of the vanishing Indian assumes that “Indians were fated to fall before the march of the backwoodsmen” (Orians 5), thereby corroborating the legal doctrine of discovery, which presupposes that Europeans saw, arrived and took America. If the myth of the vanishing Indian derives from what Kant would call the colonialist arrival to discover, colonize and possess, hospitality as a work of mourning heralds a process of decolonization insofar as it signifies the arrival or emergence of those who remain or survive the process of colonialism. Thus, discussing frontier narratives in terms of the work of mourning as hospitality enables us to rethink the event of what Gerald Vizenor calls “survivance.” At

⁵¹ A number of Cooper’s readers have identified the myth of the Vanishing Indians in his novels. In his companion on Cooper Craig White argues that the myth “underlies much of the romantic nostalgia of the Leather-Stocking Tales” (78). For Molly McGarry, Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans* together with Longfellow’s *Song of Hiawatha* and Stone’s *Metamora; or The Last of the Wampanoags* constitute a “staple of [antebellum] American literature and popular culture” through which these texts “moved antebellum audience to sentimental tears” but also “provided the perfect backdrop for the march of progress and civilization” (71).

the same time, it also helps us attend to the arrival or return of the subject who survives, which, in turn, initiates the process of undoing colonialism.

A number of Americanists have traced this figure of decolonization in American literature and history. Richard Slotkin, for instance, locates in the frontier narratives a drama of separation from the Old World, regression to the natural state of the savage Indians, and regeneration of European emigrants as “Americans” in the New World. Slotkin calls this drama “mythopoesis,” which he believes grounds American literature as well as American identity. Mythopoesis in the frontier for him stages the archetypal conflict between the hunter and the hunted, Thetis (law) and Moira (fate), reason and the unconscious, and colonists and Native Americans. Like all myths, the myth of the frontier resolves this conflict through the violent ritual of defeating and killing the opponent; yet, what interests Slotkin in this process is how the violent ritual culminates in renewal and regeneration of a new American identity. For Slotkin, rebirth of the colonists as Americans reconciles the mythic opposites as if in displacing “Indians” to make the wilderness habitable, European emigrants also allow and invite the spirit of the vanquished Native Americans to inhabit their new subjectivity as guest. In *Gunfighter Nation* Slotkin remarks that the myth of the frontier “represented the redemption of American spirit or fortune as something to be achieved by playing through a scenario of separation, temporary regression to a more primitive or ‘natural’ state, and *regeneration through violence*” (12). For Slotkin, “playing” the drama of separation from the Old World, arrival of European emigrants in the New World, and their regression to a primitive or natural state not only results in the violent removal of Native Americans but also in regenerating the emigrants as Americans.

In *Playing Indian*, Philip J. Deloria describes the emergence of a similar subjectivity that incorporates both Native Americans and Europeans. Recalling an incident during the Boston Tea Party in 1773, Deloria argues that in raising the chorus of Indian war hoops, and in donning Indian war-costumes and paint before tossing tea into the harbor, the Tea Partiers give expression to “playing Indian,” “a persistent tradition in American culture” and a crucial scene of the emergence of revolutionary national subjectivity (7). While Slotkin and Deloria theorize the return of Native Americans through their concept of complex and hybrid national subjectivity, they keep this return clearly within the context of national identity. The figures of revenant I intend to trace in this chapter antedate and surpass national identity. At the same time, these figures of revenant cannot either be Kant’s visitors, for their arrival differs from Kant’s cosmopolitan notion of universal rights based on trade and commerce. Thus, besides locating the scene of mourning as hospitality in Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, and Bird’s *Nick of the Woods*, I also discuss alternative sites of survivance and arrival of the revenant in Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*.

Tears, Mourning and Hospitality

How can tears ever be a sign of welcome and hospitality? Can something associated with death and departure, mourning and loss signify arrival and welcome? Yet, how else, if not in tears, does one “move” towards, and welcome the guest? Is it possible to be hospitable yet remain unmoved by a stranger’s movement towards us? Greeting a stranger without any emotion or merely with a smile might betray the affectedness of our welcome, even our hesitation and unwillingness to receive the guest, whereas a tearful

welcome would indicate that the guest's arrival has touched our heart and claimed a place in the interior of our very being.

Jean de Lery in *History of the Voyage to the Land of Brazil, Otherwise called America* evokes a similar overlap of lamentation and reception, and mourning and hospitality when he describes a Tupinamba ritual of “weeping greeting.”⁵² In this South American Indian ritual, hosts greet and welcome their visitor by shedding tears. As soon as the guest arrives, writes de Lery, “he is seated in a cotton bed suspended in the air, and remains there for a short while without saying a word. Then the women come and surround the bed, crouching with their buttocks against the ground and with both hands over their eyes; in this manner weeping their welcome to the visitor, they will say a thousand things in his praise” (164). Tupinamba weepers welcome as if the guest were one of their dead or lost returning home. Tupinamba ritual of hospitality is associated, to cite Jacques Derrida's *Of Hospitality*, with “the cult of the dead in which a stranger is welcomed like a revenant” (359).⁵³ In the ritual a stranger's arrival signifies an unexpected return of the dead for which the living are not prepared at all. The Tupinambas weep while greeting the stranger as if overtaken by the surprise return of the loved one whom they least expected to see. Still wondering what a proper response would be at the arrival of the guest, though never failing to make the guest feel once again at home by praising him or her, the Tupinambas weep as if they were the ones in

⁵² A similar practice of “wailing to welcome” was also found among Hawaiians, whose welcoming (*heahea*) would be followed by a wail (*uwe*). The words of *uwe* were always spontaneous and never memorized so that they expressed the affection of the host for the returned guest. At the time of wailing-welcome, they would mention loved ones, home, the hills and the sea, loved ones who had passed on during the guest's absence. “One person might do the wailing while others sat about and wept silently” (Handy & Pukui 173).

⁵³ Revenant, which, as a gerund, means “returning” or “coming back,” and as a noun, it denotes, “ghost” or “apparition” or “phantom,” is used by Jacques Derrida in many of his texts including *The Specter of Marx* in order to signify the principle of iteration, repetition, repression, history, memory, past, return of the repressed, haunting of the other, or entities that refuse to die and be fully present in a given moment.

need of welcome and refuge, as if they feared the possible shortcomings or even failure of their hospitality to the stranger. They weep as if they were responsible for the other's death or disappearance. Had their hospitality been adequate and complete, the guest would have never left them in the first place. The return of the dead that takes them by surprise not only makes them aware that mourning and hospitality to the dead remain forever incomplete, therefore interminable and impossible, it also makes them infinitely responsible for the death of the stranger. This interminable nature of mourning in Tupinamba Indian ritual makes hospitality a form of the return of the repressed in which the dead is not considered forever lost, and hospitality to strangers become the incomplete and agonizing politics of memory and history.

It is this return of the repressed that seems to compel James Fenimore Cooper to conclude his novel *The Last of the Mohicans* with an elaborate scene of mourning as if to suggest that one cannot be hospitable to the dead without shedding tears in mourning, and that mourning will somehow make the return of the dead possible. The very phrase "Last of the Mohicans" is, to cite Richard Slotkin's "Introduction" to the novel, "an elegiac phrase" and "Cooper never loves his Indians so much as when he is watching them disappear" (xxv). Yet the narrative survives the Indians' death, and after recounting the "dastardly deed" of Uncas's murder by Magua and his own "rapid flight to destruction" from the mountain when shot by Hawkeye, the narrator returns to report that the "sun found the Lenape, on the succeeding day, a nation of mourners" (424). Alice, Munro and Heyward's reunion, Uncas and Cora's murder, and Magua's disappearance already mark the climactic ending of the novel, which for many critics epitomizes the nineteenth

century myth of the vanishing Indian.⁵⁴ When the readers have already witnessed in the penultimate chapter of the novel the climactic battle between Uncas and Magua and its disastrous outcome in which both of them fall, then the details about the funeral of Uncas and Cora only appear to be redundant.⁵⁵ If Cooper's purpose in the novel is mainly to portray "the clash between red and white cultures" (McWilliams 12), the questions remain: why does he supplement the novel with a coda on mourning? Does Cooper intend to imply that being "a nation of mourners," a "Ienape" (people) in mourning is the inevitable fate of Indians after the arrival of European settlers in America?

If Cooper characterizes Native Americans, especially the Delawares, whom Magua taunts for being "women," as a nation of mourners, then why does his coda include Munro, Heyward and Hawkeye in the work of mourning? Is it merely Cooper's nostalgia and wish-fulfillment, his unrealistic desire, as D. H. Lawrence would say, to make the streams of red and white life flowing in opposite directions "meet and mingle soothingly" (Lawrence 52)? Or it is his attempt to construct what Mary Louise Kete would call "a collaborative self" formed by an ongoing, reciprocal relationship "in which the boundaries between self and other, past and present, alive and dead are constantly being negotiated" (181)? How can one collaborate, even just for wish-fulfillment, with

⁵⁴ In *The National Uncanny*, Bergland notes that *The Last of the Mohicans* repeatedly, even obsessively, returns to the familiar trope of the vanishing Indian," one of them is Cooper's use of the verb "gliding" for Magua's or Uncas' movement in the novel (86). Dippie in *The Vanishing American* remarks that "Chingachgook is fiction's most memorable Vanishing American" (22). In *Reading the Early Republic*, Robert Fergusson remarks that though *The Last of the Mohicans* cannot be solely responsible for promoting it, yet it undoubtedly belongs to some forty American novels published between 1824 and 1834 that dwell on the "theme of the vanishing Indian" (254). Harry J. Brown makes the novel part of the antebellum historical romances that aimed both at producing national literature and "nurturing a national amnesia that scholars have called the vanishing Indian" (31).

⁵⁵ Terence Martin also refers to this sense of aperture between two components that make *The Last of the Mohicans*: atrocity and requiem. According to Martin, the novel shifts from one kind of history characterized by both European and Native American atrocity to the requiem for Native Americans that constitutes a different notion of history (Martin 64). Yet as in Cooper's novel, in Martin too the other notion of history is only mentioned in the concluding paragraph as if it were an afterthought, an appendage to history proper.

someone whom one considers dead? Is this work of mourning a “valediction of weeping,” which eventually fortifies the vanishing, and ensures that the vanished person never returns at all? ⁵⁶ If Cooper’s scene of mourning promises the return of the repressed, is mourning, then, Cooper’s idea of receiving and welcoming the vanishing and repressed Indian?

Without a doubt, mourning involves memory – keeping the memory of the lost or dead person alive in the mourner. At the same time, as Sigmund Freud has shown, mourning, especially a successful work of mourning, must entail forgetting. According to Freud, the work of mourning, unlike melancholia, must be a temporary condition, which runs its natural course before “being overcome after a certain lapse of time” by which the mourner displaces or forgets the lost object of love (Freud 244). This self-contradictory impulse in mourning (in which the mourner at once recalls and receives the lost person and also seeks to erase or displace the memory of that person) structures the sentimental representation of Native Americans in nineteenth century American frontier narratives, which at once mourn and welcome Native Americans, and, as in the typical “work” of a successful mourning, seek to overcome the memory and forget them. As Mitchell Breitwieser notes, the “massive losses of the Native Americans through epidemic and war” impressed into “the thoughts and feelings of European Americans in complex ways” (71), yet the European Americans’ mournful response is merely a sublimation of the undesirable and repressive force of death through which the Puritans sought to bridge mourning and the state (72). It is, as Breitwieser notes, a “splendid opportunity,” a

⁵⁶ Here the reference is to John Donne’s poem “Valediction of Weeping. As William Empson unambiguously puts in *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, what the speaker of Donne’s poem bids farewell to is not the lover, but tears themselves because the speaker knows that once he leaves he may not weep at all. For Empson, the speaker seems to say: “let me cry while I can yet see your face, because my tears will be worth nothing, may in fact, not flow at all, when once I have lost sight of you” (139).

“defensive structure,” to gain control of self, or “tolerability of one’s understanding of loss” (36). This chapter examines the “work of mourning” as a form of hospitality in Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans*, and Bird’s *Nick of the Woods*. I argue that these works evoke mourning as a form of hospitality to strangers – dead or vanishing “Indians” in Cooper, and dead children and women in Bird – yet they employ the work of mourning as an instrument to at once establish contact with the stranger, and to forget, and repress the complex history of the “object” of mourning, especially the history of what Gerald Viznor calls the “survance” of Native Americans.⁵⁷ I will conclude the chapter with a discussion of a novel by Native American writer, Leslie Marmon Silko. I critique the necropolitics embedded in Cooper and Bird’s reception of Native Americans in their work, and show how Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* attends to the work of the return of the “repressed” Native Americans.⁵⁸

Before examining these individual texts, I would like to recall the larger context from American history and literature – especially the critical traditions of the American Jeremiad, sentimentalism, melancholia, and race – that entwines mourning, hospitality, America, and Native Americans. Recalling this context would help us distinguish the notions of the American Jeremiad, sentimentalism and melancholy from the affective hospitality through mourning that I discuss in this chapter. Even though mourning in America has become the dominant national emotion only after the tragedy of September 11, in American literature it goes back at least to the rhetoric of Jeremiad born from a

⁵⁷ Echoing Derrida’s notions of “sur-vie” or “afterlife,” and “specter,” Viznor argues that practices of survance, “unmistakable in native stories, natural reason, remembrance, traditions, and customs,” creates a sense of native presence over absence, nihilism, and victimry” (Viznor 1).

⁵⁸ “Necropolitics” here echoes Achille Mbembe, who defines the term as “the ultimate expression of sovereignty,” which resides “in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (Mbembe 11).

sense of failure of the Puritan “errand into the wilderness,” which many critics and historians consider to be *the* process of Americanization. As Perry Miller explains, the notion of the errand into the wilderness conceived aboard *Arabella* in 1630, and expressed in sermons like Winthrop’s “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630) that put forward the idea of covenant with God, failed in its mission to establish a city upon a hill and a government both civil and ecclesiastic for the cohabitation and consortship of the Puritans. According to Miller, this failure to establish a city of refuge, and a hospitable government gave birth to a large body of literature in early America that resembled the Biblical lamentations of Jeremiah. Miller notes that “under the guise of the mounting wail of sinfulness, this incessant and never successful cry for repentance, the Puritans launched themselves upon the process of Americanization” (9). The failure of divine covenant or refuge led to a different process of “hospitality”: accommodating oneself in America. The “wail of sinfulness” or the unrelenting “cry for repentance,” for Miller, is at the heart of the process of Americanization, i.e. at the heart of American identity. Tears and lamentation constitute the basis of American subjectivity, for this “long threnody over a lost cause” of the errand in the wilderness, as Bercovitch would say later in *The American Jeremiad* (5), makes the American realize that *he* is not on anyone else’s but on *his* own errand in America. However, as Annette Kolodny reminds in *The Land Before Her*, the errand is from its very beginning exclusionary, therefore, inhospitable. The American on the errand in the wilderness is always a “he,” and never a “she,” for the myth of the Adam in the eroticized wilderness “excludes women” (5).⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Kolodny criticizes the myth of the American as Adam in which “an Eve could only be redundant;” yet by evoking both the captivity narrative and women’s “accommodation” in America through the domestic space of the garden as alternative narratives to “male anguish at lost Eden” (5), she comes very close to

Furthermore, what is important for the American is, to recall Perry Miller, not “the stones, storms, and Indians [and women, Kolodny would add], but the problems of his identity” (15). Neither Indians nor the frontier holds any meaning for Miller’s American, who is “left alone in America” with his abandoned, tormented and melancholic self. On the one hand, both Miller and Bercovitch foreground the role of jeremiad and wailing in the wilderness in the process of identity formation and Americanization, i.e. the process of accommodating oneself and making oneself at home in America. At the same time, by making the frontier and Native Americans irrelevant to this process of accommodation and “hospitality,” Miller and Bercovitch render the American “Jeremiah” incapable of mourning and responding to the laments of Native Americans produced by the very process of Euro-American “accommodation” on the continent, for example, during the decade-long “trail of tears” after the Indian Removal of 1830s.⁶⁰

This unwillingness to respond to the laments of Native Americans instead gets imposed back on Native Americans themselves. The sentimentalist literature recounting the violence of Indian Wars and the ordeals of captivity testify to the fact that Euro-Americans considered Indians incapable of understanding and responding to others’ suffering and pain. In *Decennium Luctuosum* (1699), for instance, Cotton Mather defines Indian captivity in terms of the captor’s inability to understand the pain of the captives when they “Whip and Beat the Small children, until they set ‘em into grievous outcries”

America as the Garden myth. As we will see later in this chapter, narratives of captivity, though full of anguish and mourning, are also complicit with the civilizing myth of American Adam in the wilderness.

⁶⁰ Recalling the trail of tears that pushed Cherokees to west of Mississippi a missionary wrote: “It is mournful to see how reluctantly these people go away, even the stoutest hearts melt into tears when they turn their faces towards the setting sun - & I am sure this land will bedewed with a Nation’s tears – if not with their blood” (quoted in *The Earth Shall Weep*, 170).

and throw the children to the mothers to calm them down. Mather directly addresses the readers and remarks: "I know not reader, whether you will be moved by this narrative, I know I could not write it without weeping" (213). What makes Mather cry is not the failure of the Puritan errand in the wilderness, but the Indian's inability to cry, his failure to understand the crying of an infant and the ordeal of the child's mother. A similar assessment of Indians' inability to comprehend, and respond to others' suffering appears in Mary Rowlandson's narrative of her captivity. Even though her account undergoes a subtle change of tone regarding Native Americans from outright condemnation in the beginning of the narrative to a more ambivalent attitude towards those Indians who saved her life during captivity, Rowlandson still expresses outrage at the singing and dancing of the captors at the scene of the raid where houses were burning, and bodies of the slain settlers were stripped naked, chopped and scattered everywhere. "It was a solemn sight" she writes, "to see so many christians lying in their blood, some here and some there like a company of sheep torn by wolves. All of them stript naked by a company of hell-hounds, roaring, singing, ranting, and insulting, as if they would have torn our hearts out" (9-10). Rowlandson describes the Christ-like suffering of the "christians" lying in their own blood; she condemns the cruelty and violence inflicted upon the sheep-like "christians" by the Indians, who deny their victims a proper burial, and the survivor access to mourning. By comparing Native Americans to a company of hell-hounds dancing to cannibalize the hearts of their victims, Rowlandson not only appropriates mourning but she also endorses colonial mission to civilize these savages, who lack human capacity to feel for others' pain and suffering.

Thus, sentimentalism – which emerged in American literature in the colonial period and flourished in mid-nineteenth-century women’s fiction – conceals this colonial subtext that appropriates sentiments and imposes on “savage” others the lack of human capacity to feel, thereby endorsing the mission to civilize these others: Indians, slaves and the working class. Sentiments that represent American independence itself also ground the teleological narrative of progress and civilization. In the excised section of the Declaration of Independence Jefferson urged Americans to “renounce forever these [British] unfeeling brethren” who are hiring Scots and mercenaries to destroy Americans (Jefferson 36). In antebellum America mothers were reading “advice manuals in order to learn how to be more sympathetic,” and the south claimed that “it cared for slaves,” and the north that “it was sympathetic because it opposed slavery” (Weinstein 1-2). Yet this sentimental and “melancholic nation,” promoting the dream of fellowship of strangers and “affective citizenship” (Caviello 174) curtailed the “possibilities of growth for a significant portion of a community” (Douglas 11).⁶¹

Sentimentalism, as Phillip Fisher claims, may provide “the weak and helpless within society . . . full representation through the central moral category of compassion” (Fisher 95); and it may also help critique patriarchal investment in consanguinity by extending the concept of family to “a family that is based on affection” (Weinstein 9); yet sentimentalism, as Ann Douglas shows, “damages” for it is “a way to protest a power to which one has already in part capitulated” (12). Thus, sentimentalism may represent “a bodily experience of anguish [and wound] caused by identification with the pain of

⁶¹ In exposing the complexity of sentimentalism in nineteenth century America, Ann Douglas notes that sentimentalism conceals the fact that the “values a society’s activity denies are precisely the one it cherishes,” (12). Recalling the description of Little Eva’s “beautiful death” in Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Douglas argues that Stowe presents Little Eva’s death as part of a protest against slavery, yet Stowe’s sentimental depiction “in no way hinders the working of that system” (12).

another” (Noble 295); at the same time, it requires complete identification of me and not me in which otherness and difference hardly survive (Michaelsen 60).⁶² If it does, it does only in a highly modulated form so as to create a “feeling of resemblance” with the sympathetic person (Crane 58).⁶³

It is important to contextualize Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* in the tradition of the Jeremiad and sentimentalism in order to move beyond the standard reception of the text as romanticization of Native Americans. In contrast to the tradition of the American Jeremiah in which Native Americans are irrelevant to national melancholia, and also contrary to a certain tradition of sentimentalism according to which Native Americans are incapable of mourning, Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* foregrounds mourning not only through the elaborate scene of Native American mourning at the end of the novel but also by making it a dominant theme in the text. The term “last” in the title prefigures this melancholic impulse in the novel. Within this melancholic vein through which Cooper intends to mourn the last of the Mohicans lies another current of melancholy: one of the Mohicans mourning the loss of Native American life and land after the arrival of Europeans in the continent. Early on in the text, the melancholic Mohican, Chingachgook, mourns the blossoms of long lost summers, which he likens to his family members that departed to “the land of the spirits,” thereby connecting his family to the world and the land they lived in. He expresses the same symbiotic relationship between his life and the land when he concedes that he is “on the hill-top and must go down into

⁶² In “Our Sentiments,” Scott Michaelsen argues that sentimentalism is based on the premise that “affect is similar among all beings,” thereby ruling that “there finally is one emotional identity in the world,” and that there is “no relationality of difference, there is no difference” (66).

⁶³ In *Higher Law*, Gregg Crane remarks that sentimentalism compels a careful modulation of description of the other so that he or she resembles both the readers and the society at large. This modulation gives birth not to justice but to “paternalistic ethics – the obligation of the powerful to care for the weak” (59).

the valley,” adding melancholically that “when Uncas follows in my footsteps, there will no longer be any of the blood of the sagamores, for my boy is the last of the Mohicans” (42-43). By evoking footsteps or movement towards the valley of death, towards the land of the spirit, in short, towards otherness as part of the process of Chingachgook’s mourning, Cooper imperceptibly switches from his own mourning of the last of the Mohicans to Chingachgook mourning the fast approaching demise of the Mohican clan. Chingachgook’s ability to hear the footsteps of the departed “blossoms” of the past, and that of his son’s and his own death makes him a melancholic subject: one who is both the subject that loses, and the object that is lost.

While Freud draws a distinction between mourning and melancholia by observing that there is a loss of the world in mourning and the depletion of the ego in melancholia,⁶⁴ Cooper’s Chingachgook has both lost his ego as well as the world. Chingachgook listens to the departing footsteps of his tribe members at the time when he is himself on the hilltop preparing to descend into the valley of death. As if echoing his ancestors’ footsteps, his son trudges towards him in order to follow him to the land of the spirit. Chingachgook’s mourning consists of listening and responding to the footsteps of both his ancestors and his only heir; it consists of imagining a time when he was and will not be present. In fact, it seeks to mourn the time when there will be no one to mourn the last of the Mohicans. Thus, by listening to the footsteps from the past as well as the future, and by waiting for those footsteps to arrive as if to receive, respond and welcome them (for there is or will be no one to receive them or grieve over their death), Chingachgook makes his mourning at once perpetual or interminable, and untimely and impossible.

⁶⁴ In “Mourning and Melancholia” writes that in mourning “it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself” (246).

Unlike Freud for whom success and failure of the process distinguish mourning from melancholia, Chingachgook's grief hovers in the gray zone between completion and incompleteness, termination and the interminable. Chingachgook mourns the extinction of the Mohicans precisely at the moment when both his and his son's life is close to termination; yet, by conjuring up a form of grieving at the time when he will not and cannot be present or alive, he succeeds in rendering his mourning interminable and incomplete. Mourning such as his is bound to remain incomplete and impossible not simply because it evokes a time when everything will have been lost including the mourner/s and the mourned, but also because both the subject of mourning and the object of mourning will not even have access to mourning or a place to mourn. Chingachgook explains it to Hawkeye how Europeans' arrival resulted in a fast loss of Mohican land; so much so that his people lost access to the graves of his ancestors:

My tribe is the grandfather of nations, but I am an unmixed man. The blood of the chiefs is in my veins, where it must stay forever. The Dutch landed, and gave my people the fire-water; they drank until the heavens and the earth seemed to meet, and they foolishly thought they had found the Great Spirit. Then they parted with their land. Foot by foot, they were driven back from the shores, until I, that am a chief and a sagamore, have never seen the sun shine but through the trees, and have never visited the graves of my fathers. (42)

The impossibility and interminability of Chingachgook's mourning result from the fact that by taking the land from the Mohicans, the Dutch prevented them from even visiting the graves of their ancestors, and thus from mourning. What is considered an irrelevant wilderness in the tradition of American Jeremiah is, for Chingachgook, the key to his interminable mourning. Haunted by the footsteps of the settlers who took his land foot by foot, by the receding footsteps of his ancestors, and by his son's and his own march towards death, Chingachgook mourns the fact that he is prevented from mourning, that

neither his son nor himself will receive a proper mourning. After arriving in the Mohican nation and being received by them, the Dutch offered fire-water so that the intoxicated and disoriented natives would recklessly part with their land. What aggravates the abuse of hospitality by the Dutch is that they not only hold the host hostage – driving them away, and on the run where they see the sun but only “through the trees”– they also deny them mourning. By snatching away the ancestral land of the natives through the fire-water, the colonists make mourning at once impossible and incomplete yet urgent for Native Americans.

It is regarding this issue of the abuse of hospitality and denial of mourning by the settlers that the two warring parties of Native Americans in the novel – that of Chingachgook and Magua – uncannily concur with each other. While explaining to Cora, one of Munro’s daughters, why he held her captive, Magua, as if repeating Chingachgook’s words, remarks that the fire-water Europeans dispensed among the natives is responsible for his acts:

“Listen,” said the Indian [Magua] laying his hand firmly upon her arm, as if willing to draw her utmost attention to his words. . . “Magua was born a chief and a warrior among the red Hurons of the lakes; he saw the suns of twenty summers make the snows of twenty winters run off in the streams before he saw a pale-face; and he was happy! Then, his Canada fathers came into the woods, and taught him to drink the fire-water, and he became a rascal. The Hurons drove him from the graves of his fathers, as they would chase the hunted buffalo. He ran down the shores of the lakes, and followed their outlet to the ‘city of cannon.’ There he hunted and fished, till the people chased him again through the woods into the arms of his enemies. The chief who was born a Huron, was at last a warrior among the Mohawks. . . Was it the fault of Le Renard [Magua] that his head was not made of rock? Who gave him the fire-water? who made him a villain? ’twas the pale-faces, the people of your own color” (146).

Magua summarizes his life by recounting the early days before the arrival of Europeans, and his chieftainship among his people. Then he reveals how he was exposed to the fire-

water, which led to his expulsion from the Huron community, and compelled him to leave the land and graves of his forefathers. Once ousted by his own people, the tribe he took refuge with also refused to keep him as guest. Prevented from visiting his ancestors' graves, and unable to mourn them, Magua mourns the days when he was happy and was not exposed to the "fire-water." The abuse of hospitality by Europeans reduced Magua to a complete stranger unto himself – driving him, like Chingachgook, away from the graves his fathers, and to the arms of his enemy, as if he himself were his enemy. Magua tells his story in the third person in order to suggest that he was no longer the same person. The subject of his narrative had already passed on, and the narrator was not just narrating but also mourning the death of the subject of his narrative.

While the imposition of colonial estrangement leads Magua to inflict a similar estrangement on Munro's daughters by holding them hostage, it has quite a different effect on Chingachgook, who not only befriends Hawkeye, but also seeks a relationship against and beyond the colonial relationship of host and guest with Europeans. It is at this moment of estrangement from colonial relationship that Chingachgook hears and responds not only to the footsteps of his ancestors, but also to the footsteps of European travelers lost in the woods. Even a scout like Hawkeye depends on this extraordinary capacity of the native American: "What do you hear, Chingachgook?" he asks, "for to my ears the woods are dumb?" (45).

Before the scout asked Chingachgook to tell him what the latter heard, the Mohican had already heard the "approaching footsteps" of a party of English travelers, who were lost on their way to fort William Henry. Magua, the Indian runner, had misled the party that included the British Major Hayward, and his companions, Alice and Cora,

whom the major was deputed to escort to their father, Colonel Munro at fort William Henry. The Mohicans, together with the scout, decided to take the strangers with them to their secret place, the last piece of land hidden so far from the colonists, for they wanted to “save these tender blossoms from the fangs of the worst serpents” (62) as if these “tender blossoms” were the same ones that Chingachgook said earlier he lost in the process of colonial incursion into the Mohican nation.

The Mohicans decided to welcome the strangers at the moment when they themselves had no home, no land, and no “blossoms” of the family; in short they extended hospitality when they too needed refuge. At the moment when they had no access even to the graves of their relatives, welcoming these “blossoms” was for them not only a way of mourning the death of their family members, but it was also a way to recall, revive and regain home, land and the family. Like the Tupinamba Indians, the Mohicans receive the strangers as if they were relatives coming back from the dead. The “weeping greeting” nature of their welcome gets emphasized in the conditions the hosts set for hospitality: “one is, to be still as these sleeping woods, let what will happen; and the other is, to keep the place where we shall take you, forever a secret from all mortal men” (62). In response to Heyward’s offer of reward for refuge, and in contrast to European abuse of hospitality through the dispensation of the fire-water, the Mohicans and their friend lay down these two laws of hospitality: some kind of identification both with the woods or the land, and with the spirit of the dead by guarding the secret of the place from all mortals. When Heyward agrees to abide by the Mohicans’ laws of hospitality: to be as still as the woods, and to keep the secret of the place from all mortals,

the hosts take their guests to Glenn's Fall, where they take shelter in a grave-like cave surrounded by water and woods.

The Mohicans and the scout set two laws of hospitality, which are in direct opposition to the colonial abuse of hospitality, which either believes in acquiring land through the fire-water or in hospitality in exchange, as Heyward proposes, for a reward. "Hospitality" in the colonial context is just a means to purchase and possess property. This kind of hospitality, if it is one at all, reduces home to an object that can be owned, bought and sold, exchanged and circulated among individual owners. It represents an abuse of hospitality that changes guests and hosts into persons bound by economic relations of profit and loss, and rewards and "gifts." It is the "valediction of weeping" that we see in Donne's poem in which the economic motif of minting, coining, worth, and profit overwhelm all other relations. The "weeping greeting" (as in Tupinamba ritual) of Mohicans and the scout in contrast is hospitality that represents mourning, i.e. loss. In other words this kind of hospitality marked by melancholia or mourning of the host seeks to extend welcome at the moment when the host has "lost" the space to welcome, and even the self that bids welcome. The weeping greeting of the melancholic host, who is himself both the one losing and the one that is lost, does not conceive of hospitality as a means to maximize profit by treating land as an object to be exchanged, owned, and circulated, and an individual as the sole proprietor or owner of the land. The "weeping greeting" of the Mohicans treats land as a secret or sacred place to be guarded from all mortal humanity, from all relations of economic exchanges. In fact hospitality for them is possible only at this secret, and grave-like threshold which is not only what remains of

space or land in the wake of colonial occupations and settlement, but it is also what remains secret, thus sacred and unknowable.

On the one hand, Cooper's novel evokes this impossible, interminable hospitality of the Mohicans in which greeting is mingled with mourning, in which the mourners/hosts mourn the fact that they lack access to the places of mourning, to the graves of their ancestors, and in which the hosts welcome strangers as if they were relatives returning from the dead; as if the hosts could not ignore the footsteps or arrival of the strangers for the fear that the strangers would return to the land of the spirit again and remain without a mourning. It is therefore the hosts' responsibility to bid the strangers welcome even at the risk of exposing the hosts' place and risking the hosts' life. Before being a captivity narrative, or a novel about courtship, or romanticization of Indians, or a historical narrative set in the Seven years War, *The Last of the Mohicans* is about this act of impossible and strange hospitality to strangers.

On the other hand, however, this moment of strange and impossible hospitality disappears as soon as Cooper's narrative moves towards domesticating the stranger through a drama of resemblance characteristic to sentimentalist narratives. As soon as the "hosts" (Mohicans) and the "guests" (colonists) arrive at Glenn's Fall, the narrative veers towards describing Uncas, who has not been seen by the guests excepts for fleeting glances as he moves, as an exotic specimen from Grecian history. The narrative unveils Uncas' graceful and unrestrained attitude, his "high [and] haughty features" that include "dignified elevation of his receding forehead, together with all the finest proportions of a noble head" (72). The narrator goes on to remark that in the semi-darkness of the cave, the young Mohican looks like "some precious relic of the Grecian chisel, to which life

had been imparted by the intervention of a miracle” (73). By comparing Uncas to a Grecian sculpture, Cooper not only romanticizes the Native American, he also familiarizes the scene of strange hospitality – strangers’ weeping greeting to strangers.

By placing Uncas in Greek history, Cooper makes the Native American resemble the travelers/guests to be welcomed at the Fall. It also converts the grave-like landscape of the cave into the ruins of Greece populated by figures and artworks already destined for destruction. This metaphoric conversion of the Fall into Greece, and the Native Americans into Grecian sculptures helps Cooper not only to familiarize, domesticate, and inherit the land but also to impart a sense that like Greek antiquity, the noble Mohicans carry their destruction in themselves. Uncas is a perfect but lifeless sculpture which can be awakened only by a miracle. Cooper further underscores the equation between Native Americans and the Grecian ruin both destined for self-destruction in the final chapter of the novel where the narrator returns to report that the Mohicans and the Hurons are destroyed neither due to the Seven Years War fought among the British, French and many native tribes nor due to European abuse of Native American hospitality. Instead, the Native Americans brought destruction upon themselves due to their internal and ancient animosity:

The sun found the Lenape, on the succeeding day, a nation of mourners. The sounds of the battle were over, and they had fed fat their ancient grudge, and had avenged their recent quarrel with the Mengwe, by the destruction of the whole community. The black and murky atmosphere that floated around the spot where the Hurons had encamped, sufficiently announced, of itself the fate of that wandering tribe; while hundreds of ravens, that struggled above the bleak summits of the mountains, or swept, in noisy flocks, across the wide ranges of the woods, furnished a frightful direction to the scene of the combat. In short, any eye, at all practiced in the signs of a frontier warfare, might easily have traced all those unerring evidences of the ruthless results which attend an Indian vengeance. (502-3)

The Mengwes were completely wiped out, according to Cooper's narrator, not due to a colonial war among Europeans – in this case the French and the British – and the Hurons, the Delawares, and the Mohicans, but due to the inter-tribal “ancient grudge” between Delawares/Mohicans and Iroquois/Hurons. The destruction of Magua/Hurons and Uncas/Delawares/Mohicans is a tale of “an Indian vengeance” to which European colonists were both accidental victims and witnesses. Thus, by locating the cause of destruction within Native Americans themselves, Cooper concludes the narrative in a teleological way in which self-destruction of the natives is “a natural way of things” or a part of “progressive history” (Barker & Safire 22). According to this progressive history, the European mourns not to respond or take responsibility for the destruction caused [as Cooper's Native American characters earlier suggested] by the abuse of hospitality that resulted in dispossession, but to inherit the continent vacated by the self-destructive, therefore, “vanishing Indians.”

The scene of mourning with which the novel concludes, therefore, contains this double of “weeping greeting,” which makes Native Americans responsible for their own demise. It functions as a “valediction of weeping,” in which mourning succeeds in displacing the object that is lost. The mourning in the scene is shrouded in the drama of sentimental resemblance in which, as in the Greek tragedy – Sophocles' *Antigone* – only those that “resemble” are mourned. In Sophocles' play Creon decides to honor the death of a brother and disgrace the other one because the former, Eteocles, dies while defending the city, while the other, Polyneices, dies a rebel fighting against the city. Similarly in Cooper's novel, Magua is left without a burial or mourning. The narrator even shies away from calling Magua's demise a death. At the end of the battle between Uncas and him,

his “dark person” (unlike Uncas’s body chiseled like a Greek sculptor) simply vanishes off the mountain in “its rapid flight to destruction” (502). Magua does not die; he destroys himself or simply vanishes. Cooper refuses to dignify Magua by calling it “death,” as if granting him “death” would make him eligible for mourning, or worse demand mourning.

The Hurons who fight with Magua and are killed by Uncas and his team also suffer the same indignity as their leader: they are left without a burial and to the mercy of vultures and ravens. The massacre of Hurons at the end of the novel resembles the earlier massacre at Fort William Henry, which provided Cooper a chance to further vilify Magua as a savage Indian incapable of compassion and tears. Like Creon’s refusal to acknowledge Polyneices’ death, and right to burial and mourning, Cooper’s narrator refuses to exhibit sentimentality in response to the scattered cadavers of Native Americans preyed upon by vultures. As *Antigone* marks the transition of history from matriarchy to patriarchy, from kinship to law (Butler 1), so does Cooper’s mourning at the end of the *The Last of the Mohicans*: it marks the transition from Native Americans to the progressive history of the colonists.

Displacement through mourning in the novel takes place through Munro’s vision of the after-life assembly of all people in front of God. Asking Hawkeye to convey his gratitude for the Delaware women weeping at Cora’s grave, Munro remarks:

“Say to these kind and gentle females, that a heartbroken and falling man returns them his thanks. Tell them, that the being we all worship, under different names, will be mindful of their charity; and that the time shall not be distant when we may assemble around his throne without distinction of sex, or rank, or color.” (515)

Munro's mourning evokes the future reception in the kingdom of God (where "all" will be universally welcome), thereby displacing issues of colonialism, native access to the graves of their ancestors, and thus to mourning.

Unlike the Mohicans who create a loop of time by listening to the footsteps at once of their ancestors, their imminent death and the arrival of the guest at the present as if it were the Mohicans that are walking towards them in order to respond to them and to welcome them, Munro and Hawkeye merely wait for the universal welcome and friendship of futurity. By conjuring up this universal welcome in the kingdom of God at the closing moments of the novel, Munro's mourning not only fails to revive the time of the Native Americans, but it also fails to respond to them and to work toward welcoming them, even though such a work at best would remain impossible and interminable.

Mourning as displacement in Robert Bird's *Nick of the Woods*

Critics often juxtapose Robert Bird's "realistic" portrayal of the frontier to Cooper's "romantic" depiction of Native Americans. They argue that Bird makes an important change in Cooper's narrative pattern – he "eliminates [Cooper's] the noble savage altogether" (Cavelti 209). In *Regeneration through Violence* Richard Slotkin argues that Bird's protagonist, Nathan Slaughter, a Quaker turned Indian killer, revises the concept of the frontier hero as developed by Cooper and Filson. According to Slotkin, with the character of Nathan Slaughter, "Bird makes a profound comment on the Puritan character and the psychological consequences of captivity mythology," and as a southerner, Bird brings "the psychology and symbolism of racism" into play in the novel (510). H. Daniel Peck goes further in his appreciation for Bird's novel by arguing that even though the plot of the novel reduces the conflict to simple contrast between "white

civilization” and “red savagery,” and lacks Cooper’s treatment of “forces and complications of history” in *The Last of the Mohicans*; yet the “dark, interior vision [of Bird’s novel] links it to the work of Poe, Hawthorn, and Melville” (241).

In the preface of *Nick of the Woods* Bird himself wishes to be seen apart from Cooper. When *Nick of the Woods* was published, he writes, “the genius of Chateaubriand and of our own (not to speak of Marmontel before them) Cooper had thrown a poetic illusion over the Indian character” by portraying them as “the embodiment of grand and tender sentiment” in the style of the beau ideal possessing virtues such as bravery, gentleness, refinement, love, and honor (Bird iv). Bird’s purpose on the contrary “confined him to real Indians. He drew them as, in his judgment, they existed – and as, according to all observation, they still exist wherever not softened by cultivation – ignorant, violent, debased, brutal” (v).

Despite these dissimilarities, however, both Cooper and Bird’s texts hold in common the primacy of mourning and centrality of welcome in the Frontier. Once we foreground the question of mourning and hospitality, what appears to be oversimplified in Bird’s *Nick of the Woods* acquires a complicated dimension, and the “dark interior” of the novel that reminds Peck of Poe, Melville or Hawthorne’s work begins to emerge. Both *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Nick of the Woods* are about mourning – being the last to mourn the death of the family and friends, and loss of land and lives during Indian Wars. Bird begins the novel with the opening stanza of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* – “The world was all before them. . .” – thereby comparing the “the grief of our first parents” at their ouster from Eden with the departure of “the American exiles” in search of “a second Elysium” (13). Like Adam and Eve, who dropped “some natural tears, but wiped them

soon,” American exiles forsook their homes in order to “build their hearths among the deserts of the West” (13). In other words, the mourning of the American Jeremiad became an inescapable prelude to the arrival and reception of the exiles in America.

Bird’s Biblical analogy of bidding farewell to and shedding tears for the lost paradise, and welcoming the New World, the earthly paradise, foreshadows the contradictory yet interconnected movements in the novel between mourning and hospitality; arrival and expulsion; banishment and inheritance; displacement and possession; and free-will or independence and colonialism. All three main characters, Roland, Edith and the titular Nick, Nathan Slaughter, are caught in these contradictory movements. Like their fathers (who fell out of favor with the eldest and loyalist brother by joining the army of Revolution, thereby forfeiting any chance of inheriting the family’s vast fortune in Virginia), Roland and Edith Forrester were banished by their rich uncle. Homeless and penniless, they set out in search of fortune in the frontiers of Kentucky. Roland precipitated his and his cousin’s banishment by joining, like his father, the army of the Congress, for he abhorred all things British, which he thought to be incompatible with “natural rights” and a system of liberal and equitable government (37).

Unlike Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, set in the pre-Independence America of 1757, Bird’s novel was set in the tail end of the Revolution, in 1782. In Bird’s allegory of the American nation, Roland’s march towards Independence and Revolution, like his father’s before him or like the march of “our first parents” towards the earthly paradise, resulted in estrangement from home and exile in the wilderness. Roland’s footsteps toward the Revolution take him away from what the narrator identifies as the “ancien regime” (36) in which primogeniture instead of free will and natural rights dictates the

laws of inheritance and succession. Mourning the loss of home and prosperity, Roland's movement towards Independence also takes him towards the "wilderness," which must provide refuge like the second Elysium. Moving upon the "wandering barbarian" or Native Americans, from whom "the desert was to be wrung" to fulfill the "future destinies of the land" (17), makes the mourning of the American exile or the citizen successful.

Upon their arrival at a colonial Station, Edith urges her cousin, Captain Roland (who is also her beloved, thereby again evoking the forbidden – because incestuous – and Edenic nature of their relationship) to "ride forward and salute the good people that are making us welcome" (20). Roland, still mourning the loss of their fathers' estate in Virginia, and wounded by the fact that Edith had to suffer due to his convictions, mutters in a bitter voice; "who is there on earth, Edith, to welcome us? Where shall *we* look for friends and kinsfolk, that the meanest of the company are now finding among yonder noisy barbarians [the exiles being welcomed by the frontiersmen at the Station]?" (20)

Seeing that Roland still mourns their "lost" estate in Virginia, Edith consoles him by reminding that they have nothing to mourn back in Virginia for they have a whole new world ahead of them. "What have we to mourn in the world we have left behind us?" she asks, adding, as if repeating Cooper's Chingachgook, "We are the last of our name and race" (20). While Roland still laments the fact that he is responsible for his cousin's banishment from Virginia, yet he bids "[f]arewell then to Fellhallow, to James River, and all," and welcomes the opportunity the wilderness of the Frontier offers. Echoing Milton's *Paradise Lost*, he exclaims: "the world is before us; and shame be upon me if I, who have health, strength, and youth to back my ambition, cannot provide you a refuge

and a home” (18). On the one hand, as the last of the “Forresters,” who have lost their home, and families, both Edith and Roland evoke the “weeping greeting” of Cooper’s Mohicans and the scout. Edith and Roland mourn the fathers and the estate they lost to the Revolution, and they greet the New World that is before them. On the other, by bidding farewell to the past and to history, and by echoing the Biblical myth of the Fall, the American Adam and Eve prepare not to greet the new world but to bid farewell to the work of mourning by forgetting the colonial past, and with a violent ontology of the present, snatch the New World from the savages. This ontology of the present that promises Roland and Edith refuge and home not only “displaces” the wilderness both as the New World after the Fall, and the New Nation after the Revolution, it also seeks to displace the inhabitants of wilderness – Native Americans, for the frontiersmen themselves become the savages in the process of domesticating the wilderness.

As soon as Rolland ventures in the wilderness of Kentucky, he would again mourn: this time the captivity of his cousin Edith whom Shawnees hold hostage at the behest of Richard Braxley, the lawyer who plots to usurp the Forrester estate in Virginia after the death of Roland’s uncle. Again at the time when Roland has lost his love – Edith – and he may lose his life as well, as he himself is taken hostage by the Indians, he meets Nathan Slaughter, apparently a peace-loving, non-violent and melancholic man, unremittingly mourning the slaughter, as he tells Roland, of his family by Shawnees. Nathan recounts the story of how Shawnees came upon his family, and with his gun and axe that he gave “to the Shawnee chief that he might know [Nathan] was a friend,” killed his mother, his wife and five children (249):

It is impossible to convey an idea of the extraordinary vehemence, the wild accents, the frantic looks, with which Nathan ended the horrid story,

into which he had been betrayed by his repining companion. His struggles to subdue the passions that the dreadful recollections of a whole family's butchery awoke in his bosom, only served to add double distortion to his changes of countenance, which, a better index of the convulsion within than were his broken, incoherent, half-inarticulate words, assumed at last an appearance so wild, so hideous, so truly terrific, that Roland was seized with horror deeming himself confronted with a raging maniac . . . Nathan dropped suddenly to the earth, as if struck down by a thunderbolt, his mouth foaming, his eyes distorted, his hands clenched, his body convulsed – in short exhibiting every proof of an epileptic fit, brought on by overpowering agitation of mind. (250)

A quick displacement of despair occurs after Roland witnesses this extraordinary transformation of “the man of peace” into a raging maniac; Roland forgets his own misery, and makes Nathan's story his own. Roland becomes, as if through displacement, part of Nathan's interminable mourning. It is interminable both in the sense that Nathan has yet to avenge his family's murder, and properly mourn their death, which he cannot even describe and relate without collapsing in an epileptic fit. This moment of displacement provokes Roland to declare “eternal war upon them [Indians] and their accursed race” and decides to seek undying vengeance and to pursue the wretches to death (252). Brought together by mourning – both mourning the loss of their loved ones – these two strangers welcome each other as if in befriending the other they bring back the memory of, or in Roland's case, the hope of rescuing their lost relatives. If Roland promises eternal war against Indians, Nathan, a man of peace, in turn promises Roland his assistance: “Thee enemies shall be pursued, and the maid thee loves shall be restored to thee arms” (253). Nathan promises Roland that he will assist the latter in killing Indians and rescuing Edith as if the maid were the member of his family returning from death.

Roland and Nathan's friendship forged with the aim to mourn and welcome the other's beloved relative(s) as one's own, thus not only brings together apparently two disparate stories (Roland & Edith's, and Nathan's) in the novel, it also brings together the Revolution (represented by Roland, the Captain of the army of the Congress) and the Westward march of Empire (represented by Nathan, one of the settlers and victims of the Indian wars in the frontier). In joining hands, Roland and Nathan also join contradictory movements of the narrative: independence or nation building and empire making; peace and war; hospitality and hostility; freedom and colonialism; and revolt against authority and the terror of authoritarianism.

However, besides making them listen to the footsteps and follow the traces of the lost relative(s), Roland and Nathan's "weeping greeting" also leads them to intense hostility, another displacement in the novel constitutes the climactic moment revealing to the reader the true and strange identity of the titular character. Rumors about Nick of the Woods are heard very early in the novel before neither the audience nor any other characters have been introduced to him. Nick was said to wander in the woods, violently killing Indians, and leaving on the bodies of his victims his unmistakable signature mark – a cross. The identity of this "monster," whom many settlers believed to be none other than the devil himself (chapter III) and the natives would call "the Jibbenainosay" or the "Spirit that walks," was unknown until the moment when Jibbenainosay arrives in the thick of the battle between Shawnees and Roland with his associates from the Station:

A tall warrior, hatchet in hand, with a dozen and more at his back, rushed upon the Virginian. But before he could strike, there came leaping with astonishing bounds over the bodies of the wounded and dying, and into the circle of fire, a figure that might have filled a better and braver warrior with dread. It was the medicine-man, and former captive, the Indian habiliments and paint still on his body and visage, though both were

flecked and begrimed with blood. In his left hand was a bundle of scalps, the same he had taken from the tent of Wenonga; the grizzled scalp-lock of the chief, known by the vulture feathers, beak and talons, still attached to it, was hanging to his girdle; while the steel battle-axe, so often wielded by Wenonga, was gleaming aloft in his right hand.

The savage recoiled, and with his loud yells of "The Jibbenainosay! The Jibbenainosay!" tuned to the fly, while even those behind him staggered back at the apparition of the destroyer . . . the axe of Wenonga, dripping with blood to the hilt, divided the rope at the single blow, and then Roland's finger were crushed in the grasp of his preserver, as the latter exclaimed, with a strange, half-frantic chuckle of triumph and delight, - 'The sees, friend! Thee thought I had deserted thee? Truly, truly thee was mistaken!'

"Hurrah for old Tiger Nathan! I will never say Q to a quaker again as long as I live!" exclaimed another voice" (369-370).

This is a scene of the arrival of the hero at the critical and climactic moment in the novel. Roland and his associates are surrounded by Wenonga and other Shawnees; Edith is held hostage by Braxley and Doe; and a Shawnee is about to axe off Roland's head when the tall figure of the mythical Jibbenainosay dramatically enters the scene, and turns the battle around. It is the first time that the characters of the novel and the readers have come face to face with Nick of the Woods. This unexpected guest-hero of the novel, however, arrives as a host as well – someone who provides refuge and protection to the other characters and resolution to the story. Introduced as a warrior with hatchet in hand as if he were an Indian chief coming to aid the Shawnees and kill the band of settlers attacking the Indian village, soon he is addressed as none other than the Jibbenainosay. When Roland, now freed from the clutch of the Shawnees by Nick of the Woods, hears the familiar frantic chuckle – "Thee sees, friend!" (370) – it dawns upon him that the mythical Jibbenainosay is none other than Nathan Slaughter himself.

This unexpected guest-host that arrives on the scene as the “preserver” of Roland, and addresses the latter as a “friend,” however, appears ironically as an Indian, upon whom, as we know, Roland had declared eternal war. His appearance as “an Indian,” his eternal enemy, is more than a disguise intended to secure a passage without discovery to the Shawnee village. He appears like an Indian warrior with a hatchet, and is dressed like an Indian and has war paint all over his face. He is “playing Indian,” to borrow Phillip Deloria’s terms. Unlike Deloria’s tea partiers, who quickly get out of the Indian outfit, wash off their war paint, return home their natural selves (Deloria 2), and be their real “me” underneath (Deloria 7), it is impossible for Nathan to be the real “me” underneath the Jibbenainosay. In other words, Nathan’s performance is more than “playing Indian.” He not only has the axe of Wenonga, the Shawnee chief, but he also has all the scalps that sometime decorated Wenonga’s wigwam. Axing the heads of his enemies, and scalping his victims, Nathan demonstrates all the signs attributed to Shawnees in the novel. As this revelation of Nathan’s identity reveals, his relationship with Indians is more complex than what Richard Drinnon calls “the metaphysics of Indian hating” or the “wholesale killings and hurting” of Indians (Drinnon xxii).⁶⁵ Instead of being the agent of wholesale extermination, Nathan seems more like an inheritor or, contradictory as it may sound, precursor of Wenonga, whom, as Drinnon points out later in his book, Bird has “drawn not from reality but from the unconscious” (160).

Wenonga could have been Nick’s unconscious projected in the figure of the Indian, yet this projection is as much physical as psychic; hence it cannot be explained merely at the level of the psychic transformation that includes Slotkin’s concept of

⁶⁵ The title of all 19th century editions *Nick of the Woods or, the Jibbenainosay, a Tale of Kentucky* foregrounds the complex doubling of Nathan’s identity by keeping both Nick and its Indian counterpart, “the Jibbenainosay” in the title itself.

“regeneration through violence.” Instead of hating, or playing, or killing Indians for his own regeneration, Nick “incorporates” them – both physically and psychically. Nick incorporates Indians by smearing his war paint with the blood of his Indian victims and by wearing on his waist Wenonga’s scalp. Here, I am borrowing the concept of “incorporation” from psychoanalysis, especially from Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok’s *The Shell and the Kernel*. Abraham and Torok discuss “incorporation” in the context of mourning and melancholia; they define “incorporation” as fantasy at work in the person who has lost his or her loved ones. It consists of “[i]ntroducing all or part of a love object or a thing into one’s own body, possessing, expelling or alternately acquiring, keeping, losing it” (126). For Nick, therefore, carrying the bundle of scalps including his family’s together with wielding Wenonga’s axe, and wearing his blood and scalp are neither mere disguise nor a means to avenge the death of his family members, which, as Nathan recalled, happened in an identical way. Nick “incorporates” the warrior as if Wenonga’s scalp is part of his own body; and this incorporation is essential for repossessing and inheriting things possessed by Wenonga. For his revenge to be complete, Nick not only has to kill Wenonga, or to kill him with Wenonga’s own weapons, but he has to “rescue” the scalps of his family members from Wenonga. Repossessing the scalps lost to Wenonga required Nick to displace Wenonga, to take his place, to incorporate him because exterminating Wenonga would be the extermination of what Wenonga possessed – the scalps of Nick’s family.

By rescuing and repossessing the scalps of his family members (as if the scalps metonymically represented his family members as still alive, therefore not to be mourned), and by dispossessing and displacing Wenonga (as if he was never killed,

thereby denying him ‘death’), Nick’s incorporation creates a space for welcoming back his family, a reunion duplicated in Roland’s and Edith’s coming together from captivity. In fact, by salvaging Major Forrester’s will from Braxley, and discovering its secret that Roland and Edith rather than the illegitimate child of the Major shall inherit the latter’s estate in Virginia, Nick at once opens the door – as if he were the host – to Roland and Edith as well his family. The hospitality of this space of “legitimate” inheritance in which the property – the estate and the scalps – return to their rightful “owners” is also the scene of frantic jubilation of triumph rather than of mourning. In fact, as Abrahams and Torok explain the fantasy of incorporation implies “that *we refuse to mourn*” (emphasis original), and that we refuse to “acknowledge the full import of the loss” (127).

In refusing to mourn the loss of his family by taking them at once as still alive and to be repossessed, Nick’s grieving becomes a “valediction of weeping” rather than a process of “greeting weeping” in which mourning remains interminable and impossible. Rescuing Edith, restoring the Forrester estate to the rightful heirs, and bringing his family’s murderer to justice requires, and generates a sense of completion in the novel. Yet Nick’s “instantaneous and magical” moment of incorporation, as Abraham and Torok describe the fantasy of incorporation (113) or what I earlier called the ontology of the present fails to see the injustice of displacing Native Americans and foreclosing the possibility of any work of mourning for them.

Locating the Dead as Hospitality in Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*

In *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, Leslie Marmon Silko recalls the circumstances that inspired her to write *Almanac of the Dead*. She reveals that besides her frustration with the politics in Arizona in the 1980s (which led her to activism and

protest – through graffiti and murals – against the rich for taking the land and freedom from the poor), the main inspiration behind the novel was her interest in ancient Maya and Aztec almanacs. “I began thinking about the ancient Mayan almanacs,” she writes, adding that she always marveled “how they had predicted down to the exact day the arrival of Cortes” (137). Silko remarks that people may dismiss these prophecies as mere coincidence. She, however, wonders if “the tribal sorcerers of the Americas, already familiar with the evil themselves, had conjured up more evil by calling out these white men from Europe” (146). By citing tribal prophecies that seemed to have conjured up and invited Europeans to the Americas, Silko, on the one hand, underscores the question of hospitality between Native Americans and Europeans; on the other hand, by noting that Native Americans were not “surprised when the Europeans showed up” as predicted but “the cruelty of the Europeans astonished the people” (146), she foregrounds the issue of affective hospitality in the encounter. Recalling that “[s]eventy million people throughout the Americas died in the first one hundred years from 1520 to 1620” (147), Silko stresses the issue of the spirit of the dead and, by implication, mourning.

Silko’s project of revisiting the almanac of the dead brings her work closer to the nineteenth century novels by Cooper and Bird. Though radically different in terms of narrative style, plot structure, diction and characters (all of which clearly demonstrate Silko’s post-modernist inclinations),⁶⁶ *Almanac of the Dead* nevertheless is in touch and

⁶⁶ Many critics have pointed out the post-modern tendencies of Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*. To some critics, the novel’s “thematic convergences between genres through a kind of postmodernist play with contradictory dramatic and philosophical implications” reminds of science fiction (Mogen 194). A “pastiche of stories which constitutes of the novel” narrates the experience of over 70 individuals to promote Silko’s magical realist activism (Musgrave 140-1). The novel’s vivid detailing of corruption, disorder, violence, and degradation both moral and cultural also constitutes postmodernism. According to Carlton Smith *Almanac of the Dead* is “a fantasy chronicling the demise of the postmodern ‘Americas’” resulting in “a kind of a negative manifest destiny” (39-40). Jean Petrolle provides a comprehensive list of

in dialogue with Cooper and Bird's novels. In *The Turn to the Native*, Arnold Krupat hints at *Almanac*'s peculiar contiguity with the novels from the colonial period by arguing that Silko's novel "imagines a contemporary continuation of 'The Indian Wars'" (51). Arnold adds that though inhabiting a "postcolonial world," Silko writes "from within a colonial context" (54). The strong "colonial context" brings Silko's narrative close to Cooper and Bird's novels, and calls for what Patricia Yaeger, in a different context, would describe as "echocriticism," which Yaeger defines as "a deliberate prosthetic device or strategy for reading anachronistically" (Yaeger 535). Such an echocritical strategy not only enables us to locate the persistence of issues of mourning, affects and hospitality across American literature, it also helps us bridge the gap between hermeneutics of suspicion and reparative reading by demonstrating that texts such as Silko's or Cooper's simultaneously demand both.

Besides responding to the death of millions of Native Americans, Silko, in an eerie repetition and reaffirmation of the myth of the vanishing Indian, reveals that the almanacs foretold invasion, turmoil and suffering. The almanacs, she writes, "predicted terrible droughts and famines, the disappearance of the animals" (147). While Bird's incorporation of the dead displaces Native Americans, Cooper's affective hospitality creates a space of friendship, which enables the figure of the guest/host-stranger or revenant to emerge through tears of welcome. Silko's vision of hospitality also involves a spectral return of the dead as revenant. The revenant in Silko is not the Native American only; in fact, like all revenants, Silko's figure of the guest-stranger is free from all myths

the novel's "postmodernist sensibilities and strategies" that include "collagist structure, metafictional play, dense allusion, and generic boundary crossing" (145).

of nationalism. Instead it implies the return of a new world, a transnational and cosmopolitan world to which, as Silko's narrator announces, everyone is welcome provided that one renounces "things" European.

Silko's revenant of a cosmopolitan world, thus, resembles Derrida's concept of the revenant in *Specters of Marx* in which Derrida discusses Marxism as a revenant – a spectral presence considered to be dead by detractors but still alive, haunting and completely indispensable both for the critique of hegemony and the moment of emancipatory affirmation. Against the rhetoric of the demise of Marxism and the end of history in the late 1980s (also the time of the composition of Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*), Derrida evokes the "spirit" of Marxism, which cannot be dead and which calls for an urgent "work of mourning." If there is "a spirit of Marxism which I will never be ready to renounce," he writes, it is not only "the critical idea or the questioning stance . . . it is even more a certain emancipatory and *messianic* affirmation, a certain experience of the promise" (89). The form of this promise, which he also calls "the event" marked by the arrival of the revenant, is non-religious, non-mythological, and non-nationalist, for "there is no nationality or nationalism that is not religious and mythological" (91).

In an ironic mirror image of Cooper and Bird's conviction that Native Americans are vanishing, Silko claims that Mayan and Aztec almanacs foretell of the eventual disappearance of Europeans from the Americas. Yet, unlike the mythical accounts which merely mourn for the disappearance of Native Americans, Silko contends that instead of completely vanishing from the Americas the indigenous population of the continents will return as spirits or revenants. The event of their arrival is what promises hospitality of the guest-strangers in which, to quote the *Almanac*, "[a]ll [are] welcome" (710). In a chilling

reminder of Magua's "flight to destruction" in Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, in Silko's novel all major "European" characters "disappear" or self-destruct. Menardo's "suicidal" shooting while demonstrating the safety of his bulletproof vest (a product of his own business), and Baufrey and Serlo's cannibalistic project to preserve the blue blood through "organ harvests of Caucasian infants" for "alternative earth units" (563) at the discovery of which David (who was looking for his own missing son) rides his horse to death represent a few examples of Silko's belief (which she inherits from the ancient almanac) that, like Cooper's Mohicans and Bird's Shawnees, "Europeans" will eventually self-destruct and vanish from the Americas.

David Moore relates Silko's strategy of "not fighting the destroyers" in *Ceremony* to "the power of cultural regeneration," and argues that the regenerative power in *Almanac of the Dead* resides in "the very act of witnessing [and] the watching" (Moore 152). Tacho, for Moore, merely watches and witnesses Menardo's death by displaying "epic patience" equal to "the passive forces of time, land, and dreams" (Moore 154). On the one hand, Silko's indigenous characters display epic patience in the face of violence or passivity that can only be found in the passive force of time and the earth itself. On the other hand, by not distinguishing between Menardo's self-destruction and the death of, for instance, the British poet killed in crossfire between smugglers and drug-dealers, the novel seems to indulge in the same "revenge fantasy" (Dix et al 87) and unwillingness to mourn the death that we earlier saw in Cooper and Bird.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Arthur Redding locates Silko's theme of revenge in a larger context of the revenge of the colonized. Redding cites Baudrillard's *The Transparency of Evil* in which the philosopher argues that the revenge of the colonized consists not only in the indigenous claims to land and sovereignty but also in bringing back what in the march of progress is considered defeated, left-behind, and dead. According to Redding Silko's army of the dead intends to actualize this gothic return through "massive upsurge of the dispossessed" (89). In *Reworlding America*, Muthyala articulates *Almanac's* impulse to revenge even more explicitly. He

While describing the warriors of the army of the spirit, Silko's narrator notes that the Yaquis along the Mexican border "had already begun the vigil; people were praying the white men would kill off one another completely. All the people had to do was be patient and wait" (631). The narrator again reaffirms the prophecies which said that "all traces of Europeans in America would disappear and, at last, the people would retake the land" (631-2). During the vigil and the Easter dance, shooting begins between Mosca and Sony Blue's gang, and a bullet hits a British poet simply because "the poet had been much taller than the other spectators" at the dance (633). By illustrating the self-effacement of Europeans through the example of the poet's death, and by not distinguishing between the death of Menardo, the "Capitalist" and the poet, Silko homogenizes Europe, thereby failing to be what Derrida in *The Specters of Marx* calls "self-critical." To critique, he writes, is to "call for interminable self-critique," which in turn is "to distinguish between everything and almost everything" (89). Silko's reconstruction of the almanac lacks this distinction between "everything" and "almost everything," thereby making the almanac lapse into a prayer for all Europeans to vanish.

This negative affect inhering the hermeneutics of suspicion can and must expose Silko echoing Cooper and Bird. In fact, *Almanac of the Dead* invites the reader to practice this hermeneutics, without which, it seems to suggest, is impossible to know true hospitality from the trap set to take guests hostage. In Book Eight, in a metafictional section titled "Journey of the Ancient Almanac," Silko recounts the story of ancient almanacs as told by Lecha's grandmother, Yoeme. In the course of transporting the almanacs from the invasion-ravaged South to safety in the North, the Indian carriers

argues that the Yaqui Indian dream of birthing the fifth world is "contestatory, its impulse is revenge, and its game plan is the reclamation of the stolen land" (122).

face a strange dilemma in an abandoned cannibal village inhabited by a hunchback woman herself in a desperate search for food – either die of hunger or be eaten by the cannibal woman and leave the almanacs to destiny’s design or accept the hunchback woman’s hospitality by offering her a piece of the almanac in return to be cooked in the stew for the guests and the hostess.⁶⁸ One of the carrier girls memorizes a page and offers it for food to the host, until one day:

The hunchback woman was again boiling a potful of roots and bulbs. The woman gestured at the pot, and the eldest girl knew the woman wanted another page from the almanac. But this time the girl was well rested and not starving. She knew what must be done with these pages. They had not yet reached the mountains the color of the sky. Her instructions had been very clear. The girl pretended not to understand what the crippled woman was asking, but the girl also realized by the expression in the women’s eyes, the woman was not fooled. The children had not travelled all the distance without encountering “hosts” who had wanted favors in return. . . . Their elders had warned them they must be prepared for “such hosts.” (250)

Silko has this story-within-the-story nestled in the middle of her narrative as if the life of her own almanac depends on incorporating what remains of the ancient almanac. Lecha, Zeta and numerous other indigenous characters in Silko’s narrative seem to grow out of the remains of this almanac. As a narrative enlarged from the remains of the almanac of the dead carried by the young children of the fugitives, who themselves were the “last of their kind” (246), it at once mourns the death and destruction of the tribe in the alien invasion and announces the return of the people through the almanac. Those who decided

⁶⁸ The rhetoric of cannibalism in the nineteenth century, writes Jeff Berglund, “was used to characterize indigenous peoples’ and now Silko uses it in *Almanac of the Dead* “as a central trope” to “critique colonialism and capitalism, particularly as these systems affect indigenous peoples today” (Berglund 150). Janet St. Clair suspects that Silko almost buys into the stereotype of the queer cannibal, yet Clair believes that cannibalism remains for Silko a powerful metaphor to expose the “egocentric arrogance, ruthless objectification, and cannibalistic greed that characterize Western culture” (St. Clair 210).

to run the children from South to North with the almanac “knew that if part of their almanac survived they as a people would return someday” (246).

On the one hand, the elders remind the carrier children to cultivate the hermeneutics of suspicion of the hosts who not only have claimed their tribal villages, land and animals but they also may trail the children until they dispose of them as well as the almanac. On the other hand, the elders also point out that only the almanac can be their true host – taking them through difficulty and hardship, and eventually promising the return of the people, the land and the animals. If the almanac of the dead saved by the last of the tribe is the host promising the return of the tribe, Silko’s characters in the *Almanac of the Dead* inhabit the narrative as spirits, revenants, returnees or guest-strangers.

While Silko envisions a new subjectivity of the revenant, which blurs the distinction between the living and the dead, by making them haunt her narrative as revenants of the tribe that attempted to save the almanac, Silko also conceptualizes a radically new space of hospitality, a new of thinking about land and space. This rethinking of one’s relationship to land is neither as simple as “retaking the stolen tribal land,” as put forward by the twin leaders (El Feo and Tacho) who are instrumental in organizing the continental movement for land (468), nor is it a technological utopia of alternative earth units envisioned by Serlo who is engaged in a scientific project to put “the last of the earth’s uncontaminated soil, water, oxygen” in immense rockets to be launched into space (542). In contrast to “retaking of land” for repossessing, plotting, and planning again, and to Serlo’s techno-utopic answer to ecological disaster, Silko’s revenants call forth a new concept of inhabiting and belonging to the earth. As Awa Gee,

one of Silko's many mutineers, explains, the plan should be that "[e]arth that was bare and empty, earth that had been seized and torn open, would be allowed to heal and to rest in the darkness' (683). Silko's hermeneutics of suspicion not only warns of "ecological disaster and bloody revolution if the dominant culture persists in its drive for individual ownership and insistence on the right to use the earth as an inexhaustible resource" as Maggie Bowers believes she does (Bowers 270), Silko also envisions a new space of hospitable inhabiting and belonging to the earth.

Revenants and spirits plan no dream cities replacing Tucson's ghost-towns, as does Leah Blue, who devotes her real estate business to building sex malls in the desert with "sapphire water in canals weaving between brilliant white walls of palazzos and villas bordered with lawns that ran into fairways and greens" (658). Unlike capitalist fantasies of malls and canals in the desert, the Indian twins and other participants of the International Holistic Healers Convention propose walking as a means to "claim" land as if the "healers" of the earth were the carriers of the ancient almanac retracing their path from the South to the safety of the North:

Wacah, El Feo, and other people with them believed the spirit voices; if the people kept walking, if the people carried no weapons, then the old prophecies would come to pass, and all the dispossessed and the homeless would have land; and tribes of America would retake the continents from pole to pole. (711)

Patricia Holland rightly reminds that it is difficult to distinguish the outside and the inside, living and the dead in the grotesque world of Silko's almanac in which "both corrupt officials and the 'people' who wish to 'take back the land' experience and wander through a maze of grotesque circumstances, couplings, and terrains so that categories of self and other, inside and outside become blurred" (71). Nevertheless, by making the

people march as if to retrace the steps of the young children carrying the ancient almanac, Silko not only distinguishes between “corrupt officials” and healers, she also makes the healers revenants of the people ravaged by colonial invasion of the continent. The “walk” across the continent for the convention indicates a shift in people’s relationship to land and to one another, thereby charging the slogan of retaking the land with new signification.

Wacah and El Feo must not ride in automobiles or helicopters. The spirits required that people walk. Wacah and El Feo had sent Angelita to the healers convention to make apologies for them, and to invite all those gathered to join them. All were welcome. It was only necessary to walk with the people and let go of all the greed and selfishness in one’s heart. One must be able to let go of a great many comforts and all things European; but the reward would be peace and harmony with all living things. All they had to do was return to Mother Earth. No more blasting, digging, or burning. (710)

The International Holistic Healers Convention, with which Silko begins the concluding section or book of the narrative, culminates in Silko’s vision of the fulfillment of Native American prophecies of retaking the Americas. By beginning and concluding the novel in a prophecy and “not in ego-fulfilling or destroying climax” (Waldron 197), Silko conceives of the rebel/healer subjectivity not in terms of its ontological present but in terms of its spectrality; i.e. its relation to the spirits of the dead. The prophetic movement to “retake” the continents requires the healers not only to be in communication with the spirits or to take commandments from the spirits, but also to retrace their footsteps, reanimate and embody the spirits as if the healers were revenants promising the return of the dead. Silko fuels the movement by letting the spirits inhabit the living, thereby making reception of the spirits by the living or affective hospitality to the dead inextricable from the prophecy or promise of retaking the Americas.

Walking according to the wishes of the spirit not only represents the return of the dead or revenants, it also inaugurates a new relation to land, for it is also a return to Mother Earth. The gathering of healers or revenants constitutes the form of retaking the land, which is possible only if people walk and forgo the greed and selfishness of digging and blasting the earth, and live in harmony with all living things. Silko's code for this "re-possessing" of the land is affective hospitality in which "all are welcome."

Chapter III:

Hospitality in Melville's *Typee* and Holt's *Waimea Summer*

The shattered water made a misty din.
Great waves looked over others coming in,
And thought of doing something to the shore
That water never did to land before.

- Robert Frost, "Once by the Pacific"

When the Captain of the ship carrying Melville's protagonist in *Typee* announces that they are on course to the Marquesas, Tommo, the narrator exclaims that the very name of the island evokes "strange visions of outlandish things" including "[n]aked houris – cannibal banquets – groves of cocoa-nut – coral reefs – tattooed chiefs – and bamboo temples" (5). The very name of the Marquesas for the narrator evokes strange visions of outlandish things, visions which have been variously interpreted by Melville's critics as "American Pacific orientalism" (Lyons 128); "the hero's quest for the Holy Grail" (Miller, Jr. 21); an expression of "homosexual longing" (Bryant 108); an exposé of "white lies" (Samson 12); and an invention of cannibalism (Obeyesekere 298). While these critics locate an element of transgression and excess in Melville's narrative, thereby accentuating the ambivalent and subversive nature of the text, they overlook one more important aspect of his longing for and courting of things strange and outlandish: his contradictory desire to be party to a cannibal feast even at the cost of running the risk of being eaten himself. An analysis of Melville's ambivalent longing to be a guest of the "cannibals" on the exotic island at the potential cost of his own life enables us to see a

radical form of hospitality involving an unknown, terrifying and unpredictable host; an equally uncanny guest, who is ready to potentially be sacrificed by the supposedly cannibal hosts; and the seas of islands as an unsettling site of hospitality.

Typee helps us see the figure of the guest (Tommo), hosts (Typees and Nuku Hivans), and the space of hospitality (the Pacific) in a completely different light than the one shown in the existing readings of Melville's text as an anti-colonial document or a text complicit in imperialism. At the heart of this narrative lies not only Melville's critique of Euro-American imperialism in the Pacific, but also an aporia to think about landing, arriving, contact, receiving and being received at the very moment when both the guests and the hosts face the danger of either being consumed or being colonized. Tommo's acquired knowledge about the South Seas from previous authors, explorers and colonists such as David Porter and Captain Cook warns him of cannibalism. The sailor weighs the possibility of being consumed against the reality of dying of hunger on the ship. From Melville's narrative we do not know the hosts' position on ships arriving, but from the way Typees take Tommo and Toby hostage we can guess that Typees as well might have weighed welcoming the sailors against the odds of sending him back to tell the world that the islanders are actually not cannibals. That would invite more Europeans and precipitate the movement of colonialism possibly leading to the extinction of the natives. In other words, both the guests and the hosts engage in welcoming strangers at a moment when they face death or extinction. This colonial context makes the encounter between Tommo, Toby, Typees and Nuku Hivans fascinating and the event of hospitality ambivalent and strange. In this chapter, I examine the (im)possibility of welcoming strangers in Melville's *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life*. In bracketing the

prefix in “impossible,” I emphasize the fact that Melville dramatizes the impossibility of hospitality in the narrative, at the same time suggesting that the context of colonialism and empire generates the terrifying ambivalence in the encounter between the guest and the host.

Melville’s ambivalent and impossible hospitality ends in hostage taking, panicking in the face of cannibalism, and in killing the host to escape from “captivity.” Reception of guests by the islander hosts takes place in *Typee* at a moment when both parties face extinction, which not only makes the event of hospitality completely uncanny and unpredictable but it also unsettles both the hosts and the guests both psychologically and physically to initiate a process of estrangement in which one mirrors the other to the point of near indistinction. In spite of this unsettling, however, *Typee* fails to invoke the figure of the guest/host-stranger precisely because Melville’s hosts and guests firmly remain the discursive domain of colonialism and empire. If his guest (Tommo) is the student of colonialist writing on the Pacific, his hosts (the islanders) reflect his romantic and outlandish vision the noble savage. This colonial conditioning restrains Melville’s critique of imperialism in the Pacific from invoking the guest/host-stranger, for which I turn to John Dominis Holt’s novel *Waimea Summer*. While Melville’s unsettling site and uncanny subjects of hospitality illustrate the violent foundation of hospitality in the Pacific, his critique or exposure of imperial violence stops short of invoking the figure of the guest/host-stranger.

In spite of his “sympathetic” treatment of the natives as noble savages, Melville does not and cannot provide any insights into the perspective of the islanders or into their fate in the process of European arrival and colonization in the Pacific. In the second half

of the chapter, I examine the Hawaiian writer John Domins Holt's *Waimea Summer*, a semi-autobiographical novel dwelling on the legacy of colonialism in Hawaii. Unlike Melville's strangers encountering other strangers, Holt's narrative has a family member visiting his relatives in Waimea. Hospitality thus needs to be understood differently and broadly when examining Holt's novel. Despite their differences, both these texts have the history of colonialism in the Pacific as the context of their narrative. This historical context at once limits or conditions hospitality and makes it possible. If Melville's narrative describes the terror of encountering the stranger, Holt's text chronicles the terror inherent in revisiting relatives and places and cultures estranged due to colonialism. Melville ends his narrative bewildered by his inability to read, figure out and place the Typees; Holt leaves his protagonist bewildered but not without making him revisit and relive Hawaiian history. Tommo, like his historical counterpart, the author, "escapes" the cannibal Typees; Holt's protagonist, Mark, also "escapes," but in the way I referred to the term in the Introduction following Levinas: through a terrifying encounter with the past, Mark escapes his individuated self to open to history and to the genealogy of his Waimean relatives. Hospitality in Holt constitutes this traumatizing encounter with one's own past now estranged by colonialism.

Going Beyond the Binary of the Imperial and the Post-colonial

In *Literary Cultures and U. S. Imperialism*, John Carlos Rowe identifies in *Typee* well-established conventions of the fugitive slave narrative and the Puritan captivity narrative. By deploying these narratives, argues Rowe, Melville connects the institutions of slavery at home and colonialism and empire in the Pacific, thereby enabling Melville to "put his primarily white readers in the position of the victim" (78). I would add that

Melville also grafts three more narrative traditions, which not only complicate Rowe's reading of *Typee* as Melville's extension of the frontier in order to critique it but also demonstrate how Melville presents his protagonist as a figure of stranger in search of refuge. Those other three narratives are: travel narratives; autobiographical narratives; and class narratives.

Melville presents Tommo as a "victim" not only because the novelist deploys the captivity narrative and the fugitive slave narrative but also because *Typee* is at once a travel, autobiographical and working-class narrative. As a travel narrative, the Pacific for Tommo the traveler is more than an extension of the American continental frontier. If frontier is either an emptied virgin land (as in Henry Nash Smith) or a line of skirmish between civilization and savagery (as in Frederick Jackson Turner), the Pacific is neither the virgin land nor a battle field, even though questions of civilization and savagery do emerge in the narrative especially through Melville's treatment of cannibalism. Tommo is a stranger to this new space where he is not quite a fugitive nor a captive. He does not know what to make of this space. Besides being a traveler, Tommo also is a sailor, a beachcomber. This in turn brings in the dimension of class and depicts the Pacific as a refuge for the sailor against the cruel forces of mercantilism. As a semi-autobiographical narrative, Melville also lets his own psycho-sexual anxieties take the center-stage as the Pacific becomes a site where he encounters the stranger in himself.

These other narratives complicate Rowe's otherwise ingenious connection between the domestic frontier and the imperial frontier in Polynesia. They also resist Waichee Dimock's assessment in *Empire for Liberty* that Melville's works resonate "with the language of freedom in antebellum expansionist discourse" championing the "idea that

America was ‘an asylum for those who love liberty,’” (9). No surprise that Dimock excludes *Typee* from her analysis as it not only contradicts her claim about America as an asylum, but also about Melville’s narrative of personification, which underscores “possession of one’s destiny” and enables this imperial self ‘to expand his domain of freedom” (40). In fleeing the ship, and by extension America, Tommo enters a fluid space, which makes it impossible for him to keep possession of his destiny, let alone expand his domain of freedom.

Rowe and Dimock’s readings of Melville highlight how his narratives extend the American frontier to the Pacific, thereby perpetuating empire and propagating the notion of America as asylum fail to take into account Melville’s expectations of refuge from the strange and outlandish things in the Pacific. In contrast, critics such as Malini Schueller Johar, Justin Edwards and Theo d’ Haen follow the same path by implicating his narratives in empire and colonialism. In “Colonialism and Melville’s South Seas Journeys,” Johar contends that in *Typee* and other South Seas texts Melville “affirms his position as colonist” (3). Haen argues that “*Typee* at once contributed to the culture of imperialism while radically criticizing it” (291). Edwards notes that Tommo’s “critiques of imperialist expansion are implicitly corrupt” due to his exploitation of sexual freedom in the South Seas (32). In implicating Melville in the project of Euro-American imperialism in the Pacific, these critics expose an important aspect of nineteenth-century American literature, but their exclusive focus on imperialism makes them overlook other sites and scenes in the narrative which revolve around complex relations of hospitality and refuge.

In opposition to those who find Melville complicit in imperialism, some critics claim to have discovered a post-colonial Melville. Some of them believe that Melville is postcolonial only if we define post-colonial in the sense of the temporal marker. Peter Hulme, for instance, argues that “the United States becomes a postcolonial nation in 1776 and its early literature is marked by this fact” of which “Melville is a good example” (Hulme 392). For others, the post-colonial Melville emerges very early in the process of editing and marketing *Typee* in Britain as well as in the U.S. during which “as a postcolonial writer,” Lawrence Buell explains in “Postcolonial Anxiety in Classic U.S. Literature,” “he communicates to his ideal reader through double meanings” (206). Besides this double-speak, what makes Melville postcolonial is “his ability to articulate the undervoiced, to receive and transmit the indistinct sounds of newness” (Sanborn 18). For Paul Giles, Melville is post-postcolonial because he as a “Janus-faced figure” finds “uncomfortable parallels between markedly divergent cultures” (228), while for Robert Wallace Melville is close to Frederick Douglass for “his multicultural and postcolonial insights” in works such as *Benito Cereno* and *Moby-Dick* (10).

The Janus-faced figure speaking with double meanings represents one of the aspects of the postcolonial Melville, which requires that while reading Melville we come to terms with the novelist’s ambivalent and contradictory impulses and his split self carrying his own doppelganger that makes any univocal understanding impossible. The other aspect of the postcolonial in Melville relates to the notion of newness, which for Sanborn defines postcoloniality. For Sanborn, Melville’s attempt to make newness visible for the American public by exposing the colonial truth about cannibalism constitutes his postcoloniality, which after all is nothing but “the interrogative aftermath of truth-claims”

(10). In other words, Melville is postcolonial not because he brought in another knowledge, but because he exposed the colonial truth-claims.

Holt's *Waimea Summer* is not postcolonial, for it hardly seeks to interrogate colonial truth-claims; in fact letting newness enter the world is not one of its major concerns. What it waits for is not newness only but history as well. In fact, the novel's energy is devoted to evoking history, recalling and reliving it so that the present of its protagonists is the host for the visitation and haunting of the past. Unlike Sanborn's understanding of Melville's investment in the postcolonial truth, Holt's hosting of history is the cultivation of decolonization.

Interrogating Melville's Postcolonial Pacific

For a famished sailor at sea without enough provisions, visions of banquets, bread-fruit trees, and cocoa-nuts maybe outlandish, but they constitute a regular staple in literature on the Pacific, which often describes the Pacific either as an invitation to the feast or as the feast itself. Identification of the Pacific with the feast is perhaps best expressed in Herman Melville's works, which frequently evoke the Pacific as the site of festive banquets. For instance, in the second "sketch" of "The Encantadas" entitled "Two Sides to a Tortoise," Melville describes three antediluvian-looking tortoises which "seemed the identical tortoises whereon the Hindu plants this total sphere" (82). While praising these outlandish and mythic creatures as "the oldest inhabitants of this or any other isles" (82), Melville quickly shows the "other side" of tortoises by revealing that soon after seeing the tortoises he sat with his "shipmates and made a merry repast from tortoise steaks and tortoise stew" (83). The Pacific for Melville is not only a place where he expects a welcome and a feast, it is also a place which takes him to the beginning of

time where he encounters the archaic and the mythic. In other words, it represents a place where Melville meets what is truly strange. Meeting with the stranger, for Melville, is an occasion for celebration and feast, which not only provides him a utopic ideal of contact and conviviality but also an alternative to what he considers to be and condemns as imperial West. Instead of merely critiquing imperialism in the Pacific, critique of empire and hospitality seem to coalesce in Melville's work.

On the one hand, the festive welcome Melville's narrators look for and expect from the Pacific transports them to the world of the archaic and mythic; on the other hand, the domestic scene of the feast also brings them "home." In fact, as we have seen in the chapter on Whitman, characterizing the United States as a "pleasantly set meal" is no stranger in American literature. By describing the Pacific as a banquet to be feasted upon Melville's narrators both in *Typee* and "The Encantadas" seek to extend the domestic image of the United States to the Pacific as if the latter were simply a continuation of the U. S. frontier. Melville's search for refuge and hospitality in the Pacific at once brings him face to face with the homely and the unhomely. While he situates the arrival of his narrators in the Pacific in the exotic context of houris and Hindu myths, he at the same time domesticates the exotic by depicting it in terms of the myth of the national feast.

Between Melville's encounter with the exotic other and his imposition of the domestic image of America as "a meal pleasantly set," the site of his protagonists' arrival – the Pacific – gets simply lost. Either the narrators reach some outlandish locations resembling the antediluvian paradise populated by splendid angels ("Hurs") and the heroes and heroines from ancient Hindu myths or they simply arrive "home" to extend

and celebrate America's ever-expanding frontier. The actual location of their arrival – the Pacific – remains a site under erasure, visible yet struck out or unrecognized. A built-in misrecognition hovers on Melville's passionate narratives, which foreground hospitality yet fail to acknowledge the host and the place in which the scene of hospitality takes place.

Melville frames his protagonist Tommo's arrival in Nukuhiva in the context of mythic encounter with the exotic and strange partly because he seeks to distinguish the visit from the colonialist arrival (to use Kant's terms from *Perpetual Peace*) of a fellow American Captain David Porter (who annexed Nukuhiva in 1813) and from the French who were in the process of colonizing the island for France at the time of Tommo's visit. Melville in fact grounds his famous critique of Western imperialism in *Typee* on Tommo's strategic dissociation from colonialism and empire in the Pacific. While the invocation of oriental myths to describe Tommo's visit allows Melville to critique imperialism, it also hinders Melville from squarely engaging with empire in the Pacific. One of the arguments in this chapter is that a critique of empire is not enough for achieving decolonization, and Melville's semi-autobiographical narrative *Typee* best illustrates this point.

Typee critiques Western imperialism in the Marquesas Islands, but stops short of engaging with the legacy of colonization and empire in the Pacific. My argument is that such an engagement is possible by looking at hospitality in the context of empire, which is what John Dominis Holt does in *Waimea Summer*. If a critique of empire interrogates the arrival of Europeans in non-European lands and cultures, hospitality in contrast seeks to trace a different kind of arrival – the colonized people seeking to reconnect with their

relatives, and to revive and receive their own history, languages and cultures. Hospitality in this sense is re-welcoming culture, and making home habitable by the colonized after it was and has been rendered unhomey by colonialism. A critique of imperialism, thus, is only a first step towards a long, and perhaps an endless process of decolonization, which is impossible to achieve without hospitality, i. e., without the colonized seeking to make sense of the alienation caused by colonialism and without reconnecting to and reclaiming home.

While Melville's protagonist Tommo critiques missionary presence and imperial violence in the Pacific, the Pacific Islands and the islanders remain mere curiosities for him. On the contrary, for Holt's protagonist Mark, visiting Waimea is more than satisfying orientalist fantasies about the exotic Pacific and the noble savages. For him, visiting his relatives in Waimea represents revisiting history, rebuilding connections and reviving and receiving his own Hawaiian culture. If Melville's narrative focuses on Tommo's individual experiences in the Marquesas islands – his visit to Nukuhiva, his “reception” by the islanders, his captivity in the Typee valley and his return as a survivor – Holt's novel is a collective experience in which Mark receives as host the “remains” of Hawaii's history and culture. Melville primarily focuses on the ambiguity of Tommo's experiences in the Marquesas: his fascination for the exotic, and his repulsion for the greed and violence of imperialism; his “homelessness” as a poor sailor and beachcomber and his terror at the sight of a supposedly cannibal community of the Typees. In short, Melville's narrative revolves around a character who cannot be received by either cultures, hence his escape from both the ship as well as the valley.

Melville depicts Tommo's visit to the Typee valley as if the visitor were among ancient ruins exploring the remnants of a culture on the verge of extinction. The Typees for him represent what remains of the Marquesas in the wake of Western imperialism in the Pacific. He portrays Tommo in the valley as a threshold through which enters the haunting of the other, the stranger. The haunting of the stranger constitutes the reception and welcome of the other in *Typee*. Visitation of the stranger through haunting is further intensified in Holt's *Waimea Summer* in which the protagonist of the novel becomes host to the remnants, ruins, or in his own words, "déclassement" of cultures and life in "post-colonial" Hawaii.⁶⁹

After critiquing European imperialism and capitalism in the Pacific, Melville also invents a space for hospitality and refuge in the Typee valley, which, for him, is and must remain untouched by colonialism and empire. However, by imagining the Typee valley as a space of purity or absolute otherness, Melville fails to come to terms with both imperialism and the natives of the valley. He critiques the hypocrisy and violence of empire in the Pacific; yet his critique remains "uncritical" and orientalist precisely because it leads him to inventing the Typee valley as a romantic and utopian space of pre-colonial culture. On the contrary, Holt's *Waimea Summer* dwells on the issue of what

⁶⁹ There is a growing unease with the term "post-colonial," but I use it to signify what Robert Young calls "the great historical achievements of resistance against colonial power" that the prefix "post" implies in the term post-colonial (60). There is some truth in the detractors' words who believe that the term "risks obscuring the deformative-traces of colonial hangover in the present, while at the same time delegitimizing research into the precolonial past (Shohat and Stam 14); or that the post in post-colonial "reduces cultures of peoples beyond colonialism to *prepositional* time," thereby conferring "colonialism the prestige of history proper" to which other "cultures share only a chronological, prepositional relation to a Euro-centered epoch that is over (post-), or not yet begun (pre-)" (McClintock 292). However, these precautionary gestures limit the term "post-colonial" to imply the historical stage of post-coloniality at the expense of analyzing what Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge call the "ideological orientations" (Mishra and Hodge 284). Considering the ideological orientations of the term would lead us to interpret and relate the post in the post-colonial to "post-modernism." Such a move would reveal that the "post" in post-colonial is "the *post* of a space-clearing gesture . . . concerned with transcending, with going beyond coloniality" (Appiah 149). Following both Young and Appiah's understanding of the term, post-colonial signifies the continuous process of decolonization or going beyond coloniality and arriving at a post-colonial future.

remains of Hawaiian history and culture in the wake of colonial violence. Holt's engagement with the legacy of empire – the remnants of colonialism and its reception – takes place through hospitality – both literally as well as rhetorically. Holt's novel recounts Mark's visit to his uncle's home in Waimea, where Mark is involved in a series of events that impel him to receiving not only his strange relatives but also his genealogy and the history of Hawaii. Thus, Holt's novel clearly moves from the critique of colonialism and empire to hospitality as a reaffirmation of kinship and belonging.

A discursive shift from the critique of imperialism to hospitality is highly desirable in order to transform the field of postcolonial studies, for instance, in Edward Said's critique of Orientalism. Said defines Orientalism as a "movement" of the West upon the East. He notes that in general "it was the West that moved upon the East, not vice versa (73)." This generic movement upon the East enables the West to "manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively" (3). Defined as a movement of the West upon the East in order to invent, manage, administer, domesticate, and colonize the Oriental other, Said's Orientalism, however, suffers from a blindness to alternative movement. It concentrates on the West moving upon the East at the expense of any alternative movement either from the West or the East. "Moving upon" for Said implies both systematic discursive aggression and military movement upon the East; and his generalization fails to trace any alternative arrivals or returns such as Mark's arrival and his reception of Hawaii's history and cultures. This alternative movement can be visible only if we shift attention from the linear movement upon the East to the complex

movement of hospitality that unfolds in the wake of colonialism and marks the arrival or return of the colonized other.

Said's critique of Orientalism exposes the movement of the West upon the East, yet the alternative movement of the West and the East towards each other remains invisible to his critique. The critique reveals that Orientalism "invents" the East, and depicts it in the image that the West has of the East as if the West were moving not towards the other but towards itself. Yet this revelation – that the West moves linearly upon the East to manage and administer the latter – ignores the movement of hospitality in which both the West that arrives and the Orient that receives moves. Unlike the generalization of Said's analysis, the complex movement of hospitality recognizes the East and the West in their singularity and difference.

In this chapter I examine Melville's *Typee* (1846) and Holt's *Waimea Summer* (1976) in order to juxtapose Melville's orientalist and anti-imperialist discourses to Holt's narrative of alternative arrival. In contrast to Said's notion of Orientalism in which it is always the West that marches upon the East, the alternative movement of hospitality I seek to foreground here traces of a different kind of "arrival" that cannot be reduced to orientalist forms of knowledge. Orientalist approaches employ a panoptic gaze to study, i.e. "receive" and "know," the Orient in its totality. As Foucault notes in *Discipline and Punish*, a panoptic gaze represents "the political dream" of a "utopia" or "a pure community," (198) in which the object of the gaze "is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject of communication" (200). The Orientalist "knows" and "receives" the other not in terms of relationality – as someone in relation to and

communication with the Orientalist – but in terms of absolute alterity and strangeness without engaging the native stranger in a differential relation of hospitality.

By “differential” relation I mean the movement inevitable between two entities in relation that are defined not by their positive essences but by their difference. In *Margins of Philosophy* Derrida argues that such a relation, which, in fact, produces meaning in a language, is both differential as well as deferential, i.e. both non-positivistic or non-self-referential and incomplete. As a “weave of difference,” such a relation implies “movement” of one entity toward another (12). Even if orientalism acknowledges native hospitality, it does so merely to confirm the stereotypical representation of the Islanders as hospitable. For an Orientalist, native hospitality lacks civility; it is other-worldly and excessive; in fact, it is very often interpreted as an “invitation” to the civilizing mission of colonialism. What the Orientalist approach responds to, communicates with and receives is not the native stranger but the ideal other invented by or in the romantic “literary” tradition of the West. The Orientalist approach further erases hospitality by holding the power to define what counts or does not as a proper welcome, and by claiming it to be the systematic, scientific and complete “truth” about natives.

In contrast to the Orientalist appropriation of hospitality and its portrayal of Pacific Islands as remote, disconnected, other worldly utopias, and the Islanders as exotic noble savages fast approaching extinction, the alternative movement of arrival and return I intend to trace here depicts the Pacific as an intricately connected network of relationship and belonging guided by what Epeli Hau’ofa, a Pacific Islander, would call “world enlargement” (30). By “world enlargement” Hau’ofa implies a complex web of movements across Oceania that counter approaches restricted to colonialist arrivals.

Claiming that Oceania is “huge and growing bigger every day,” Hau’ofa contends that “ordinary Pacific Islanders” make “nonsense of all national and economic boundaries” by “crisscrossing an ocean that had been boundless for ages before Captain Cook’s apotheosis” (30). Hau’ofa locates this oceanic hospitality in the movement of world enlargement in the Pacific in which emerges Oceania itself instead of an orientalist utopia. “Oceania is vast,” he repeats, adding “Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous . . . Oceania is us” (39). This movement or approach of Oceania reinvents the politics of hospitality in order to replace colonial fantasies of cannibalism, and cultural and economic domination with “new” forms of kinship, conviviality, and consumption.

The narrative structure of Melville’s *Typee* is built on two seemingly contradictory logics or aporias: on the one hand, Melville shows how imperialism has a violent and morally degrading influence on the people and cultures in the Marquesas and Hawaii; on the other hand, he posits *Typee* as a community of noble savages, who are not only yet untouched by the corrupting influence of Western imperialism, but also a utopian antidote to Western imperialism. In imagining this primitive and noble community of innocent “cannibals,” Melville gives in to orientalist fantasies about the *Typee* valley islanders as exotic and absolute others. In other words, Melville at once critiques Western imperialism, and yet is implicated in it. As a result, Tommo’s visit to the Marquesas Islands resembles the westward movement of a frontiersman driven to explore, invent and eventually domesticate the wilderness. Melville’s anti-imperialism has this unwarranted double, which prevents him from critically examining the colonial legacy in the Pacific. No surprise that in its first British edition Melville’s narrative did

not have “Typee” in the title. When Melville expressed dissatisfaction about it, “Typee” returns to the title in the revised edition in 1847.⁷⁰

Tommo, the protagonist is an American sailor, who, together with his shipmate, Toby, decides to desert the ship the *Dolly* while at anchor in Nukuhiva. At first guided by a desire to “peep” at Polynesian life, Tommo, well-versed in discourses on the South Pacific by explorers before him, approaches the Marquesas islanders as a voyeur and Orientalist ethnographer bent on discovering and exploring the “untouched” cultures of the islands. Indeed, as Wai-chee Dimock remarks in *Empire for Liberty*, the twin phenomena of “building of an imperial nation and the making of a sovereign self” dovetail in Melville’s writing (11). However, this adventurous explorer (who shows “false sympathy” recurrently expresses unambiguous revulsion at “savage” customs of the islanders), is also an object of a reverse approach or visitation.⁷¹ Tommo and Toby are starving mariners overworked by the Captain of the ship. By deserting the tyranny and privations of the ship, Melville’s sailors not only disobey dictatorial authority exploiting the labor of the common crew, but they also, to recall William Spanos’ *Herman Melville and the American Calling*, “do not answer to or refuse to be answerable

⁷⁰ A note on the title of Melville’s text is in order here. *Typee* was first published in London in February 1846 by John Murray with the title, *Narrative of a Four Month’s Residence among the Natives of a Valley of the Marquesas Islanders; or A Peep at Polynesian Life* to which in 1847 J. Murray added *Typee, or A. . .* after Melville protested. Since then a number of editions and revisions of this fluid text have appeared, three of which were published in London with different titles: in 1907 J.M. Dent & Sons published the book as *Typee: A Narrative of the Marquesas Islands*. In 1950 Folio Society of London published the text simply entitled *Typee*. Again in 1985 KPI, London published it as *Typee: Four Months Residence in the Marquesas*. At least equal of number of variations can be found in American editions of the book. After its first publication as *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* in the March of 1846, the United States Book Company, New York published the text in 1892 as *Typee: A Real Romance of the South Seas*. In 1920 Hartcourt, New York struck down the “real” and published the text simply as *Typee: A Romance of the South Seas*. The subtitle: *A Peep at Polynesian Life* reappeared with the Penguin, New York edition published in 1996.

⁷¹ In “False Sympathy in Melville’s *Typee*” Mitchell Breitwieser argues that in *Typee* Melville becomes “a sympathetic primitivist as long as he is left in charge of defining “primitive.” . . . detesting [Typee’s life-style] once it begins to impinge on himself” (398).

to the *call of the American narrative*” that boasts “democratic” and exceptionalist protagonists (10, emphasis original). In other words, Tommo is in conversation with voyagers before him in South Pacific while, as a reflection of Melville’s “subversive genealogy,”⁷² simultaneously refusing to respond to the Euro-American voyagers’ call to explore the Islands and civilize the Islanders.

Tommo not only exposes class exploitation aboard the *Dolly*, he also critiques the colonial and missionary abuses in the Marquesas. His approach to the Pacific, unlike that of the colonial explorers and scientists, is not guided and informed by colonial cartography and imperial expeditions; instead his approach, which is in reality the approach of, and haunting by, the islanders, is serendipitous. As an escapee from the ship and an adventurous traveler in the “cannibal” island, Tommo is haunted by the fear of being captured both by the Captain and the “cannibals.” For him going back to the ship is as risky as deserting it: returning to the ship would mean being consumed by hunger and drudgery; and venturing into Typee valley is inviting cannibalization. Tommo decides to desert; yet, as if chosen by the “cannibals” instead, he together with Toby, arrives in the valley not as an explorer but by inadvertently falling (literally) in the valley while wandering without food or water in the dense mountainous forest on the Island. Tommo is carried by the natives of the valley because of his mysterious ailment that makes (in anticipation of *Moby-Dick*’s one-legged Captain Ahab who was chosen by the Whale) his leg dysfunctional. Literally “approached” by the natives and embraced by them into their community, Tommo and Toby are perpetually plagued by the thought that they, at once

⁷² “Subversive genealogy” is how Michael Paul Rogin summarizes his assessment of Melville’s art. Rogin argues that the political context of the time and Melville’s family genealogy are the material from which his texts were made. His texts owe as much to the American political transcendence of his period as they do to his family history that included grandfathers who “were merchant heroes of the Revolution” (18).

renegades and refugees, are at the mercy of the “cannibal” islanders. While following and building upon Melville’s critique of imperialism and his evocation of the haunting of the stranger in the Pacific, the subsequent section of this chapter discusses structural limitations and conditions in Melville’s foregrounding of hospitality in *Typee*.

Excessive Hospitality, Cannibalism and Captivity in *Typee*

Captain David Porter, an American explorer, who arrived, invaded, and claimed the Marquesas island of Nuku-Hiva for the United States in 1813, is one of the writers cited “as possible source material upon which Melville levied in the composition of his book,” *Typee* (Anderson 121). Melville’s editor and critic, John Bryant calls Melville’s borrowing from Porter, “smuggled verbalism” (200). In one of the scenes that would be echoed in *Typee*, Porter describes his arrival and reception in Marquesas in these terms: “The men repeatedly invited us to the shore and pointed to the women and the house near which they were standing, accompanying their invitation with gestures which we could not misunderstand” (Porter 13). In this description, Porter not only foregrounds the importance of hospitality in the encounter between Americans and the Marquesas Islanders, he also hints at the inherent ambiguity in the Islanders’ welcome, and the importance of interpreting hospitality and its limitations in the encounter. The scene of welcome by the Islanders, which is present in almost all nineteenth-century Euro-American travel writings and fictional accounts of the Pacific, is not merely a stereotypical representation of a hospitable primitive; instead, it is fraught with the politics of interpretation and reception. In other words, the questions such as “what constitutes an invitation or welcome?” and “who gets to define what hospitality means?” are inextricable from the issue of hospitality in the encounter.

On the one hand, the host-guest relationship between the Euro-American explorers and the Marquesas Islanders clearly establishes a power-equation that recognizes the islanders as hosts holding the power to invite and welcome or not welcome the guests that included Euro-American missionaries and mariners, colonial cartographers and castaways, and whalers and beachcombers. On the other hand, the Orientalist approach appropriates the authority to define hospitality, thereby reducing the host to strangers (to civilized notions of hospitality) in their own land. In the Orientalist approach, it is the guest who defines what is hospitable and what is not. It is the guest who knows beyond all doubts that the Islanders repeatedly invite him to the shore and offer everything including the Islander women. Thus the guest, who fully understands the Islanders and can correctly interpret their gestures, is not the stranger; instead the Islanders are the strangers to the guest's definition of hospitality.

Guests including the missionary, colonial explorer or mariner lay down the law of hospitality to which the host remains a complete foreigner. No surprise that the scene of hospitality begins not with the host welcoming the guest, but with the moral and ethical discomfort and disgust the guest feels at the "excesses" and "perversions" of welcome by the "savage" Islanders. So much so that the guest takes the Islanders' welcome as an indicator of the hosts' inability to welcome the guest with civility. Their excessive hospitality is a sign of their lack of civilization, which in turn acts as an invitation to the guest to civilize the host. It is in this sense of civilizing the "savages" that T. Walter Herbert Jr. remarks that "the basic theme" in the writing by Porter, Stewart, and Melville is that of "the transaction between 'savages' and their 'civilizers'" (15). He further explains that "in confronting the Marquesans as 'savages,' the Americans

engaged in dramas of self-definition by which they asserted themselves to be ‘civilized’” (20). In other words, in the writings of Melville, Stewart or Porter, it is not the hosts but the guests that appropriate and control the “drama” of welcome and hospitality; and the Islanders are absolute strangers to this drama since it enacts scenes of self-definition by American travelers and explorers.

Unlike common perceptions that hospitality is coterminous with civilization itself, Porter, Stewart and Melville imply that the native practice of hospitality is precisely what makes the Islanders savages. What the Islanders demonstrate through their “excessive” and “amoral” welcome is nothing less than abuse or perversion of hospitality. Melville’s Tommo locates this perversion of hospitality in the welcome by the inhabitants of Nukuhiva and Typee valley. And at the end of the narrative, Tommo seeks to escape from the Islanders’ perverted practice of hospitality. Thus, in spite of his critique of missionary activities and colonialism in the South Pacific, and in spite of his admiration for the noble savages of the Typee valley, Melville too seems to suggest that the abuse of hospitality in Marquesas is committed not by missionaries or by American and French colonists but by the Islanders themselves whose excesses revolt the enlightened taste of Euro-American guests. In order to dramatize the encounter Melville makes the most of Tommo’s confusion whether the Typee are “feeding him out of hospitality” or “fattening him up” for cannibalizing (Edmond 87); yet in reality Melville suggests that the Typee do not see the difference between fattening up and hospitality or at least their notion of hospitality is civilized man’s captivity or cannibalism. By holding the guests hostage to their welcome, the Islanders “invite” imperial retribution or intervention.

Estrangement of the native islanders in *Typee* starts as soon as the name

“Marquesas” is mentioned aboard *The Dolly* long before the actual landfall:

“Hurra, my lads! It’s a settled thing; next week we shape our course to the Marquesas!”

The Marquesas! What strange visions of outlandish things does the very name spirit up! Naked houris – cannibal banquet – groves of cocoa-nut – coral reefs – tattooed chiefs – carved canoes dancing on the flashing blue waters – savage woodlands guarded by horrible idols – *heathenish rites and human sacrifices*. (5)

D. H. Lawrence wrongly believes that the blue-eyed, sea-born people such as Vikings, whom he thinks Melville also belongs to, hate life and the land, and “can meet and mingle no longer: [and] turn away from life, to the abstract, to the elements: the sea receives her own” (Lawrence 132). Melville’s sailors on board *The Dolly*, who were forced to go without food for days, were in search of an escape from the “land-sick ship,” and were enlivened at the prospect of meeting and mingling with the Marquesas Islanders. But Lawrence is right that Tommo and the Typees cannot commingle because they are separated by a gulf of time and being. The only qualification to be made, however, is: Lawrence locates the gulf in Typees being stuck in the past so that anyone wanting to meet them needs to go backwards “towards the past, savage life,” and Tommo cannot and should not go backwards (Lawrence 136).

In truth, Tommo himself is stuck in the past: the romantic past created by voyagers exoticizing the South Pacific; and Tommo cannot take a step forward to meet the Marquesans in the “present.” Tommo cannot meet or commingle with Typees because as soon as he arrives among the islanders, he would impose on them his visions and fantasies of savage life – cannibal feasts, oriental orgies in the harems, pagan idols and heathen practices of human sacrifices. Lawrence is however right that Melville was

there to meet not the Marquesas Islanders but to see the noble savages conjured up by European thinkers. “Here at last,” Lawrence writes, “is Rousseau’s Child of Nature and Chateaubriand’s Noble Savage called upon and found at home. Yes, Melville loves his savage host” (135). Melville’s Tommo, stuck as he is in the time of Rousseau and Chateaubriand’s noble savages or with the cultural moment steeped in the romantic movement and the gothic strain (Edwards 84), cannot cross the bridge and meet the actual Islanders in their time, place and being. Tommo’s approach, thus, is Orientalist hospitality personified in which the traveler is both the guest and the host as he visits not the Islanders but the noble savages conjured up by the discourse he is familiar with. Tommo’s step backward approaches or contacts what is intimate and familiar to him and in him, thereby estranging the actual Islanders he was about to meet in the Marquesas.

As in Margaret Mead’s anthropological account of the palm trees, glimmering sea, and homosexual orgies on the beach of Samoa (Mead 12), Melville’s exotic picture of Marquesas “seen” even before the islands can be seen from the sea erases the islands and the Islanders as possible hosts. Before being a guest by welcoming the host, Tommo, like Mead, is already with the “Islanders,” or to be more precise, with his fantasies about the Islanders. Like Mead, Tommo, too, is smitten by the beauty of the islands, and he too possesses similar desire to see. “Such were the strangely jumbled anticipations,” he admits, “that haunted me during our passage from the cruising ground. I felt an irresistible curiosity to see those islands which the olden voyagers had so glowingly described” (5). This desire to see the enchanting island “hidden from the world in these remote seas” (24), and to escape the privations, drudgery and harassing cares of a seaman makes Tommo devise a plan for deserting *The Dolly*. “Yet, after all,” he says to himself,

“insensible as he [the savage] is to a thousand wants, and removed from harassing cares, may not the savage be the happier man of the two?” (29). Such, Tommo recalls, “were the thoughts that arose in my mind as I gazed upon the novel spectacle [of escaping & being among the Islanders] before me” (29). It is this desire to gaze upon the spectacle of the exotic Polynesian life that compels Tommo to explore the Typee valley, and to peep like a voyeur at the frivolous, spontaneous and erotic acts of the “savages.” Together with the anthropological gaze fixed on the life of the Islanders, their food practices, costumes, taboos, families, and spiritual activities, Melville’s Tommo, turning his mysterious illness of leg to his benefit, again in anticipation of Mead, peeps at the curious sexual practices of the Islanders, especially King Mehevi’s romps with a young girl and her lover.

When the ship approached the bay at Nukuhiva, Tommo’s attention was caught by a “singular commotion in the water ahead of the vessel,” which he first thought to be “a shoal of fish sporting on the surface” (14). When “our savage friends assured us that it was caused by a shoal of ‘whihenes’ (young girls), who in this manner were coming off from the shore to welcome us,” Tommo still could not believe that they were young girls (14). “I almost fancied,” he confesses, “they could be nothing else than so many mermaids” (14). While Tommo was seeing mermaids in the young girls, the latter jumped on board the ship flinging “themselves lightly over the bulwarks and were quickly frolicking about the decks” (15). Overjoyed with the arrival of the mermaids, Tommo exclaims: “What a sight for us bachelor sailors! How avoid so dire a temptation? For who could think of tumbling these artless creatures overboard, when they had swam miles to welcome us?” (15). This scene of “welcome,” however, is not recognized as hospitality; and the young girls, who were first called fish and mermaids, quickly change

to everything including “a sight for a bachelor,” “dire temptation,” and “artless creatures” but hosts. Their hospitable gesture is perceived as an attack and hostage-taking.

The ‘Dolly’ was fairly captured; and never I will say a vessel carried before by such a dashing and irresistible party of boarder! The ship taken, we could not do otherwise than yield ourselves prisoners, and for the whole period that she remained in the bay, the ‘Dolly,’ as well as her crew, were completely in the hands of the mermaids. (15)

True to his name, the peeping Tommo was voyeuristically enjoying every bit of the “abandoned voluptuousness” of the mermaids; yet, as soon as the mermaids “approach” the ship, Tommo panics and fears for the dissolution, even cannibalization of his civilized self. Losing sight of the mermaids, he sees in their place “every species of riot of debauchery” on the ship. The panic and the premonition of cannibalism causes Tommo assume the role of the civilizer for whom the hospitality of the mermaids-turned-species-of-riots-and-debauchery is only an invitation to “grossest licentiousness” and “shameful inebriety” (15). For Tommo’s civilized sensibility, the mermaids welcome not only the sailors but also the unholy passions, unlimited gratification, and “the contaminating contact” of the white man (15). It is this uncivil and unsophisticated hospitality that renders the Islanders susceptible to Western civilizing missions and colonialist incursions in the Pacific. The “unlimited” hospitality of the Islanders results in what Tommo would later call the “fatal embrace” of European colonialism:

When the inhabitants of some sequestered island first descry the “big canoe’ of the European rolling through the blue waters towards their shore, they rush down to the beach in crowds, and with open arms stand ready to embrace the strangers. Fatal embrace! They fold to their bosoms the vipers whose sting is destined to poison all their joys. . . (26)

Meville not only makes hospitality central to colonialism, he also implies that it is the Islanders who “invite” colonialism through their perverted sense of hospitality. Though

the guests who arrive in these islands poison the bosoms of the exotic creatures, in Tommo's view, they are not the sole agents of the fatal embrace because they are taken hostage by the welcome of the natives. When the Monroe doctrine took effect in 1820s, America was transformed from a continental nation to a hemispheric power (Schmidt 281). The doctrine established what has come to be known as "the Pacific Squadron." From a single ship – the *Macedonian* – in 1818, the squadron rises to three between 1824 and 1838, and six after 1840. The squadron was primarily designed to protect and save deserters and beachcombers like Tommo, and other captains and whaling ships "subjects to the tender mercies" of the Islanders (Heffer 78). Tommo's sense of captivity and panic, therefore, justifies imperial incursion in the Pacific.⁷³ It is precisely this panic created by the excessive hospitality of the Typees that compels Tommo to escape from the Typee valley.

Melville's critique of colonialism and empire lies in his rejection of the contaminating world of the white civilized man, whom he describes as "the most ferocious animal on the face of the earth" (125). Midway into the narrative Melville juxtaposes the Typee with the civilized world, and emphasizes the freedom Typee offers him against the repressive and cruel mechanisms of the so-called civilized world. There were no foreclosures of mortgages in Typee, he says, no bills payable, no assault and battery attorneys, "no beggars, no debtor's prison, no proud and hard hearted nabobs; or to sum up all in one word – no Money," the root of all evil (126). The ambivalence in Melville's critique of colonialism, however, lies not simply in his exoticization of the South Pacific; it also lies in his ahistorical portrayal of the Typee valley and its

⁷³ David Farrier also implies that the unsettling narrative of *Typee* places "Typee" as the "locus of an excessive rhetoric, a short hand signifier for the white sailor's anxious projections of encounter" (123).

inhabitants, who seem to exist exterior to, but never in an interactive, though asymmetrical, relationship to the West. That is the reason why even until the end of his stay in the valley, Tommo fails to understand how the natives may have used the myth of cannibalism as a defense mechanism or strategy against the possible Western colonial incursions. Instead, he keeps on believing that by nature the Typees are cannibalistic, it is only the matter of time before he falls victim to their whims.

Melville's critique of colonialism in *Typee* is further problematized by the "Appendix" in which he defended the provisional cession of the Sandwich Islands to Lord George Paulet. Though removed from the American edition of the text, the "Appendix" on the Sandwich Islands is in direct contrast to his anti-colonialist stance in the rest of the text. In the "Appendix" he not only defends Paulet's interventions in Hawaii, thereby justifying foreign control on the Islands; but he also deplores what he perceives to be the degradation of morality and character of Hawaiians during the riotous rejoicing in the wake of the British pull out, and restoration of monarchy in Hawaii. Melville calls the celebration "the Polynesian saturnalia," which reveals to him "the heathenish" nature of the Islanders. Even within the text, Melville frequently compares the natives of Hawaii and Typee, and finds that the latter are far more gracious than the "licentious" Hawaiians. King Mehevi of Typee, for instance, has more regal dignity than his Hawaiian counterpart, King Kamehameha III, who is merely "a fat, negro looking blockhead" who has already lost the noble traits of the barbarian (189).

Though Melville critiques imperialism in *Typee*, as we saw, his critique is not a response to the perversions of hospitality that follows the "fatal embrace" and corrosive and contaminating contact of Euro-Americans. Melville approaches the native as an

Orientalist (i.e., he takes a step towards the natives, but not to meet the native Islanders but the ones he invented, conjured up or borrowed from the travel writing and romantic discourses before him). He imposes the image that he and others invented onto the Islanders so that his steps towards them in fact take him back to himself, thereby making him a guest of the host he himself conjures up. As he critiques colonialism as perversion of hospitality, he reinstates himself as host and consolidates his own sense of self. Letting the stranger approach and welcome involves disorienting oneself rather than wielding an Orientalist gaze in which it is always the colonial “I” that sees and knows. What emerges at the moment of the other’s approach is not a consolidated self, but a stranger who transcends the colonial equation of host and guest by disorienting the Orientalist gaze that seeks to bring the Islanders into its totalizing purview.

The return of this colonialist gaze or appropriation of the gaze by the Islanders constitute the process of decolonizing hospitality in which not the Euro-American and his invention – the native – but a stranger, “something,” as Frost would call in his poem “Once by the Pacific,” arrives. In this other approach or approach of the other, the stranger returns when we least expect him or her, in a form and manner that exceeds our preconceptions and prejudices. Melville’s *Typee* contains a few of these unexpected moments of the return. One of them occurs very early in the text when Melville describes how the Nukuhivan “savages” appropriate the “peeping” and look back at the missionaries, especially at the one who introduce his wife in the mission to convert the “heathenish” Islanders. This missionary’s wife was “the first woman who had ever visited their shores,” and the “islanders at first gazed in mute admiration at so unusual a prodigy” and took her to be a new divinity (6). After some time, though, they discover by

piercing “the sacred veil of calico” enshrining the “deity” that she is also human. This discovery changed their attitude toward her from idolatry to contempt. Nukuhiva islanders, who were always under the strict gaze of the missionaries anxious not to let the “savages” wander off on the path of heathenism and sin, re-appropriate the face and return the look, which eventually makes the missionaries retract and abandon their project of civilizing the Islanders.⁷⁴

Tommo personally experienced the power of the gaze of the savages when he with Toby arrived at the dwellings of the Typees. When they were escorted by a pair of natives to the village, a throng of the islanders accompanied them until they reached a house where resided a number of “noble-looking chiefs” (70). These chiefs, says Tommo, “regarded us with a fixed and stern attention, which not a little discomposed our equanimity” (71). Tommo recalls how one of the chiefs in particular “placed himself directly facing me; looking at me with a rigidity of aspect under which I absolutely quailed” (71). The chief’s gaze was so intense that Tommo admits that he had never been “subjected to so strange and steady a glance” (71). For the first time in his life Tommo feels like the chief “subjected” him to the power of his gaze.

Another encounter with the gaze and approach of the “savages” occurred when the Typee King Mehevi invited Toby and Tommo to “the hoola hoola ground” at the taboo groves for a ceremonious feast. After the rituals, and dinner when the pipe was brought in, both Toby and Tommo gave in to the soporific effects of the repast and

⁷⁴ In *Facing the Pacific*, Jeffrey Geiger raises the question of “facing” Pacific Islanders and argues that though the term might evoke “westward march of empire,” it also suggests “putting a face on” Pacific Islands and peoples, which in fact “was the by-product of, an ambivalent and contested US self-image” (3). In other words, while facing the Pacific Islanders the U.S. produces its self-image, and stages its encounter with itself. By re-appropriation of face here I mean the face in the Levinasian sense in which the face is always the face of the other, i.e., it suggests a contact a contract that issues the injunction – don’t kill me, though I’m vulnerable.

smoke. Upon waking at midnight, they discovered that the Islanders had withdrawn to light a fire at a distance, where they could see the Islanders' shadows moving to and fro before the fire. When Tommo wondered what the fire could be for, Toby replied: "Why the fire to cook us, to be sure; what else would the cannibals be kicking up such a row about if it were not for that?" (94).⁷⁵ This shook Tommo as well, and when they knew that they "indeed were at the mercy of a tribe of cannibals," in the dim light of the distant fire, they noticed a few shadows gliding towards them.

They came on noiselessly, nay stealthily and glided along through the gloom that surrounded us as if about to spring upon some object they were fearful of disturbing before they should make sure of it. – Gracious heaven! the horrible reflections which crowded upon me that moment. – A cold sweat stood upon my brow, and spellbound with terror I awaited my fate! (94)

To make the matters worse, they heard King Mehevi's voice: "Tommo, Toby, ki ki (eat)." While the guests of the royal feast urged the host to "cook us first, will you?" the King put before them a large wooden trencher full of steaming meat. In the darkness of the night both Tommo and Toby thought that it was a "baked baby" the "savages" brought them before they wanted to bake both the guests themselves. "A baked baby, by the soul of Captain Cook!" said Toby; Tommo insisted that they bring a light, and when the light was brought, Tommo "gazed eagerly into the vessel, and recognized the mutilated remains of a juvenile porker" (95). In *American Pacifism*, Paul Lyons argues that "[e]ven when the aim is a critique of imperialism, U.S. artists and scholars narrating stories of intercultural relation in Oceania have for the most part misperceived, misrepresented, disrespected or ignored Oceanian institutions, perspectives, humor, and

⁷⁵ Many of Melville's critics believe that Melville thought of cannibalism as the "product of a civilized observer's 'frame of mind'" (Rennie 195), which proves that he never left the civilized frame of mind even after living with the cannibals. This meeting is with himself.

ways of knowing (and narrating), attempting to subsume indigenous categories into their own” (2). In his study Lyons seeks to address these “ignorances/denials” by referring to the notion of hospitality “as a category through which Euro-American and Oceanian encounter and relation might be effectively audited and at times appreciated” (10). While Lyons might be one of the first critics to use hospitality as a critical lens to study American literature on the Pacific, his notion of hospitality is confined to Euro-American and Oceanian encounter. As a result he ignores how Pacific Islanders seek to restore their ancient cultural practices of hospitality which not only engages with what Lyons calls the Eueo-American and Oceanian encounter,” but also with hospitality among Pacific Islanders themselves in the wake of colonialism. For this we must look at Pacific literature itself, and in the second part of this chapter, I would like to examine hospitality in John Dominis Holt’s Hawaiian novel *Waimea Summer*.

Receiving *Mana* or Welcoming the Specters of History in *Waimea Summer*

Waimea Summer is one of the narratives about Hawaii that foregrounds hospitality. In her dissertation *Pele’s Appeal*, Sherilyn Ku’ualoha Ho’omanawanui argues that centuries before being appropriated by the tourist industry, Kanaka Maoli “offered hospitality to each other,” and Pele and Hi’iaka mo’olelo are one of the many legends or narratives that include “episodes presenting hospitable behavior as a positive trait, and inhospitable behavior as very unbecoming” (397).⁷⁶ In *Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen*, Queen Liliuokalani recalls her bridal tour to the island of Hawaii and remarks that her host Prince Lot welcomed her in such a manner that “no matter how protracted our stay, Hawaiian hospitality, or love and loyalty, whichever it may please the

⁷⁶ I would like to thank Professor Susan Najita for lending me this text and for directing me to other books and articles on Holt’s novel as well as Hawaiian literature and culture.

reader to call it, was never exhausted” (25). Hawaiian hospitality or love and loyalty were extended not only by the chiefs, but also by Kanaka Maoli. The Queen further notes that if she were to visit Hawaii, “scarcely would the knowledge that we had reached the port of Hilo get to the ears of our people when a house would be provided for our occupancy, food would be brought to our doors, and we would be made welcome amongst our people for weeks, months” (25). Later in the book, Queen Liliuokalani provides details of her visit to England and the royal welcome she received from the Queen of England, thereby grounding Hawaii’s claim to sovereignty on the diplomacy of reciprocal hospitality between the royalties of both kingdoms. The Queen interprets the plot to dethrone her, take over the government and annex Hawaii as America’s betrayal of Hawaiian hospitality. Towards the end of her “story” she writes:

Let me, therefore, return to the annexationists and their plots. While I have been no more than an interested observer, quietly awaiting the course of justice, and conscious of the strength derived from truth and right on my side, their commissioners, with such influences as their indomitable assurance could command, had been working very hard to get the present rule in Hawaii out of its political and financial difficulties, by passing over to the United States a country whose hospitality they have betrayed, a land which they do not and can never own. (352)

Liliuokalani equates colonialism in Hawaii to the abuse of hospitality by the United States. While she critiques the betrayal of hospitality by the United States and exposes the audacity with which the annexationists seek to retain control of Hawaii, she also believes that Hawaii cannot be owned by the United States precisely because Hawaiians possess the indomitable spirit of hospitality. She believes that Hawaiian hospitality or love or loyalty as a custom or practice has not “altogether passed away by the many changes which have been wrought through the hands of the foreigner in the Hawaiian Islands” (25). Unlike Melville who, as we saw, thought that colonial contact degraded the

nobility of the indigenous Hawaiians discernible even in the physiological features of the people of Hawaii, the Queen believes that Hawaiian practice of hospitality survives foreign contact and outlasts colonial violence. In fact, she seems to suggest that hospitality is what remains of Hawaii despite colonialism. For her hospitality indeed is the force which will eventually enable Hawaiians to regain sovereignty by overcoming the relation of owning and possessing initiated by colonialism.

Waimea Summer is another narrative that chronicles the importance of hospitality in decolonizing Hawaii. Though published in 1976, the novel takes the readers back to a summer in the 1930s, a few decades after Hawaii's annexation in 1893, and before its statehood in 1959. It narrates the story of Mark Hull, who pays a summer visit to his Uncle Fred's family in Waimea, Hawaii. If *Typee* is complicit with colonialism as Melville defends George Paulet's intervention in Hawaii, and calls the Hawaiian King Kamehameha III "a fat negro-looking blockhead," thereby undermining his own critique of imperialism in the main narrative of the text; Holt is not only nostalgic about Hawaiian monarchy, as "a founding member of the Homerule Movement" he also seeks to "excavate Hawaiianness and regain power for Natives" (Kwon 469). Though a descendent of Lord George Paulet, Holt identifies with the third world and its anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, and civil rights movements across the globe. *Waimea* represents a moment in the history of American literature in general, and Hawaiian literature in particular, a "postcolonial moment" in which the Empire writes back.⁷⁷ If Melville justifies colonial interventions in Hawaii, Holt's writing, on the other hand,

⁷⁷ Holt expresses awareness of movements against colonialism and for civil rights across the globe in *On Being Hawaiian*. He concedes that Hawaiians are "a tiny handful of people among the millions who make up the third world's population of non-white humans;" yet, he argues that Hawaiians have been, "as blacks, Asians and other brown, and yellow people, plundered, ravaged, used and we have suffered the humiliation of allowing the culture of our predecessors to be beaten to near extinction by strangers" (9).

chronicles the devastating legacy of colonialism, or what Susan Najita calls the “traumatic re-experiencing of the past” (169). In *On Being Hawaiian* Holt calls the ruin colonialism brought upon Hawaiian culture “the holocaust of the 19th century” (15). *Typee* is about Tommo, *his* inordinate desire to see, and *his* ability to read and master the native culture in spite of the fact that he could not have a meaningful interaction with Typees beyond exchanging gestures aided only by a couple of words he learnt during his stay.⁷⁸ Holt’s protagonist, Mark, in contrast, works as a meeting point at which he receives divergent views and responds to conflicting claims and accounts of almost all the other characters in the novel. Fred and Julian, Puna and Eben, Lepeka and Mrs. Warrington, Dr. Okamura and Mr. Hanohano, though each represents the opposite of the other in one sense or the other, all confide in Mark, who engages with them all, and finds some common ground to connect with each. This capacity to receive and respond to everyone regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, education, and profession, and above all his reaffirmation of his genealogy as a Hawaiian is what distinguishes Mark from Melville’s Tommo, who opposes imperialism but cannot respond or relate to those estranged by imperialism. Thus *Waimea Summer* shifts the discourse from critique of imperialism to responding to and reception of the other of Empire.

Set in the Hawaii of the 1930s, the story of Holt’s novel revolves around a fourteen-year-old hapa-haole (half-white and half-Hawaiian), Mark Hull, who is also the narrator of the story. Invited by his *paniolo* (cowboy) uncle Fred Andrews, Mark visits his relatives in Waimea, and stays at Andrews’ nineteenth-century gothic house. Holt

⁷⁸ John Bryant notes that Melville in *Typee* gains “imperial dominion over himself sexually, and over primal Polynesia culturally, because he can now read the native gaze; and reading it as a mirror of himself, he converts it from controlling stare into a vehicle of imperial self-dominance” (141).

foregrounds the moment of Mark's attempts to reconnect with and receive the past in the opening paragraph of the novel:

At four in the morning, three days after I arrived on the Big Island to pay my first visit to Waimea, I awoke and was gripped by a sense of doom and apprehension, even before I could shake off the lingering remnants of sleep. All the things I heard said about Waimea being a place ridden with ghosts and black magic seemed now to be true. Before this the excitement of being at last in this place my father had so endlessly extolled, my explorations around the once handsome house and garden, and exhaustion had successfully kept back the age old sensitivity Hawaiians have to the world of spirits. But this morning, in my darkened room, a chilling sense of portent and unseen things being everywhere had complete hold of me. The fourposter in which I'd felt quite comfortable for three nights now seemed forbidding. The handsome quilt of the breadfruit design, which had been specially granted, felt now like a shroud. (1)

Mark, still only half-awake, opens his narrative as if from a mental space between the conscious and the unconscious.⁷⁹ His visit to Waimea is colored by his father's stories about exotic Hawaiian Islands, expansive and Eden-like ranches, and by rumors about ghosts and black magic. Like Melville's Tommo, Mark also came to know about the Pacific through the stories he heard,⁸⁰ and like Tommo, who becomes a guest of a culture in shambles, a culture on the verge of disappearance due to Western imperial encroachment in the South Pacific, Mark visits Hawaii at the time when a once-thriving ranch culture of Waimea is literally in ruins. However, while Tommo's response to the ruins in the Marquesas is nostalgia and "false sympathy," Mark's reception of the ruin or

⁷⁹ Like *Typee*, Holt's *Waimea Summers* is a coming of age story, a story of awakening and initiation for Mark Hull. If *Typee* helps Melville exorcize "adolescent homosexual tendencies" and define himself in increasingly heterosexual terms" as if the book was about a self-colonization of his sexual being" (Bryant 137), *Waimea Summer* initiates and inducts Mark into Hawaiian culture and history, and initiates him sexually as well. Yet Mark's sexual initiation like the intersecting movements is double – he has sexual encounters with a married woman, Kimiko, as well as with a man, Mr. Hanohano, with whom Mark experience "an unmistakable same sex-embrace" (Isaac 157).

⁸⁰ Melville gets his stories from written sources, especially from European voyagers before him, whereas Mark's sources are mostly oral – family stories and anecdotes, which present two different views of history. Yet Mark's nostalgia for Hawaii's exotic past, which is the primary drive for his visit to Waimea, brings him close to Tommo's wish to explore Nuku-Hiva as well the Typee valley.

the remnant is more like incorporation. In *Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific*, Susan Najita observes that Mark's response to the ruins of the ranching culture in Waimea is one of reconnection and reclaiming; and in "reconnecting with his Hawaiian relatives, Mark Hull finds a silence-filled and fragmented past, one whose illegibility is deeply troubling" (Najita 31). In reconnecting with what the Pacific historian Jonathan Osorio calls "dismembered lahui [people]" (Osorio 3), Mark the visitor in an uncanny moment realizes that he has been here before.

Najita characterizes the troubling experience of reconnecting with the dismembered lahui as Holt's "traumatic realism" which, according to her, enables us to see "how the shards of the colonial past continue to resurface in the present not as foreclosed and concluded historical moments but as trauma constitutive of ongoing colonial relations" (22). While Najita's deployment of trauma allows her to analyze colonial violence and its psychic effect on the colonized subject, the troubling experience of the trauma in her analysis is the colonial past. The troubling experience of reconnection I trace in *Waimea Summer* is not only the colonial past, but a pre-colonial past and a decolonial future. In other words, Mark the visitor becomes the host not only in reconnecting and reclaiming the gothic home rendered unhomey by colonialism, but also imaging a decolonial future.

Mark's vision of ghosts, black magic, and pagan animal sacrifices, therefore, open the pathway for welcoming or being visited by the cultural practices of ancient Hawaii. The series of panic attacks he undergoes throughout the entire novel in fact function as thresholds on which takes place the impossible return and reception of the historical figures and practices of ancient Hawaiian culture. If the panic attacks of Melville's

“Tommo,” originate from Tommo’s orientalist gaze that looks at the Typees as absolute others, Mark’s panic attacks and his fear of being consumed by the “superstitious” beliefs and practices of his Hawaiian relatives, in contrast, represents the process through which Mark receives the alienated past. Even though Uncle Fred claims that Mark is “here as my guest under my protection and care,” Mark knows that he is not only living in a gothic house full of ghosts and spirits, but his host is a cannibal, sort of, who has prayed people to death. In one of the fights Mark witnesses in the house, Julian, Fred’s brother-in-law, accuses Fred of killing Miriam (Fred’s wife and Julian’s sister) by praying her to death (24). Fred, on the other hand, thinks that Hawaiian spiritualism or Kahunaism, which Fred thinks Julian practices, is cannibalism and communism (107). By accepting his Uncle’s invitation to visit, Mark feels that he let himself be held hostage in his host’s house. He started having outlandish visions, as did Tommo, of being enshrouded in the house, which Mark describes as “a splendid sanctuary for ghosts and dust” (10). These outlandish and exotic visions of a hapa-haole or stranger-guest become the very medium through which return “indistinct nineteenth-century figures” from Hawaiian history (33).

The missionary condemnation of native Hawaiian religious practices and colonialism’s distortion of Hawaii’s history prevent Mark from a direct identification with home and self. He is conditioned to approach Waimea through a stranger’s eyes as if he were an outsider-guest. He comes to his ancestral home now estranged by colonialism. He acts as if the only way to “arrive” and visit Hawaii is by dressing up as a cowboy or an explorer. He first begins a “private survey of Fred’s house” (7), which he would continue later as well by paying “exploratory visit[s] upstairs” (17). After the house, he explores the surrounding, revealing that his “eyes flashed in all directions,

greedily seeking out prominent features of the surrounding countryside” (11). Mark’s “greedy” gaze hovers on the eucalyptus trees and the tall Mauna Kea mountain. He admires in particular the Kohala range that protects Waimea from northern winds. The Kohala mountains seem to him to be “friendly mountains near at hand, and as comforting as the engulfing arms of lover’s in embrace” (11). Lost in the soothing embrace of such an exotic setting, Mark’s dreamy eyes wander off to the forest of lehua and koa, where he believes “the friendly spirit of Laka, patron of the hula” could be alive (11). The “fiercely luxuriant” growth of trees and plants make him exclaim:

I had the sense that the Gods had blessed Waimea as once the God of the Old Testament had bestowed magical, extravagant beauty upon Eden. I breathed deeply, spread my arms wide and felt like bellowing Tarzan’s call” (11-12).

This romanticization of exploration is part of what Stephen Sumida calls the novel’s “complex pastoral” romance, whose “heroic context” is the entire history of Hawaii (162). Yet, what distinguishes Mark from Tommo’s orientalism is that Mark lets Hawaii’s history visit him; in short, he becomes the threshold through which enters or arrives the complex history of Hawaii. As Mark claims in the novel, he is endowed with a special ingenuity: “I saw fellow humans as aesthetic objects, as repositories of music, art, poetry – of elements similar to ones I found in a view of the sky, the sea or the mountains” (118). His objectifying glance aestheticizes human beings, and sees in them their inherent potential, beauty, and truth unknown even to the “object” of Mark’s gaze. It is this gaze, however, that enables him to “see” and “know” Hawaii’s glorious past. Throughout the novel Mark impresses almost all hapa-haole characters with his love and knowledge of Hawaii’s past. During their horse ride one day, Fred talks about his impending luau (party) and the list of the guests he intends to invite for the occasion. He

takes this opportunity to familiarize Mark with his neighbors, relatives, and residents of Waimea. When Fred asks if Mark knows who Mrs. Warrington is, Mark surprises his uncle by recalling the Hull family's ties with the Stevensons, upon which Fred remarks: "You know quite a lot about the old folks, boy! You will be living in the past the rest of your life, if you don't watch out!" (72).

On the day of the luau, when Mark encounters the legendary rancher of Waimea, Mr. Baxter, who is also a family friend of the Hulls, Mark again impresses Mr. Baxter with his knowledge of their family genealogies and history, which makes Mr. Baxter acknowledge: "I must say, young fellow, you know one hell of a lot about the old days. Most kids of your age don't seem to care!" (121). Knowing the past, for Mr. Baxter, is "caring," which is how earlier in the novel Fred defines the role of the host – caring for the guest. In other words, by knowing the past in its totality, Mark attempts to see himself as the host of the Waimeans.

Similar compliments on his knowledge come from Mrs. Warrington herself, the aristocratic lady of Waimea, and the "reigning queen" of the Stevenson ranch, as Fred calls her (72). Touched by Mark's interests in and knowledge of the past, especially his veneration of the courtship between his aunt Sybil and Tony Stevenson, uncle of Mrs. Warrington's grandchildren, she notes: "You love the past, Mark. That's obvious. It's a rare thing in a youngster nowadays. Sybil and Tony are your Romeo and Juliet, . . . your Dante and Beatrice (131). What is revealing about Mrs. Warrington's assessment of Mark's "love of the past" is that he seems to love Hawaii's past only within the context of the European romantic grand narratives of Romeo and Juliet or Dante and Beatrice. Mrs. Warrington, herself at the moment is in a dilemma whether to "go back to Paris or

stay in New York” (125). And she leans toward Paris because she does not want to disappoint her “boys’ tutor,” who is a young Frenchman fresh from the Sorbonne (125). Mark places Hawaii’s past in the romantic context of Uncle Tony and Sybil’s courtship, and recasts their courtship in the framework of European romantic narratives. Familiar only to this framework, Mark panics when love between Julian and Puna or between Miriam and Julian begins to emerge in the course of his stay in Waimea.

Julian appears to Mark not like the nineteenth century figures such as Tony and Sybil, who are perpetually present in his mind as myths, as someone ghostly.

Immediately after his first panic attack with which the novel opens, Mark returns to his room only to run into Julian:

As I struggled into the boots, using the lamp Fred had left on the table near my door, a lithe young Hawaiian with a thin, bony face appeared, as suddenly as if from the spirit world, at the opposite entrance to my room. In the light of a kerosene lamp held close to his chest, he stood silent, his coppery skin, ebony eyes, and black beard, all glistening in the flickering light. (3)

In the early twilight hours of the day Julian appears to Mark as a ghost from another world; and in spite of Mark’s perceptive, greedy and flashing eyes, Julian controls his visibility by holding the lamp in his hand, and by revealing his “coppery,” “ebony,” “dark,” therefore imperceptible features. These spectral features at once manifest and withdraw Julian’s visibility and presence in the house. As if a permanent specter of the house, Julian again interrupts Mark’s initial survey of the house when the latter was looking at stuffed animals and portraits on the wall:

As I was giving the stuffed spider monkeys a last glance of wonderment, I felt the presence of someone in the room; but my eyes kept their hold on the sad, accusing face of the quiescent primates. “Dis house,” Julian said before I turned around, “dis house eez haunted.” (10)

On their second encounter as well it is Julian who approaches Mark. Instead of being an aesthetic object of Mark's purview or the receiver of his Tarzan's call, Julian is the first to address him, to subject him to his look of mockery. "I faced him now," Mark confesses, "and saw his look of mockery" (10). After being looked at and addressed by Julian, Mark feels exposed to the stranger's approach, which makes him self-scrutinize: "Was he taunting me," he asks himself, "a stranger from the city, a close relative of Fred's, a half-frightened kid? Was I challenged as a fair-skinned, even though I was nearly half-Polynesian (10). "Julian's look and voice" seem to command him, making him fear that he might become the object of Julian's scorn during the weeks that follow (10). Julian's address, his look and voice not only unsettle Mark, but make him aware of his strangeness in Waimea, thereby interrogating his "knowledge," "interest" and "love" of Hawaiian history. All he could ask in response was – "How long have you lived here?" Julian's answer, however, provides no comfort; for Julian reveals that he has been living in the house ever since his sister Miriam married Mark's Uncle Fred. Since Julian and Miriam's bond – which is later in the novel revealed as a "pio marriage of mana-rank chiefs" (187) – exceeds Mark's discursive horizon of love and courtships restricted to the myth of Romeo and Juliet, he simply stares "at him [Julian] briefly and then [leaves] the room" (11). The house exposed to Julian's apparition, his address, and "the vibrations of Julian's words" threaten the sense of security Mark feels as guest in Fred's house, and he wants to "escape the suddenly threatening gloom" (11).

As he bolts out to the "safety of the out-of-doors," Mark feels that the threat that comes from the past of the house and, by extension of the island, targets his very being, his sense of self and identity. When a fight breaks out between Fred and Julian, Mark

literally jumps between Fred's pistol wielded at Julian and the latter's defiance and vituperation. As if quoting Melville's attributes to Kamehameha III, in a rage of jealousy Fred calls Julian a "filthy black bastard," ambiguously hinting at Julian's "incestuous" relationship with his sister. Kamehameha III is the same king who had the last known pio marriage with his sister, and had a son with her, whose mana, the novel suggests, has affected Miriam's son, Puna. Julian retaliates by accusing Fred of killing Miriam, Julian's sister. When Julian "excommunicates" himself from the house announcing that his heart is clean compared to Fred's which "iss black," Mark feels that he was going to meet his end (24-25). That turns out indeed to be the beginning of the end of the Mark who arrived as guest from Honolulu to spend a summer vacation in Waimea under the care and hospitality of his uncle Fred. With Julian's departure, Mark becomes a natural substitute to look after Puna, Fred and Miriam's son. Puna, who very well might have been Julian and his sister's son, like his historical counterpart, suddenly falls ill.

Now left alone in a haunted house, which has not "offered hospitality" for a long time (53), with a sick child to look after, and a family to cook for, this stranger-guest from the city finds himself literally taking care of the host's family. This guest-stranger, who is threatened to the core of his being, gradually awakens to his duty as a relative to look after Puna, and he is converted into the host – a host who transforms from Captain Cook's midshipman to the cook and caregiver for the ailing Puna; a host who not only prepares meals for the family of his host, but also feels being "swallowed into the life patterns" of his Waimea relatives (42). It is at these moments that Mark evidently feels being visited by old folks. The moment Mark assumes his responsibility as family in

Fred's house coincides with the return of Hawaii's old-cultural practices, which becomes obvious to Fred, who in turn acknowledges: "you cook like the old folks, Markie" (51).

This skill for cooking like old folks is not the same as Mark's ability to see and know the past. It is not Mark, the hero of the pastoral, who exhibits his knowledge and grasp of Hawaii's past; rather, he welcomes the past, becomes the receiver of the gift and *mana* of the figures from the past. His reception of the gift of Uncle Tony's silver spurs marks such a welcome. When Mrs. Warrington brings the gift to him, he touches "the spurs carefully, as though willing them to reveal some covert secret," but instead of feeling a sense of personal gain, Marks feels "unnerved," as if "Tony Stevenson's spurs put a new kind of burden" on him, a burden and responsibility all hosts, inheritors, and receivers of gifts and *mana* feel, a debt at once impossible to refuse and repay.

Mana is an important concept in Hawaiian culture. In *Native Land and Foreign Desires*, Lilikalā Kame'elehiwa notes that Hawaiians have two paths to *imihaku* (search for new source of power or *mana*), and Ku and Lono or the Akua (god) of war and love, peace and fertility represent these two paths. Corresponding to the two paths of *imihaku*, according to Kame'elehiwa, there "were two ways *mana* could be obtained: through sexual means and through violence" (46). While Kame'elehiwa restricts the paths to *mana* to sexual means and violence, other scholars have used the concept more comprehensively to include various other means of obtaining *mana*. In *Hawaiian Antiquities*, David Malo describes the ritual of worshiping gods for *mana* before a marriage of a high ranking chief. As part of a religious ceremony to secure offspring, the chiefs worshipped gods because it was firmly believed that "the genius, power and inspiration (*mana*) of a king was like that of a god" (Malo 179). Further expanding the

paths to *mana*, in *From a Native Daughter*, Haunani-Kay Trask defines *mana* as “the ability to speak for the people and the land” (95). Trask believes that women leaders of Hawaii have effected a “great coming together of women’s *mana*” through their ability to speak for the people and the land and through “organizing” (94). If for Trask coming together and speaking for the people and the land represent paths to obtain *mana*, Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel Elbert believe that not only humans but objects possess *mana* such as *kupua* or stones with *mana* that contain power to cure sickness (186).⁸¹

It is in the expanded sense of speaking for the people and the land, and possessing objects with *mana* that Mark receives Tony Stevenson’s spurs. Upon receiving the gift and the *mana*, Mark undergoes another panic attack, which leaves him choking, yet in the dim light of subconscious frenzy, he feels now genealogically related to his childhood hero. Yet the fact that reception of *mana* takes the receiver beyond genealogy is what Mark learns when he visits the hinterland of the Big Island, Waipio valley, and meets Mr. Hanohano, who foretells that Puna is going to die because Fred’s house is full of bad *mana*. Mr. Hanohano teaches Mark the secret of *mana*, which he calls the spirit or life force that lies both in people and things. Mr. Hanohano chants a long Hawaiian prayer, which Mark cannot follow, but he feels as if his spirit is “transported back hundreds of years” (172). He feels as if he has gone beyond his personal knowledge to the land of *mana*. He is at once the guest of that land, but also the one who receives the gift of the life force.

⁸¹ Anthropologist Rober Kiste notes that Polynesian chiefs most senior in rank possessd *mana* or “power to accomplish,” also found in places and objects. “By definition,” he writes, “any person or object capable of extraordinary performance had *mana*. A chief skilled in leadership, diplomacy, oratory, and warfare, or a fish-hook that caught exceptional quantities of fish, had *mana*, which is self-evident by performance. *Mana* commanded respect and was both sacred and dangerous. Charged with such invisible power, a chief was always separated from others by rites of avoidance or *tabu*” (Kiste 12).

After this midnight prayer, Mr. Hanohano takes Mark to Waipio beach, where he again recites fragments of old chants to Lono for Mark. “These are good prayers,” he says, “Prayers to Lono. I say them for you – for your future,” and again sensing Mark’s panic attack at the moment of his opening to the world of spirits and *mana*, Mr. Hanohano assures, “Don’t be afraid, my boy, don’t be afraid” (178). Upon the invocation of Lono, the Ocean seems to respond:

Violent waves rolled in from the reef and crashed on the black sand. Dark clouds raced across the Waimanu cliffs toward Hiilawe. The first pale yellow began to streak the horizon. I could not read the signs of the coming weather as they appeared in massive cloud formation above the sea. . . He [Mr. Hanohano] unfastened the strings of his pajamas, stood naked with his arms wide open as though to embrace the full spread of the new day. He said something in Hawaiian and ran into the green wall of an oncoming wave. He disappeared for a few moments and then I saw his brown body bobbing in the foamy waters. He looked like some sea-borne turtle. I stripped off my clothes and ran like a savage into the pounding surf. (178)

The embrace of the oncoming waves takes place at the limit of history and Mark’s personal ability to know or see. The Ocean in Waipio approaches with violent waves, and dark clouds at dawn. Mark could not read the signs of the coming weather as the stormy and violent waves approach the beach. Mr. Hanohano opens his arms to receive the waves or to be received by them, and like “a savage,” Mark follows.

This welcome and reception taking place on the beach also repeats in the concluding chapter of the novel in which Mark visits ancient ruins of the Puu Kohala temple. At the temple Mark inadvertently sits on a stone reserved for the chiefs in Hawaii. When questioned by the kahu (priest) of the temple, Mark claims that he comes from the chiefs (192), upon which the priest chants Mark’s genealogy, and tells him how Kamehameha I would kill a shark in the bay below the temple. The kahu invites him to

stay back on the island. “Stay,” he implores, “You will be a guest in my home. I will tell you wonderful things about this place, about all the great ones of the past” (194). In his vision Mark sees chiefs starting to gather around the temple as if they were joining the Kahu and entreating him to stay. Even the Great One – Kamehameha – appeared in the vision, and sits with the other “immobile chiefs” (195). As the chiefs sit in expectation, the kahu repeats his invitation – “Stay child! Stay! You belong to us” (195).

When Mark first arrived at Waimea, it was Julian, Fred’s brother-in-law, who was a dark spectral figure who haunted Fred’s house unable to cohabit with Fred but also unable to leave due to the strong bond with his sister Miriam’s son Puna. Mark’s arrival coincidentally precipitated Julian’s departure from the house, which in turn placed Mark as a surrogate uncle/father of the five-year-old Puna. Though Mark’s care and protection could not save Puna from dying, what becomes evident from the love and dependence both Fred and Julian demonstrate for Mark is that Mark substituted for Puna. Mark, who arrived as a distant relative of the cowboy, and only curious about Hawaii’s past is not only related to Fred Andrews’ immediate family, but as a revenant of Puna – who himself died like his historical counterpart, the five-year-old son of King Kamehameha and his sister Princess Nāhi‘ena‘ena– Mark was also related to these royal figures.

The mysterious vision at the end of the novel corroborates this genealogy, which (re)establishes Mark’s kinship to Hawaiian royalty, who “visit” him at the temple. As if he had already welcomed them *in* him, incorporated them in him, Mark does not even wait to answer the priest’s entreating. Instead, like his royal relative, the Great One, who used to run “down the hill and into the waters where he met the shark head on” (193-94), Mark also pulls “away and run[s] pell-mell down the hillside” (195). The novel ends with

this description of how Mark charges down the hill. Though it may also signify his “departure” from the island, the ambiguous ending of the novel also suggest the “arrival” or return of a new Mark in the form of none other than King Kamehameha I. After listening to the chants by the priest and establishing his genealogical ties to royalty, Mark descends the hill not towards the boat but towards the lake in order to kill, like the king, the shark that had gone out of control. Unlike Melville’s Tommo, who kills one of his host islanders to escape from the Typee, Holt’s protagonist returns as a revenant of Hawaii’s sovereign king, thereby becoming host to the history and cultural practices of the land.

Chapter IV:

Un-furnishing Hospitality: Welcoming Immigrants in Willa Cather's Novels

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuge of your teeming shore
Send these the homeless, the tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

– Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus.”

Shortly after her family's arrival on the prairie, the eponymous protagonist from Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*, reveals to the narrator Jim Burden that her father hesitated to immigrate to America. She adds that it was her mother's idea, for her mother believed that “America big country; much money, much land for my boys, much husband for my girls” (58). As if responding to Emma Lazarus's “mother of exiles,” who extends a familial and world-wide welcome to the tired, poor and hungry masses, Ántonia's mother, Mrs. Shimerda, left for the New World believing that upon arrival she would be greeted by free land, plenty of money, and a host of young men to court her daughters.⁸² Mrs. Shimerda's vision of welcome from a generous and familial host not only epitomizes the mythical view of America, it also represents mythical hospitality invoked in the majority of immigrant narratives in American literature. Even though *My Ántonia* depicts the story of immigrants “displaced across continents” (McGowan 55), and though the novel is conditioned by one fundamental loss, “the loss of preoedipal fusion with the

⁸² Lazarus wrote “The New Colossus” after encountering Russian refugees, and in her biography of the poet Esther Schor recalls that Lazarus “recoiled from [the sonnet's] generalized vision of American liberty” (192). But Schor also notes how the sonnet has been associated with America's mission – “as the provision of refuge for the oppressed” (191).

mother” (Fisher-Wirth 41), the notion of America as a maternal refuge “furnishes” the novel with fantasies of plenitude and prosperity, in short, with the American Dream, which one of its noted chroniclers and exponents defines as “that hope of a better and richer life for all the masses of humble and ordinary folk” (Adams 363).

The cave which becomes the Shimerda residence upon their arrival on the prairie, *Ántonia*’s failed romance with Jim and other men, her diminished and toothless shadow with which the novel ends, and her new relationship to the land mediated by her father’s burial site at the crossroad on the prairie indicate that instead of propagating mythical hospitality promising plenitude, Cather intends to evoke hospitality as unfurnishing. Cather not only un-furnishes the mythical promise of hospitality that underwrites the American Dream; by evoking subjects involved in un-orthodox relationships with the land and history, she also proposes a new concept of hospitality devoted to unfurnishing and critiquing appropriation of land by settlers.

“Unfurnishing” is a riff on Cather’s deployment of the term in “The Novel *Démeublé*.” In the essay, Cather complains that “[t]he novel, for a long while, has been over-furnished” with material objects and vivid presentations (35), which reduce it to a “form of journalism” (40). Though Cather’s critique is formalist, her indictment of the furnished or journalistic novel also extends implicitly to her disapprobation of the materialistic tendencies of American culture.⁸³ She calls for “un-furnishing” the novel and letting it teem “with the inexplicable presence of the thing not named” (41). For

⁸³ Many of Cather’s readers have discussed the novelist’s critique of American materialism. Michael Schueth calls her novels such as *A Lost Lady* “Cather’s complicated critique of modern materialism” (118). John Murphy notes that Cather’s “bitterness at the materialism that was becoming the world’s philosophy of life” led many to accuse her of being a snob and a medievalist (76). Sally Allen McNall recalls Cather’s condemnation of the machine-made materialism to argue that her novels often are “a looking back to a time and way of life uncontaminated by materialism” (46).

Cather, the verbal mood and emotional aura created through a suggestive style constitute the core of the novel and revive the evocative power of this imaginative art. She wonders if “we could throw all the furniture out of the window” along with the meaningless reiterations of physical sensations, “and leave the room as bare as the stage of a Greek theatre or as that house into which the glory of Pentecost descended” (42-3).

The trope of unfurnishing enables Cather to formalistically distinguish journalistic and realist novels from the novel *démeublé* or the unfurnished novel, which invokes through verbal mood and emotional aura things not named in the text. This, however, restricts her notion of unfurnishing to formalistic concerns about realistic representation, diction and point of view, though she ends the essay with a reference to the Greek theatre and the glory of Pentecost, which are cultural instances of unfurnishing. I see and hear in the term “unfurnishing” what Cather might have left unnamed: the cultural, ideological and conceptual contexts of the frontier, nation-building and immigration. While Cather uses the term as an adjective, I make it more dynamic and dramatic by using it also as a verb and a noun, and I splice it into two by distinguishing the concept and act of “furnishing” from its antonym – unfurnishing. I relate furnishing to the conventional notion of the frontier which promises to furnish the immigrant with the land, home and new identity as American, instilling in him the American Dream. Furnishing not only implies expansion and empire, it also represents the promise of plenty, which in turn makes the immigrant feel at home. This aspect of the term ties it inextricably to the mythical concept of hospitality in American culture, which I juxtapose to “unfurnishing,” by which I mean not a settler colonial and materialist relationship to the frontier but a new consciousness of the land and new understanding of identity and subjectivity. By

revising and expanding the term unfurnishing, I locate a radically different movement or dynamics of welcome in Cather's novels. I argue that by proposing the aesthetics of unfurnishing in which the "host" rejects "the furniture" used to make the guest at home, Cather urges her readers to imagine hospitality at the anxious and unhomely moment when it seems to disappear or look impossible with the paraphernalia of welcome thrown out the window.

Mythical hospitality to which Mrs. Shimerda appeals in justifying her journey to the New World interconnects fantasies of plenitude underpinning the notion of the American Dream and the immigrant as the subject who at once benefits from the plenitude and fulfils that dream. To the extent that Cather frames her narratives of *My Ántonia* and other prairie novels in the context of the American Dream, which represents the myth of an ever-expanding frontier to achieve the immigrant dream of appropriation, domestication and possession of land for material prosperity, Cather becomes complicit in the imperial project of expansion in the wilderness. As James E. Miller, Jr. shows in "My Ántonia and the American Dream," the novel depicts the momentary surge and "rapid diminishment and disappearance" of the American Dream symbolized by images such as the vision of the plow against the setting sun (101). As a narrative of mythical hospitality projecting America as a maternal host promising the American Dream, the novel also has a subtext of empire and colonialism. The most rudimentary Freudian psychoanalysis would show that the text of the dream-content [of the immigrant, in Cather's case] differs from the dream-thoughts, thereby resulting in a dream-displacement in which "the dream-content no longer resembles the core of the dream-thoughts and the dream gives no more than a distortion of the dream-wish" (Freud 324-

25).⁸⁴ Cather's narratives of the American Dream pass through this dream-work which condenses imperial expansion and familial hospitality to the masses of the humble and ordinary folk. This condensation turns the figure of the immigrant in Cather's novels into the agent of colonialism and empire, who by domesticating the wilderness and assimilating to American culture, appropriates the role of the host to future arrivals. As Joyce McDonald and other critics note, Cather chooses the West as the site for her frontier novels precisely because "the West, with its myth of 'virgin' territory and new beginnings for the stalwart and brave, suited her sensibility" and her "heroic visions" of the pioneers (McDonald 29). As some critics have noted, Cather's inclusion in the American literary canon results from her celebration of "American manifest destiny and the settling of the West" in her early novels (Carlin 7).⁸⁵

Cather's celebration of the pioneering immigrants and their westward march has its own aesthetic and political implications. On the one hand, her celebration monumentalizes the pioneering heroism of the early immigrants; on the other hand, it presents the frontier as wilderness to be colonized and domesticated, and "Indians" as the vanishing or already vanished subjects. As Magdalena Zaborowska remarks, this mythical view of the West belongs to the tradition of writing about America as a Garden of Eden, "a paradisiacal haven for the world's refugees" (122-123). According to this view of hospitality, European immigrants are exceptional pioneers who convert the

⁸⁴ John N. Swift explores the not so easily discernible nexus between Freud and Cather. Swift points out Cather's early critique of Freud and her sarcastic portrayal of Jim Burden's wife, who Swift believes resembles Mabel Dodge Lahun, a patroness and hostess to modernists, socialists, suffragists and psychoanalysts in New York. Swift argues that Cather and Freud present an odd pair "standing not at all comfortably at the gates to modernism: each mistrustful of the present and future, and looking romantically backward to a nobler, stronger past, in childhood or in human history – but each also too honest to accept that past as an unproblematic Golden Age" (226).

⁸⁵ Referring to *O Pioneers!*, *The Song of the Lark* and *My Antonia*, Carlin explains that "Cather's canonical value resides in the heroic myth of national identity" which "a vast array of readers recognize [sic] in these novels" (7).

wilderness into a garden or a home. This westward march of empire involves making oneself at home in the “wilderness,” in short, furnishing the wilderness with the accouterments of civilization, which in turn marks the boundaries of the community and defines the relationship among immigrants. In other words, Cather’s mythical hospitality in her heroic fiction of the West depicts the frontier as wilderness to be domesticated, immigrants as pioneers, and history as “furnishing” civilization through the march of empire.

In this chapter I read Willa Cather’s immigrant stories, primarily *O Pioneers!* and *My Ántonia*, in order to discuss the novelist’s aesthetics of hospitality as “un-furnishing.” I will also take up briefly other works (including *The Song of the Lark*, *The Professor’s House*, *Death Come for the Archbishop*) to contend that when examined from the angle of her journalistic investments – that is, from Cather’s use of the American Dream or her vision of heroic pioneers marching westward and fulfilling America’s imperial destiny – the figure of the immigrant appears as a sovereign host domesticating the vacant wilderness.⁸⁶ However, Cather’s art of un-furnishing the novel also lets a different picture of the immigrant emerge – not the one who expands the frontier and appropriates free land through his pioneering heroics but the one who is internally divided, a subject divided in terms of home, belonging, class, gender and sexuality as well as in terms of roles as guest and host. Cather presents hospitality to immigrants as a struggle between the mythic notion of hospitality as the American Dream of prosperity or plenitude and

⁸⁶ As David Humphries has shown, Cather’s relationship with journalism is not always oppositional. Humphries argues that in her early works Cather “depicts journalists and immigrants as helping artists shape popular taste and change existing conceptions of culture, while in her later works she depicts journalism as nothing more than a form of advertizing and immigrants as narrow-mindedly pursuing financial successes” (13). Humphries provides a reason from Cather’s personal experience for this change in her attitude towards journalism. He notes that Cather’s love for journalism ended as soon as she could “support herself through her creative writing” (14).

hospitality as un-furnishing, which creates the possibility of welcoming immigrants as guest/host-strangers.

If the celebration of pioneering heroism and the promise of vacant or free land to accommodate or “furnish” the immigrants forestall the articulation of colonial appropriation of land and displacement of Native Americans, hospitality as un-furnishing enacts a different kind of avoidance in which the thing not named but emphatically suggested is the process of anti-colonialism, and the inexplicable presence is none other than the figure of the Native American, which haunts Cather’s novels without ever being fully present. Eudora Welty insightfully finds that Cather keeps her history “pure” compared to William Faulkner’s depiction of history which “has come down to the present with a taint of blood and a shame of wrongdoing” (Welty 7). Cather keeps the wrongdoings of history unnamed. But she does not stop there; at the heart of her “unfurnished” novels lies another convulsion of unnameability: the unnamed figures of Native Americans.

To summarize, Cather’s novels present a threefold discourse of hospitality: i) mythical hospitality as “furnishing” in which the frontier is portrayed as a vacant wilderness and the immigrant as the pioneer who at once seeks refuge in the wilderness and also claims to provide refuge for future arrivals; ii) multicultural and cosmopolitan hospitality, which explodes the mythical homogeneity of guests and hosts, and depicts a multicultural frontier welcoming visitors with diverse histories, gender and sexual orientations from places including Bohemia; and iii) hospitality as unfurnishing in which Cather complicates and challenges the multicultural and cosmopolitan frontier in order to remap the relationship between immigrants and the frontier.

I use three theoretical frameworks to examine these three discourses of hospitality. The first theoretical framework is Cather's own theorization of the unfurnished novel. While she limits her discussion of the unfurnished novel to the exposition of narrative style and other formalist issues, I expand her concept to include its ideological, aesthetic and ethical implications. Furnishing and, by extension, unfurnishing are closely related to home, making home habitable, providing comfort, nursing, care, refuge and hospitality. In expanding this concept, I discuss it in relation to the notion of the westward march of empire and the American Dream.

Cather claims that the unfurnished novel makes thoughts and emotions felt upon the page without specifically naming them. Her conviction that an unfurnished novel evokes "the inexplicable presence of the thing not named" takes me to my second theoretical framework – theories of the negative – which I borrow from theorists who examine the phenomenon involving languages of the unsayable such as Derrida, Adorno, Iser and others. I relate theories of the negative to Heidegger's concept of "the clearing" and "care" to suggest that like Heidegger's notion of the clearing, Cather's frontier apparently resembles colonialist expansion. The clearing in Heidegger functions like cleaning up, expanding, removing and destroying. Likewise unfurnishing in Cather also evokes the movement of clearing up the frontier by removing Native Americans. Though Heidegger's concept of the clearing, which means literally "illuminating" or disclosing contradicts Cather's emphasis on concealing and unnamings, Heidegger also relates the clearing to making room, creating the condition of possibility, and to "care." Cather's notion of the frontier as a space of unfurnishing or the clearing is also an anxious (care) or unhomely space of hospitality. She describes the frontier as a negative space in which

not only the unsayable but a stranger emerges who differs from colonialist subjects including the pioneer and the settler. The emergence of a new subject in the negative space of the frontier leads to my third theoretical framework in which I recall theories examining the figure of the immigrant to demonstrate where Cather's own representations of the pioneer and the immigrant register the difference in order to develop an internally divided subject.

Hospitality as Furnishing

Cather's own prose work fans the embers of imperial impulses in her fictional accounts of the prairie. For instance, in "Nebraska: End of the First Cycle," published in *The Nation* in 1923, Cather bemoans the passing away of the "Old World" and describes Nebraska as "a line of poetry" (as opposed to "a market report") which reads: "Westward the course of empire takes its way" (236). Admitting that Nebraska became a "state before there were people in it" (236), she eulogizes the pioneers, who arrived and "subdued the wild land and broke up the virgin prairie" (238). In spite of Cather's journalistic investments in this westward march of empire and its gross neglect of the indigenous people this march displaced, her "frontier is not Cooper's, her great war is not Hemingway's, and her sense of history is not Faulkner's" (Urgo 23). Her frontier "is a place not of regeneration but of humility and loss" (Urgo 23), where "Caliban is heard singing behind Ariel" (Stout 221).⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Stout makes this observation on the basis of her reading of Cather's poem, "Paradox," which describes the "jest" and "mockery" of art resulting from the speaker's shocking discovery that while she thought it was Ariel who brought music in, it was only Caliban who was singing. Caliban's song is a "concern" for Cather, who felt similar anxiety or "pang" around "the native and the African presence" (220). In this chapter I scrutinize Cather's "concern" or anxiety, and going beyond Stout's diagnosis, I argue that Cather is not only concerned about Caliban, but his presence haunts her novels.

While Cather's journalistic renderings of the frontier as a line of poetry signals the westward march of empire, her own poetry collected in *April Twilights*, especially the sonnet titled "Paradox," evokes a different image of the frontier and its inhabitants. It illustrates a distinct understanding and consciousness of poetry, music and subjectivity. If the subject of Cather's "journalism" is empire and colonialism, Cather's sonnet sings of a radically different subject, Caliban, who contradicts Ariel's colonial logic as he resurrects himself as the indigenous figure of the continent.⁸⁸ Cather alludes to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and compares America to "Miranda's isle" on which the speaker encounters both the "[M]isshapen Caliban, so seeming vile" and "Ariel, proud prince of minstrelsy" (19). Cather reframes the Shakespearean figure of the cursing Caliban by conflating Ariel and Caliban's songs, thereby making the song an ambivalent voice of the other. A captivating melody one night awakens the speaker, stirring in her "all longings yearned" and "Star-grasping youth in one wild strain expressed" (19). The speaker's tender and insistent "heart of night and summer stood confessed" (19).

I rose aglow and flung the lattice wide –
 Ah jest of art, what mockery and pang!
 Alack, it was poor Caliban who sang. (19).

Cather's sonnet paints an undeniably romantic view of the "isle" modeled after *The Tempest* and also echoing the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. Yet, contrary to her assessment of the "prairie" as a line of poetry celebrates the westward march of empire into a territory which became a "state before there were people in it," Cather's sonnet acknowledges the presence of Caliban, whom Bill Ashcroft calls "the prototype of the colonized subject" (19). Cather depicts this captivating scene of encounter with Caliban,

⁸⁸ Here the term "journalism" implies not only Cather's works published in journals, but that aspect of her work in general including the "literary" which champions the "poetry" of pioneering, expansion and the westward march of empire.

“the original inhabitant” of the continent (Springfield xii), who is also the “original” host to all other visitations and arrivals. Caliban is not only a muse, the source of Cather’s song and her poems, but he is also the one who makes her tower at once homely and unhomely. Even though on hearing the enchanting melody, the speaker is the one who opens the lattice as if to let the singer in, she realizes that it is Caliban’s song that unsettles her but also provides the sense of welcome and at-homeness in her tower.

Critiquing the post-colonial preoccupation with and racialization of the figure of Caliban, Jodi A. Byrd remarks that Caliban represents “an allegory for the global conditions of colonialism at the site of race and nation” and creates “the gateway through which settlers and arrivants articulate their sense of status and belonging” (58). In contrast, Cather’s works attempt the opposite: the settlers and the arrivants or immigrants provide the gateway through which Caliban makes his (re)appearance. If Byrd’s view of Caliban in contemporary usage represents what she calls the “transit of empire” through which is actualized continuous “westward” march of imperialism, the speaker’s reception of Caliban in Cather’s poem functions as a gateway marking not only the opposite movement of anti-imperialism but also the emergence of a guest/host-stranger who unsettles any linear movement or transit.⁸⁹

By staging this dialectic between the furnished and the unfurnished novel, or poetry and journalism, Cather critiques the expansionist transits of empire. If we

⁸⁹ Byrd relates her concept “transit of empire” to the astronomical event of the transits of Venus across the sun, which for her served in 1761 and in 1769 “as global movements that moved European conquest toward notions of imperialist planetarity” across four continents and a sea of islands (xx). This event of the transit is aided by “discourses of savagery, Indianness, discovery, and mapping that served to survey a world into European possession by transforming indigenous peoples into the *homo nullius* inhabitants of lands emptied and awaiting arrival” (xxi). For Byrd, the transit of empire tropes conquest and awaiting arrival indicates the arrivants, a category Byrd uses for all arrivals including European explorers and immigrants. The “arrival” that I trace in Cather’s poem is Caliban’s and not that of the explorers, for my concern is not how empire transits, but how other lines of flight traverse through Cather’s works.

exclusively focus on the furnished notion of hospitality, that is, on frontier as a site through which empire transits, we run the risk of overlooking and missing this contest between furnished/unfurnished and imperial/anti-imperial narratives of hospitality which runs through Cather's works.

Caliban as the Unnamed Host

Besides acknowledging Caliban's presence on the isle, the speaker of Cather's "Paradox" also reveals the source of the captivating melody – Caliban – who is only seemingly vile. The speaker was hoping that the origin of the melody was Ariel – the proud prince of minstrelsy, who "did forsake the sunset for my tower" and burned "like a star above my slumber" (19). Yet she knows that the misshapen Caliban, who is only seemingly vile could very well be the source of the enchanting song. Aware of Caliban's deceptive qualities, the speaker bares her heart, which is "tender as dawn," "insistent as tide" and filled with longing and yearning.

What is the significance of the speaker's acknowledgment of Caliban's presence and her longing for his melody? Insofar as Cather's frontier is not Cooper's (which is implicated in the process of the westward march of empires), and insofar as the only music one expects to hear in the frontier is Caliban's, locating this presence is not only crucial in interpreting Cather's works, but it is also inextricable from her vision of hospitality, which differs from the mythical view according to which America is the virgin land (that is, devoid of any presences). If Cather's frontier differs from the conventional notions of the frontier, it also redefines the figure of the immigrant, and reconfigures what hospitality means in the frontier haunted by the Caliban of the land. Reconfiguring hospitality as the presence of Caliban not only transforms the figure of the

immigrant, it also illustrates Cather's understanding of art, especially its intersections with colonialism, race and sexuality. As Janis Stout in her essay, "Poor Caliban," shows, Cather's references to Caliban reveal the "wellspring" or the very origin of her art (29). While Cather's investment in pioneering implicates her in the colonial project of westward movement, equating Caliban's presence or song to the purpose of her narrative or art evokes an alternative aesthetics which critiques colonialism.

Writing from the perspective of the Americas, Fernandez Retamar asks: "what is our history, what is our culture, if not the history or culture of Caliban" (14). For Retamar, to identify with the condition of Caliban "implies rethinking our history from the *other* side, from the view point of the *other* protagonist" (16). He adds that there is no "real Ariel-Caliban polarity," for "both are slaves in the hands of Prospero," yet he acknowledges that "Caliban is the rude and unaccountable master of the island" (16).⁹⁰ Positioning Caliban as the source of her aesthetics, Cather not only rethinks history from the other side, she, like Retamar, also acknowledges Caliban's sovereignty of the island. Yet this "unaccountable master," to use Retamar's terms, is not an imperial host, nor is he an unproblematic opposite of Ariel, as Cather seems to suggest he is. In her poem as well as in her fiction, the figure of the Caliban functions, to quote George Lamming, "as the very climate in which men encounter the nature of ambiguities" for his turbulent history "belongs entirely to the future" (107). Lamming notes that Caliban has "no self," for he is "the measure of the condition," which is "eternally below possibility, and always beyond

⁹⁰ Writing from Latin American in the context of North American interventions in Nicaragua, Retamar acknowledges the complexity of the figure of Caliban, which he traces to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which in turn echoes another term: *carib*. Retamar explains that before the "arrival of the Europeans, whom they resisted heroically, the Carib Indians were the most valiant and warlike inhabitants of the very lands we occupy today" (6). Thus, his discourse on Caliban has the context of double occupation and colonization: European colonization of the Caribs, and Retamar's "occupation" of the position of the Caribs to examine imperialism in Latin America.

reach” (107). Caliban “shows an aptitude for music” because it animates him, he responds to it, and he represents its harmonies. But he is more like the earth, and like “the earth he is always there, generous in gift, inevitable, yet superfluous and dumb” (108). Cather’s Caliban may be superfluous but he is not dumb. He is the sovereign of the island, but his sovereignty is not mastery but oneness with the isle. He is the condition and the climate of the island. He is the “being there” of the island, at once the excluded guest and the receiving host – therefore a guest/host-stranger – through whom everyone and everything passes. As the very nature of ambiguities, he exists beyond all individuated identity or “name.” He represents the condition and possibility of identity. He is the future against which all names, arrivals and promises are measured.

Cather conjures this figure of the guest/host-stranger in relation to music, which is integral to her aesthetics. Unlike Lamming’s assessment that music animates the mechanical Caliban, Cather’s Caliban represents music itself, which animates the speaker or the settler. In contrast to the colonialist reading of Caliban’s (in)capacity to produce legible sounds, and also unlike the postcolonial reading which makes his cursing the language of resistance in a colonial context, in Cather Caliban overtakes and overwhelms the author’s music and voice. Musical references in her short stories such as “The Bohemian Girl” or “Peter” and in the novels such as *The Song of the Lark*, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, *Lucy Gayheart* or *My Ántonia* usually suggest western music (of which Cather herself was an avid consumer and admirer), especially the “Old World” music including Wagnerian operas, and other classical and orchestral music. Yet Cather’s endowing of musical skills to her characters distinguishes them from others, rendering them “not simply isolated but estranged from others” (Fay 24). Music estranges her

characters (such as *Ántonia's* father, who plays the violin) from the rest of the society; this estrangement in turn brings them close to Caliban. It not only sets them apart, but it also dislocates them and drives some of them to suicide.

Cather explicitly expresses the estranging effect of music and its proximity to the figure of the guest/host-stranger in *The Song of the Lark*. Thea Kronborg, the protagonist, is not an exceptional musician or singer. In her childhood, her mother knew that Thea was different and “must be kept at the Piano, just as a child with measles must be kept under the blanket” (30). The metaphor of contagious illness warranting containment used to describe Thea’s condition not only sets her apart, it also describes her dislocation, homelessness and her proximity to Caliban. She occupies the attic of the Kronborg’s house, and sings at funerals. She is described in the novel as “a savage blond” (224). To her music teacher Harsanyi, her voice is that of a “wild bird,” and she herself is a “crude girl” who has the “laugh of the people” (237). She plays the piano, but her “hands are every kind of animal there is” (229). Mrs. Harsanyi “thought she was possessed” (243), and to Mr. Harsanyi she looks more “[l]ike a horse, like a tree” (256). She is “a fine young savage” with a voice which is “a wild thing” that “can’t be bred in captivity” (257, 258).

In giving “wild” appellations to Thea, Cather is not romanticizing her voice or skills. She knows that Thea’s musical apprenticeship in Chicago was made possible by the money she “inherited” from her childhood friend, Ray Kennedy. Ray himself amassed the money he willed to Thea from Indian tomb raiding. Ray describes how once with a band of people he robbed an Indian woman’s mummy and obtained a piece of jewel, “the handsomest thing we ever looted out of those burial mounds,” and how the

“fellow that claimed it sold it to a Boston man for a hundred and fifty dollars” (148). When Thea asked if he got anything from the mummy, he produced a stone from his wallet, “a turquoise, rubbed smooth in the Indian finish;” and declared: “I got this from her necklace” (148). Thea’s music lessons in Chicago paid for by Ray’s money, however, failed to pave her way to her artistic fulfillment. She finds “her voice and identity as an American artist in the spiritual presence of ancient Anasazi women” in the Cliff-Dwelling city of the Panther Canyon (Schubnell 40). Thea’s elusive relationship to music suddenly changes when she visits the caves of “the ancient people,” the “Cliff-Dwellers” of Arizona’s San Francisco Mountain.

The motif or theme of the cave, canyon or cliff-city is recurrent in Cather’s novels. After appearing in *The Song of the Lark* (1915) in the form of the Cliff-City in the Panther Canyon, these images reemerge both in *The Professor’s House* (1925) and also in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927). In *The Professor’s House*, Tom and his friend, Roddy, discover Blue Mesa on which was built a crystal city eternally frozen on the stone tower. Tom describes it as a sculpture “preserved for eternity in the dry air and almost perpetual sunlight” (180). It is among the remnants of this city that Tom finds the mummified body of an Indian woman whom his companion names “Mother Eve” (192). Instead of signifying a return to the Garden of Eden [for the Cliff City did not have any soil or vegetation], for Tom the figure of the Native American woman, together with other artifacts of the ancient people, reminds him of the horrors and catastrophes that caused the tribe to abandon the city. While the Cliff-City looks more like a sculpture to Tom representing the eternal beauty of art in which lies the roots of America’s artistic tradition, it also represents an alternative history in which the images, relics and

“mummified” bodies (preserved by the climate and the sequestered nature of the Cliff-City), as in Keats’ Grecian urn, have captured the eternal pain and suffering of the citizens:

She was lying on a yucca mat, partly covered with rags, and she had dried into a mummy in that water-drinking air. We thought she had been murdered; there was a great wound in her side, the ribs stuck out through the dried flesh. Her mouth was open as if she were screaming, and through all these years, had kept a look of terrible agony. (192)

For Tom and Professor St. Peter, the Cliff-City provides shelter from the “meaningless conventional gestures” of the world (237). They run to it for freedom and refuge. But instead of a welcome, the guests are greeted by an unhomely figure of a screaming mummy who can never receive the visitors in the conventional sense of welcoming visitors at one’s home. The scream of the would-have-been-hostess seems to convey yet withhold her agony as if her suffering is intimately connected with “the inexplicable presence of the thing not named.” This unsettling image drives the guests to imagining the circumstances of her murder, reliving history and resurrecting the presence of this unnamed woman. Like Caliban swearing at his “master,” the screaming mummy of the Native American woman at once resists the arrival of the guests implicating them in the murder and the catastrophe, and invites them to decode the agony. Hermione Lee opines that instead of being a prelapsarian idyll, the pastoral of Cather’s cliff-city conceals horror inside it, “tellingly associated with sexuality” (248). The agony and horror of the Caliban-like woman is sexual, but it also has other horrors added to it, for it might very well be the agony originating from colonialism or inter-tribal violence.⁹¹ Richard Daniel Lehan interprets Cather’s obsession with the crystal cities as her fascination with “the

⁹¹ Continuing in a similar vein, Danielle Russell argues that “Tom’s sense of wonder” at the masculine presence of the Tower entering the feminine landscape of the valley “conflates the architectural with the suggestively sexual” (88).

theme of the lost past, especially the lost frontier,” and the frontier movement for him is “also an urban movement” (193). Yet Cather’s lost frontier looks at the theme of the city upon a hill differently not as a movement of expansion but of recollection, not of marching forward but of moving towards an artistic future by going backward to a pre-colonial past.⁹²

If Tom and later Professor St. Peter visit the Cliff-City in order to be in touch with history and with their “primitive” selves, in *Death Comes to the Archbishop*, the Pecos cave provides life-saving shelter to the protagonist, Father Latour. Latour, the Bishop, recalls the cave of the Pecos, which “had been hospitable shelter to him” he, together with his Indian guide, lost his way in a snow-storm (141). As instructed by Latour’s Indian guide, Jacinto, the Bishop keeps quiet about the cave and its ancient mysteries; but this thing not named fills him with such “horror” that he feels he knows what the white men or the Mexicans in Santa Fe could never know about “Indian beliefs or the workings of the Indian mind” (141). His encounter with the cave of Snake Root functions not only as an interruption of his mission to Christianize the American desert, but also as an alternative source of spiritual knowledge, and the Bishop’s intimate encounter with “the New World’s own ‘Old World’” (Williams 84).⁹³ It is an interruption in his mission, which is otherwise structured around biblical episodes of exile and temptation in the desert, and pilgrims “in care of such a nurturing mother, the Holy Mother” (Calendar 53).

⁹² In one of her innumerable and insightful notes on the drafts of this chapter (for which I remain sincerely indebted to her), professor Susan Najita remarks that this “is a quintessential modernist gesture” on Cather’s part, for “the lost frontier always already appears in her novels like a non-frontier.” Najita reminds me that “this is not a Calibanesque vision here--Caliban would have met with Columbus first. U. S. is a latecomer to the imperial fray.” That is the point: Cather replaces Columbus or Prospero with a Thea, an Antonia, or an Alexandra to demonstrate that there are other arrivals, other movements and sites than the narrative of colonial conquest and explorations. And these other “narratives” resound with Caliban’s music.

⁹³ Some critics associate this encounter with the biblical story of the snake in Eden. David H. Porter argues that “the association of evil with snakes is ubiquitous in Cather’s works” (260).

This biblical journey informed by Latour's Catholic faith and its sanctuary gets "for a moment, cracked" (Dean 56) as the Bishop enters a radically different regime of hospitality and reception in the cave. The Bishop's entry into the cave is not just his "descent into the underworld;" it is an invitation to "accommodate the demands of a culture and worship system other than one's own" (Winters 78). In entering this sacred cave with his guide and friend Jacinto, the Bishop was not only entering as a stranger "outside his parish" or comfort zone (Williams 84), he also recognizes or submits himself to the strange and mysterious power of the other religion. When the Bishop listens to the oldest voices of the earth in the cave what he hears is the underground river, which is mythically represented by the sacred snake. As Alex Hunt reminds us, the Bishop's rebirth from the cave may not have been immediately felt, for "he is quite horrified by the feminine power of the cavern" (16). Hunt adds that Latour or his organized faith, "cannot handle the essence of the earth goddess" (16). By accepting the refuge of the earth goddess, the Bishop also acknowledges her presence and the contingent and precarious nature of his own presence in the land.

In *The Song of the Lark*, Thea Kronborg takes a room in the cave of Panther Canyon. In the empty room lined only with Navajo blankets among the ruin-city of the Cliff-Dwellers, she begins "to have intuitions about the women who had worn the path, and who had spent so great a part of their lives going up and down it. She found herself trying to walk as they must have walked, with a feeling in her feet and knees and loins which she had never known before . . . She could feel the weight of an Indian baby hanging to her back as she climbed" (376). While sojourning in the ruins of the Navajo caves, and giving birth and nursing the "Indian baby," as it were, Thea finds herself

visited, even haunted by music. She was not singing much, “but a song would go through her head all morning” as it were “more like a sensation than like an idea, or an act of remembering”:

Music had never before come to her in that sensuous form. It had always been a thing to be struggled with, had always brought anxiety and exaltation and chagrin . . . And now her power to think seemed converted into a power of sustained sensation. She could become a mere receptacle for heat, or become a color, like the bright lizards that darted about on the hot stones outside her door; or she could become a continuous repetition of sound, like cicadas. (373)

Thea moved to the Cliff-City out of sheer frustration with her lack of progress in learning music in Chicago. The ancient ruins provide her a shelter, which she was not able to find in the city of Chicago or her home town. Music comes to Thea in a sensuous form in the bare and unfurnished cave of the ancient people. Her trip from Chicago to the Cliff-City represents a movement from furnishing in the sense of acquiring the skill of singing and playing musical instruments to unfurnishing or being “a mere receptacle” to the music around her. This reception enables her to replace the piano with the broken pottery in the Cliff-City:

Thea had a superstitious feeling about the potsherds, and liked better to leave them in the dwellings where she found them. If she took a few bits back to her own lodge and hid them under the blankets, she did it guiltily, as if she were being watched. She was a guest in these houses, and ought to behave as such. (379)

In visiting the Cliff-City, living among the ancient ruins, walking the path walked by the Native American women, giving birth to and nursing Indian babies as if she were the ancient woman herself, Thea is neither appropriating the place of Native Americans nor does she become a Native American. Instead, her relationship to the Cliff-City and the ancient people is that of guest and host. By visiting the Cliff-City as a guest, Thea

resurrects the figure of the host or ghost of the Cliff-City dwellers. Unlike the conventional understanding of hospitality in which a host (who is alive and in charge of the house he or she inhabits) receives a guest, in this scene, Thea the guest resurrects an already departed and ghostly host and suggests that welcoming or being welcomed is an uncanny encounter with the ghosts from the past.

Tom Outland in *The Professor's House* also encounters a ghostly figure in the form of the dead body of an unnamed Native woman. Though in Tom's case the body of the woman was more like an art object, it haunts him, and compels him to go back to the mesa. Cather's invocation of the ghostly figures of women both in *The Song of the Lark* and *The Professor's House* represents the figure of a female "Caliban." Tom Outland, Thea Kronborg and Father Latour resurrect the figure as ghost-hosts, which in turn enables Cather to redefine explorers, missionaries and immigrants as uncanny guest-strangers. This reconfiguration of identity also revises the figure of Caliban himself, who in his original avatar in Shakespeare is a swearing and menacing male threatening rape. Cather's Caliban is a female host, who lends voice to Thea, provides a country to Tom, and unsettles and bewilders Latour in the womb-like cave.

In contrast to Cather's pioneers, who populate the vacuum of the prairie, these guest/hosts-strangers exposed to the visitations of the ghostly Caliban-like figures, present immigrants as subjects themselves riddled with absences, loss, failure and haunting. Instead of populating a vacant continent, the guest/strangers in Cather's novels invite the indigenous Caliban to sing within them. Any reading of Cather's works remains incomplete if we leave out this gesture of hospitality inhering in Cather's aesthetic vision, which seeks to throw all the furniture of material prosperity and

plenitude out the window in order to make room for the guests. Instead of “celebrat[ing] American manifest destiny and the settling of the West” (Carlin 7), thereby championing the mythical notion of hospitality, Cather’s works foreground “un-furnishing hospitality” in which a reception or welcome constitutes articulating absence, silence, loss and failure rather than plenitude and prosperity.

Discussing hospitality as un-furnishing, that is, as articulating the absences and silences, not only re-imagines immigrant narratives, it also enables us to reinvent the politics of hospitality in Cather’s texts, and to broaden and revise the exclusively modernist and new critical studies, which examine literary techniques and devices in her works at the expense of their political and cultural implications. I will show how Cather’s narrative technique of un-furnishing the novel is inextricable from the politics of un-furnishing hospitality. “Un-furnishing” as a link between Cather’s aesthetic and political vision will help us counter those readings of her works which claim that she neglects political issues of immigration, colonialism and empire for the sake of creating art for art’s sake.⁹⁴ Reconfiguring Cather’s immigrant novels by distinguishing two different figures of the immigrant will also expose and expand studies which overlook the differences between conflicting images of immigrants and frontiers.

Cather’s “un-furnished” novels propose an aesthetics of un-furnishing hospitality, which she achieves by i) not taking the immigrants as exceptionalist pioneers appropriating and domesticating the wilderness, thereby nativizing themselves as hosts; ii) not considering the immigrants as raw materials for assimilation and ingredients for

⁹⁴ For instance, in *The Imaginative Claims of the Artist in Willa Cather’s Fiction*, Demaree Peck relates the critical assessment of Cather’s works as art for art’s sake to the Cather scholarship of 1940s. Peck recalls that critics of 1940s and 50s “appreciate [Cather’s] absolute investment in art for art’s sake” and argues that rise of the New Criticism in the period also coincided with “Cather’s recovered popularity during the war” (263).

the multi-cultural melting pot; iii) configuring the immigrants as internally divided subjects marking the space for articulating difference, dissimulation and interchange in terms of class, gender and sexuality; iv) reinventing the figure of the immigrant as a guest-stranger, which becomes one with the land not in order to nativize herself or to relate herself to the land as if it were an expendable form of property, but as if it were the thing not named, the un-furnished theatre into which “the glory of the Pentecost descends,” a house or domesticity open for the reception of the guest/host-stranger.

In outlining hospitality as unfurnishing, Cather proposes what can be called, to borrow a phrase from Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, “the language of the unsayable.” For Budick and Iser, the language of the unsayable represents that “forgotten part of our literary experience” which “spotlight[s] what has been excluded by that which is sayable and said” (xi). It is a mode of negativity suggested through “implications, omissions, or cancellations” (xii). Examining the language of the unsayable requires a double responsibility: exposing the limits of the sayable by acknowledging “the existence of the ‘unsayable things,’” and articulating “that which cannot be grasped” by “means of a language somehow formed on being silent” (xii). Budick and Iser summarize the objectives of the literary experience involving the language of the unsayable as tracing implications, omissions, cancellation and absences in order to articulate what is left unsaid in a literary work of art. Seen from their perspective, Cather’s unfurnished novels articulate what cannot be grasped through a language which is somehow formed on being silent. In *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*, Agamben makes language and death inextricable from the *place* of negativity. He argues that human faculty for language and death is itself permeated by and grounded in negativity; that is to say, the

most proper dwelling place for humanity is the place of negativity. Agamben explains the relationship between language and death, on the one hand, and negativity, on the other, by noting that we must understand what articulating the silence or absence means – that is to say what the Voice is. He distinguishes the Voice from utterance or phoné. “If language,” he asks, “were immediately the voice of man, as braying is the voice of the ass and chirping the voice of the cicada, man could not be-the-*there* or take-the-*this*; that is he could never experience the taking place of language or the disclosure of being” (84). Agamben moves beyond Budick and Iser’s proposition that tracing the language of the unsayable requires articulation of absences. He proposes a more complex understanding of articulation as an experience of the negative:

The Voice does not will any proposition or event; it wills *that language exists*, it wills *the originary event* that contains the possibility of every event. The Voice is the originary ethical dimension in which man pronounces his “yes” to language and consents that it may take place. To consent (or refuse) language here does not signify simply to speak (or to be silent). To consent to language signifies to act in such a way that in the abysmal experience of the taking place of language, in the removal of the voice, another Voice is disclosed to man and along with this are also disclosed the dimension of being and the mortal risk of nothingness. (87)

For Agamben, the Voice itself is not an event; it merely signifies the existence of the originary event, which only can contain the possibility of every event. Saying “yes” to the taking place of language brings out the Voice, which is distinct from the utterance.

According to Agamben, the Voice here is the other voice, which instead of originating from a human being removes him or her from the act of articulation. “Man is that living being,” he explains “who removes himself and preserves himself at the same time – as unspeakable – in language; negativity is the human means of *having* language” (85).

Thea’s regaining of the voice in the Cliff-City therefore is not an exceptional event; it only signifies the originary event of the taking place of language, or negativity in which

she removes herself, unfurnishes herself and says “yes” to the event among the ruins. By removing herself, that is to say, by not appropriating the place of the ancient city dwellers, she changes the ruins into the most proper dwelling place or home. Her act of removing herself as a guest distinguishes her dwelling from the imperial and colonial movement of expansion or conquest. Music comes to Thea as the Voice of the other, of the Native American woman who carried water up the hill, and the ancient people who inhabited the city before Thea’s arrival.

In his own theorization of the negative in “How to Avoid Speaking: Denials,” Derrida relates this emergence of the Voice to the promise or “call of the other,” which “having always already preceded the speech to which it has never been present a first time, announces itself in advance as a *recall*” (28). The call of the other, for Derrida, predates both the speech and the speaker, and acts as an avoidance of speaking, for it occurs before any act of enunciation. To avoid speaking, therefore, is neither remaining silent nor promoting nihilism (as Derrida and deconstruction are often accused of doing), it is to realize how not to speak of something or how “to avoid speaking of it without rhyme or reason” (12). Cather has been accused of avoiding the history of colonialism and empire in the United States. Speaking of Cather’s prairie novels in general and *My Ántonia* in particular, Mike Fischer writes that Cather’s novel is “a story of origins for whites only” for it “it ignores the most significant Other in Nebraskan history: the Native American whose removal was seen as a *sine qua non* for successful white settlement” (31). Cather is silent about the removal of Native Americans; yet her silence reveals the aesthetics of unfurnishing or what Derrida and others call the aesthetics of negativity. By not directly speaking about colonialism and empire, Cather deploys the aesthetics of

negativity, which for her is not only the event of “speaking well,” but also a realization that it is already too late to not speak, for, to quote Derrida’s “How to Avoid Speaking ” again, “the moment I open my mouth, I have already promised; or rather, and sooner, the promise has seized the *I* which promises to speak to the other” (14). Cather’s novels cannot avoid speaking of Native Americans, for they have seized the *I* that narrates, and provide the condition or the unstable ground of narrating. Their seizing of the speaking/narrating “*I*” represents a promise or event of their arrival in which every other subject or “*I*” can only be a guest.

Cather’s aesthetic of negativity sometime veers towards its opposite, for it speaks when it should have avoided speaking. The Voice of the other does not always promise the event of the “arrival” of the guest/host-stranger. As in the story of Blind d’Arnault in *My Ántonia*, Cather lets Jim appropriate and domesticate the blind black man’s voice. Jim calls it “a soft, amiable Negro voice” with a “note of subservience in it,” which he remembers from his childhood (112). Jim adds that Blind d’Arnault has “the Negro head, too; almost no head at all” (112). The black musician looks repulsive to him just as his piano-playing is “abominable” (115). Yet Blind d’Arnault’s music, like Caliban’s, seems to interrupt the homogenous time and space in *Black Hawk*: “There was only one break in the dreary monotony of that month: when Blind d’Arnault, the Negro pianist came to town” (111). As an African American musician, Blind d’Arnault is not Caliban, who, for Cather, is the source of music. However, Blind d’Arnault represents a trope for articulating the thing not named.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Alain Locke argues that if “American civilization had absorbed instead of exterminating the American Indian, his music would be the folk music,” but now it “fell to the lot of the Negro. . . to furnish our most original and influential folk music. . . to lay the foundation for native American music” (Locke 2). In this sense Arnault’s music converges with Caliban’s.

In Search of the Thing Not Named

Though critical works on Cather range from myth-critical studies of the frontier to the analyses devoted to complex phenomenon of gender and sexuality in her work, one theme that seems to cut across various critical schools is the search for the thing not named. We can divide the scholarship on Cather's works in general and her prairie novels in particular into the following five main categories: i) rethinking the frontier; ii) gender and sexuality; iii) empire and colonialism; iv) immigrant stories; and v) formalist interpretations focusing on literary techniques, genre and narrative style. Lloyd Morris argues that the reason why Cather is admired in America is that "she writes of the West" and her "preoccupation with the pioneer brings Miss Cather's work within the main trend of American literature" (641). Morris notes that Cather's obsession with the West not only brings her close to American writers such as Emerson and Whitman, thereby providing "philosophical and emotional direction to the national life," it also establishes "the cult of the individual . . . democratic ideal . . . independence, self-reliance and perseverance" (641). For other critics, however, Cather revises the old mythical view of the frontier according to which the West is gendered with different roles for men and women in the march of empire westward. These critics believe that Cather exposes the pre-determined gender roles assigned in the old mythical understanding of the frontier. In her novels, the "traditional, constrained view of the Madonna of the Prairie is countered" by presenting capable women as protagonists, who have "vision and power" to develop "a creative, mutual relationship with the land" (Campbell and Keane 136). While Morris discerns the reaffirmation of the westward march of empire in Cather's myth of the

frontier, Campbell and Keane discover in Cather's works a feminist revision of the frontier, thereby revealing the interconnections between Cather's notion of the frontier and gender. In *No Man's Land*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar further examine this connection by arguing that for Cather the frontier was "a virtual no man's land" (185). Citing both *O Pioneers!* and *My Ántonia's* as examples, Gilbert and Gubar note that Cather portrayed the frontier as "unfriendly to man" or a domain outside man's jurisdiction (184-185). Yet instead of a simplistic reversal from a male dominated frontier to a feminized space, they detect in it a complex phenomenon of "sexchanges" (173) in which Cather's protagonists appropriate the role of their male counterparts to "exercise their powers" on the liminal space of the frontier (187). Gilbert and Gubar expose Cather's ambivalent portrayal of the frontier as a no man's land through which the novelist at once "constructed a myth of personal and national origins that redefines America as Herland even while it illuminates a fall into gender from the sexual frontier that her gardens of earthly and early delight represent" (174). To state it differently, Cather's protagonists undergo sexchanges while appropriating the role of male pioneers while marking the frontier with "women's work" and converting it into Herland only in order to reinstate the gender roles of the frontier as if it were a fall from the earlier innocence of the garden.

While Gilbert and Gubar touch on the theme of sexuality in Cather's work, in "The Thing Not Named: Willa Cather as a Lesbian Writer," Susan O'Brien brings this theme to the center of Cather's work by arguing that Cather is a "lesbian writer forced to disguise or to conceal the emotional source of her fiction, reassuring herself that the reader fills the absence in the text by intuiting the subterranean, unwritten subtext" (577).

By weaving biographical, historical and textual evidence, O'Brien seeks to prove that the phrase "thing not named" in Cather's "The Novel D meubl " refers to "Cather's lesbianism" and to her "need to camouflage and conceal her sexual identity" (577). Scott Herring expands on the theme of sexuality in Cather by discussing not only lesbianism but the homo-erotic friendship of men in her novels. Recalling the narratives of male bonding between Archbishop Jean Marie Latour and Father Joseph Vaillant in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and between Professor Godfrey St. Peter and Tom Outland in *The Professor's House*, Herring argues that we must view Cather not as voicing the homoerotic urban subculture, which had already begun to be visible in urban areas, but as refusing "the movement from friendship to homosexuality," thereby giving expression to a relationship that is still formless (70). Herring implies that what remains unnamed in Cather is not the homosexual identity of a lesbian writer, but a nameless friendship between her male protagonists.

If the theme of sexuality and the frontier focuses on homosexuals and women as pioneers, the third theme foregrounds the immigrants. Susie Thomas argues that before Cather, "the immigrant in Western literature had the status of a literary untouchable" (60). In the *Voyage Perilous*, Susan Rosowsky credits Cather for being the "first to give immigrants heroic stature in serious American literature" (45). For Dalia Kandiyoti, what distinguishes Cather from her contemporaries is her "favorable representations of various groups of non-Anglo immigrants, who, at the xenophobic time of her writing of the early novels, were held in low esteem and were not part of the dominant national identity discourses" (Kandiyoti ii). By pointing out that Cather favorably portrays non-Anglo immigrants during a xenophobic time, Kandiyoti extends the critical tradition developed

in works including Walter Ben Michaels' *Our America*, Lisa Lowe's *Immigrant Acts* and Magdalena Zaborowska's *How We Found America*. These critics examine the phenomenon of nativism in American literature and culture. Kandiyoti, however, goes a little further to locate another curious phenomenon in Cather through which the novelist "presents the immigrants in a primitivizing frame by emphasizing their corporeality and their identification with the place" (ii). In presenting the immigrants as the native, according to Kandiyoti, Cather serves the logic of empire by writing indigenous Americans out of the picture. What follows is a reading of Cather's immigrant narratives – *O Pioneers!* and *My Ántonia*, in which I intend to demonstrate that Cather's remapping of the frontier, her restaging of gender and sexuality in the frontier and her reinvention of the figure of the immigrant culminate in the aesthetics of unfurnishing. Cather's art of unfurnishing requires that instead of appropriating the land or the subject position of Native Americans, the immigrant seeks a new relationship characterized by being a guest/host stranger to land, to Native Americans and other immigrants.

New Consciousness of the Land

As we have seen, redefining the frontier, i.e. redefining the relationship among settlers, arrivants, Native Americans and the land is crucial in unfurnishing hospitality in Cather's *O Pioneers!* and *My Ántonia*. At stake in this redefinition is Cather's subtle critique of settler colonialism even though apparently her works seem to cheer on the westward march of empire. The promise of free land, as we recalled in the opening paragraph of this chapter, not only constitutes the myth of America as the land of plenty,

it also figures in the desire of the immigrants. It is in-dissociable from the immigrants' sense of self, identity and being. What brings the immigrants "home" both emotionally, literally and ontologically is the land with which immigrants including Antonia and Alexandra identify to the point that it is difficult to decide whether it is the immigrant who received the land or the other way around.

O Pioneers! begins by depicting a duel between the settlers and the land in which the latter seems to have a considerable edge. The dwelling houses of the little town of Hanover, Nebraska "looked as if they had been moved in overnight," and "[n]one of them had any appearance of permanence" (3). In the town, "the great fact was the land itself, which seemed to overwhelm the little beginnings of human society" (9). The most bewildering, depressing and disheartening aspect of the new country was the "absence of human landmarks" (12). The Swedish pioneer, John Bergson, failed in his mission to tame the wild land, which "was still a wild thing that had its ugly moods; and no one knew when they were likely to come, or why. Mischance hung over it. Its Genius was unfriendly to man" (12-13). In spite of the fact that the genius of the land was inimical to man, and that any attempt to make a human mark on the land would fail, John Bergson, on his death bed, makes his daughter promise that she will "keep the land" (16). The narrator explains that John "had the Old World belief that land, in itself, is desirable" (13).

For John Bergson, to keep the land signifies keeping the myth of the West and pioneering alive, which is to say keeping the "enmity" with the land alive so that it bolsters the fighting spirit of the frontiersman. "A pioneer," explains the narrator, "should have imagination, and should be able to enjoy the idea of things more than the things

themselves” (28). Though some readers of Cather believe that novels such as *O Pioneers!* and *My Ántonia* represent a phase in Cather’s “land philosophy” in which the novelist expresses “an acceptance of the land and a sense of harmony between it and those who love it” (Schneider 61),⁹⁶ a simultaneous urge to keep alive the enmity and friendship with the land constitutes the prominent narrative in Cather’s novels. An apparently contradictory relationship of enmity and friendship complicates the easy depiction of America as the Promised Land or a city of refuge for the pioneers. Yet this relationship illuminates the fact that both enmity and friendship with the land furnish the pioneer with the spirit of heroism with which he is supposed to domesticate the frontier. If the land posits both inimical and friendly relationships to humans, pioneers are those who overcome this contradiction to reach the Promised Land. Conrad Eugene Oswald, Jr. warns that Cather’s fiction depicts a post-lapsarian world in which the land loses its earlier sacred significance, thereby endowing it with an unmistakable secular hue. For him, the romantic notion of the sacred natural world, “which describes America as the garden” characterized by “a benevolent environment, a meeting place for humanity and the transcendent” gives way to Cather’s secularized landscape, which is not only “hostile” (43), but also fails to provide “the gateway to otherness” (40-41). Instead of guiding pioneers to their Promised Land, the secularized notion of the land makes taming the land “the first step toward the American’s secularization of natural space” (50). Both

⁹⁶ Sister Lucy Schneider’s remarkable essay divides Cather’s “land philosophy” into three stages starting with the early stories (1892-1912) in which Cather “lets her readers see the faults of the land and rejects its offer of close association” (61). This initial antagonism gives way to the second phase (1913-1918) in her land philosophy marked by a change in Cather’s approach to the land, which depicts harmony between humans and the land. The third period of writing, which for Schneider begins with the publication of *One of Ours* (1922) and ends with the publication of her last completed story “The Beast Years” (1948), “she presents a complex, seasoned relationship between human beings and the land” (61). She discusses this philosophy by tracing two elements of imagery – the land and the rock – which respectively symbolize “immersion in a reality that is limited yet which points perpetually beyond itself that is lasting” and “an achieved transcendence, in the sense of other worldly satisfaction of human longings” (63).

secular and sacred notions of the land, however, are devoted to keeping alive the myth of America as the land of plenty and promise in which a pioneer is destined to reach his Promised Land.

In promising her father that she “will never lose the land” (16), Alexandra refers to this pioneering spirit destined to achieve the Promised Land. She binds herself to the wishes of her father, and commits to this double inheritance: literal inheritance of John Bergson’s settlement on the prairie and the legacy of the westward march of empire. By agreeing to keep the land, she keeps her father’s Old World desire alive according to which land is a desirable and profitable commodity to be kept and tamed. The frontier as a vacant wilderness without any human presence or marks seems like a call for furnishing, that is to say, for making it homely and habitable so that it provides refuge to the immigrant. Furnishing also implies that the frontier is a piece of property or furniture, which decorates the home and functions as a means to larger structure or idea of America as a city upon a hill, a Promised Land. Hospitality as furnishing, therefore, depicts America as the land of plenty and promises of prosperity, which are actualized and achieved by treating the land as a means to acquire or amass property.

Alexandra Bergson inherits the colonialist and mythical view of the West as an expanding frontier. Yet, like a true inheritor, she does not merely bind herself to “keeping” the land, but promises to not “lose” it. If keeping would imply owning and possessing the land, not losing it implies that she would not want to fail it, would not want to separate from it; and she would at all cost want to be worthy of it. Thus, while her brothers, Lou and Oscar, try to persuade her, during a season of drought on the prairie to move to “[an]y place where things will grow” for “everybody who can crawl is going

away” (33), Alexandra decides to take a chance with the land and against all odds decides to stay:

Alexandra drew her shawl closer about her and stood leaning against the frame of the mill looking at the stars which glittered so keenly through the frosty autumn air. She always loved to watch them, to think of their vastness and distance, and of their ordered march. It fortified her to reflect upon the great operations of nature, and when she thought of the law that lay behind them, she felt a sense of personal security. That night she had a new consciousness of the country, she felt almost a new relation to it. Even her talk with the boys had not taken away the feeling that had overwhelmed her feeling when she drove back to the Divide that afternoon. She had never known before how much the country meant to her. (40-41).

Alexandra puts her faith in the land; and unlike her father and her brothers – Lou and Oscar – for whom it represents a desirable property to be kept or sold depending on the yield or return from the land, Alexandra establishes a new relation to the land.

Alexandra’s new relationship to the land takes her beyond enmity or friendship with the land; it also differs from the sacred or secular concepts of the land. What does

Alexandra’s new relation to land involve? In what relation is it new? Why does this new relation to land take her away from her own brothers, her own family? Why does this new relation pull her away from home and take her outside in the field, thereby rendering her “homeless?” What danger is she trying to escape from by seeking the security and shelter of the land?

This scene immediately follows her discussion with her brothers, who believe that with other townsmen they must leave Hanover for a better place, possibly even the city. This scene separates Alexandra from the dominant discourse of the town, the dominant ideology regarding appropriation of the land. It also makes her a stranger in her own home and family, thereby compelling her to seek refuge in the land itself. While the pioneering relationship to land is one of owning, keeping, enclosing, expansion and

domestication, in short, of seeking refuge in the land so long as it provides homely shelter and comfort, Alexandra's new consciousness of the land is the opposite of home, property or the domestic, and, as an unhomely relationship, it lies beyond appreciation of the land in terms of its inimical or friendly spirit. She feels safe outdoors with the birds and the trees, and seeks solace in the orders and marches of the celestial bodies. This new relationship to the land awakens her to a new consciousness of hospitality in which instead of owning or keeping it, domesticating and taming it, one submits to the land; and instead of considering the land as unfriendly and inimical, one befriends it, gets attuned to its mood swings, submits to it and waits upon it. It is on the threshold of this awakening that Alexandra waits for the "future stirring" under the long saggy ridges of the prairie (41).

In contrast to the mythical notion of America as the land of plenty and promises, Alexandra's new relation to land represents unfurnishing colonialist relations and ideologies, which champion the appropriation and owning of land. Alexandra's awakening to a new consciousness of the land resembles Heidegger's notion of the "clearing." In *Being and Time*, Heidegger defines the clearing as the illumination of Being-in-the-world:

To say that it is "illuminated" ["erleuchtet"] means that *as* Being-in-the-world it is cleared [gelichtet] in itself, not through any other entity, but in such a way that it *is* itself the clearing. Only for an entity which is existentially cleared in this way does that which is present-at-hand become accessible in the light or hidden in the dark. By its very nature, Dasein brings its "there" along with it. If it lacks its "there," it is not factually the entity which is essentially Dasein; indeed, it is not this entity at all. *Dasein is its disclosedness.* (171)

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes Dasein, which literally means Being-there or what is close to us, as the clearing, which literally means openness, open space. If what is

close to us including our sense of being is the open space in front of us, Heidegger echoes or corroborates the mythical or furnished notion of America as the virgin land. The cleared space of the frontier and the act of clearing it by domesticating it is what characterize the process of being an American. But for Heidegger, the clearing is not an empty space; rather it is a space full of possibilities where things or entities light up by themselves. Being close to this clearing is being disclosed to it or by it.

What is disclosed to Alexandra during the star-lit night is the clearing, which is the disclosedness of her Being-in-the-world. A new relation to the land and herself is “disclosed” to Alexandra as she wanders in the dark and observes the glittering stars when she leaves behind proprietorial relations to the land and the security of being at home and owning home. A new sense of security emerges when she “uproots” and unfurnishes herself from familial ties and their notion of the land as property to be kept and domesticated. Being close to the clearing does not make Alexandra open the land to whoever comes to occupy it nor does she renounce her title to the property. That would be giving up the land or losing it. She relates to the land as does an unhomely or unfurnished being. This unfurnishing not only awakens a new consciousness of the land in her, but it also makes her wait on the threshold of the future stirring. A little later in *Being and Time*, Heidegger compares the clearing to “ecstatical unity of temporality,” in other words, “the unity of the ‘outside-of-itself’ in the raptures of the future, of what has been and of the Present” (401). At the ecstatic moment of gazing at the stars and listening to “the sweetest music” of the insects, Alexandra endows a new meaning to her inheritance of the estate, her relationship with her family, herself, the land and their future. Describing the relationship between the temporal unity resulting from the ecstasy

and the clearing, Heidegger adds that the light which “clears” an entity or being or “that which makes it both ‘open’ for itself and ‘bright’ for itself – is what we have defined as “care” (401-402).

Care for Heidegger is the primordial mode of Being-in-the-world. The standard meaning of “care” in Heidegger is “worry or grief” (241) or being “full of care” or “devotedness” (243). He distinguishes “care” from other concepts such as anxiety, curiosity and ambiguity, and believes that we must distinguish “care” from “phenomena which might be proximally identified with care, such as will, wish, addiction and urge” (227). Heidegger explains that “care” “is ontologically ‘earlier’ than the phenomena” (238). That is to say in care one arrives “at Dasein’s primordial state of Being” (273). Heidegger’s concept of “care” enables us to understand the awakening of a new consciousness of land in Alexandra, whose “care” for the land reveals the primordial relation of human beings to land and themselves. By virtue of its precedent to all other relations and entities, this primordial relationship to the land brings Alexandra close to Caliban, to the original inhabitants of the continent and their world.⁹⁷

Caring in the Heideggerian sense is being involved, being concerned for or taking care of someone or something. It also implies being alongside, moving towards and waiting. Alexandra promises to her father that she will not lose the land, but the will or wish to keep the land does not define her relationship to it. Unlike other settlers (including her father, her brothers and neighbors), the land for her is not merely a tool, a means to accumulate property, for Heidegger notes that care as “awaiting” and “towards-which” is “not getting something thematically into one’s grasp” (405). Alexandra’s

⁹⁷ In *American Cultural Studies*, Campbell and Kean also note the proximity of Cather and Native American’s view of land. They remark that “Cather proposes mutual relation to the land, closer to the Native American view” (137).

relationship to the land is neither furnishing in the sense of the mythical plenitude implied by America nor is it grasping, holding or occupation. Rather it is awaiting and Being alongside, in other words unfurnishing or being hospitable. The immigrant in Cather is not a pioneer who seeks to hold and grasp, but a being who moves towards the land, *is* alongside the land “in care,” and above all is in touch with the primordial structure of Being as “care.”

Looking at *O Pioneers!* in terms of the Heideggerian notion of the clearing not only captures Alexandra’s new consciousness of the land, but it also enables us to distance her relationship with the land from any attempts to either identify with the land or to locate an evolutionary movement from the land to Being. In “Willa Cather and the Fatality of Place,” Susan Rosowski argues that just as “*Ántonia* belongs to the land” so does Alexandra, for “the union of Alexandra and the Divide” determines Alexandra’s fate (88).⁹⁸ If Rosowsky and others identify Alexandra and *Ántonia* with the earth, Tom Quirk locates a Bergsonian movement from matter to life in Cather’s novels. Quirk traces in *O Pioneers!* a movement in which the land symbolizes matter, which in turn moves from indefiniteness and incoherence to coherence and heterogeneity to which Cather adds “the creative force of personality” in order to “affirm the evolutionary character of the new reality” (Quirk 128). Both Quirk’s Bergsonian reading and Rosowski’s romanticism, which conflate the protagonists with the land fail to discern the mutual relationship of care and hospitality between humans and the land in Cather’s *O Pioneers!*.

⁹⁸ Rosowsky continues to draw differences between *Ántonia* and Alexandra by noting that “Alexandra is an otherworldly figure, often described by details of gold and light” whereas as “*Ántonia* is physical and identified with the earth” (88). Yet both of Cather’s heroines share a “fatal” relationship with the land, the only difference is that Alexandra’s identification involves recognizing the inherent order in the land and being one with it while *Ántonia* becomes physically identified with the land.

The involvement of care also defines *Ántonia's* relationship with the land in Cather's other prairie novel, *My Ántonia*. In the introduction, the editor-narrator of the novel reveals that "[m]ore than any other person we [Jim Burden and the editor-narrator herself] remembered, this girl [*Ántonia*] seemed to mean to us the country, the conditions, the whole adventure of our childhood" (5). When Jim Burden, the primary narrator of the novel, first runs into *Ántonia*, his companion, Jake, reminds him that one is "likely to get diseases from foreigners" such as her (10). A foreigner who is dangerous to associate with, and whom Joseph Murphy calls "the un-American subject" of Jim's auto-American biography (214), now comes to symbolize and embody the West and its American adventures. The editor-narrator of the novel, however, distinguishes Jim Burden's West from that of *Ántonia's*. If Jim's West is "the great country through which his railway runs and branches" and for which he "is always able to raise capital for new enterprises" (4), the West evoked by *Ántonia* is neither the railway nor capital.

Even before her arrival on the prairie, *Ántonia* looked to Jake "as bright as a new dollar" (10), thereby underscoring her exchange value in the New World. But to the narrators, *Ántonia* represents neither capital nor the railway, both means to "furnish" the land with material success, prosperity and plenitude. She proves as bright as a newly minted dollar for her mother and her brother, Ambrosch, who start hiring her out to work in the field or to work as a maid; but they carefully keep her wages for themselves. Larry Donovan, the railway conductor *Ántonia* decides to marry is interested only in her money. In contrast to *Ántonia's* association with the American Dream in which a foreigner finds refuge in the plenitude of America, for the editor and Jim, *Ántonia*

symbolizes the West in the sense that she creates the possibility of the space of hospitality and refuge.

Early on in the novel, Jim Burden provides a clue to his vision of the West. While riding along with the Bohemian family on their way to Black Hawk, Jim describes how he is overwhelmed by the monotonous vastness and flatness of the land:

There seemed to be nothing to see; no fences, no creeks or trees, no hills or fields. If there was a road, I could not make it out in the faint starlight. There was nothing but land; no country at all, but the material out of which countries are made. No, there was nothing but land . . . I had the feeling that the world was left behind, that we had got over the edge of it, and were outside man's jurisdiction. (11)

This frequently cited passage from the novel has yielded two contradictory interpretations in the Cather scholarship.⁹⁹ Michael Gorman argues that Jim's declaration that there is nothing but land "erases the inhabitants pre-existing the arrival of European settlers from his memoir" (32). In other words, while travelling westward to their refuge on the prairie (Jim Burden to his grandparent's farm, and *Ántonia's* newly arrived Bohemian family to their new homestead in Black Hawk), Jim Burden implicates himself and *Ántonia* in the westward march of empire.

If the emptiness and boundlessness of the prairie metonymically represent erasure of indigenous Americans, for some critics, it also functions as the erasure of a male-centered frontier. For this second group of critics, the emphasis in the passage falls not just on the emptiness and vastness of the land, but also on the idea of the prairie as a space beyond man's jurisdiction. In *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice*, Sharon O'Brien

⁹⁹ To recall a few studies which refer to this passage, Demaree Peck relates it to Jim's desire to "escape" in order to live out a transcendental fantasy" (136). Peck sees in it the Emersonian strategy to become a part of something entire, and argues that Jim seeks self-reconstitution through self-dissolution (137). Laura Winters notes that Jim's awe of the land implies creation of sacred and intimate places in order to nurture the deepest self (13). For Daliya Kandiyoti, Jim's observation exemplifies a migrant site, which constructs a "sympathetic identification between the ideal immigrant and her landscape," for "American territory defines the immigrant as much as deterritorialization and migrancy" (86).

argues that Jim's characterization of the frontier as a space beyond man's jurisdiction evokes "women's sphere" of which Cather was initially critical and became gradually more respectful. Cather moves her narrator, Jim, "from his sheltered Virginia homeland to a vast seemingly empty prairie 'outside of man's jurisdiction,'" which in turn is "aided by the realms within woman's jurisdiction – the kitchen and the garden, protected and ordered spaces where the boy feels at peace" (24).

Gorman believes that Cather's frontier is repressive as it erases the history of Native Americans. In contrast, O'Brien argues that Cather's representation of the West as the limits of man's jurisdiction contains a subversive and emancipatory potential, which not only rejects the late-Victorian masculine values "denigrating and devaluing women" (4) but also enables Cather to "fashion a female self" and women's sphere compatible with the artist's role (4). While Gorman categorically confines Cather in the camp of colonialism and empire, thereby overlooking the subversive dimensions of her aesthetics, O'Brien presents a more flexible and historically accurate account. Yet, like Gorman who stops at the consolidation of a colonialist self in Cather, O'Brien also restricts her analysis to the creation of women's self and sphere, thereby failing to take into account what Judith Butler would call in her own reading of Cather in *Bodies that Matter* a "specific practice of dissimulation" and cross-identification (145). Butler argues that Cather's texts cannot be easily categorized as women's or lesbian texts for they lack "some primary truth awaiting its moment and adequate historical representation" (162). Cather's texts, Butler adds, can be "lesbian" in the sense that "substitutability is the very condition of this sexuality" (162).

Judith Butler exemplifies her notion of substitutability with an examination of the way names and pronominals work in *My Ántonia*. Referring to the introduction of the novel in which the anonymous narrator “I” transfers narrative authority to Jim Burden in order to bring out Ántonia’s story, Butler argues that the “I” receding “into an almost illegible anonymity” parallels the state of Nebraska (146). The “I” dissimulated as fading horizon, Butler adds, “becomes the story’s nonthematic condition” installed through “the transferring of narrative authority from the shifting pronoun to the figure of Jim” (146). This transfer from the ambiguous “I” to the male figure Jim Burden is only a temporary resolution, for the name “Jim Burden” announces the “burdensome quality of carrying the weight of that resolution and whose capacity to refer will be intermittently disrupted by the trajectory of the narrative that it appears to ground” (146).

The incapacity of the figure, Jim Burden, to refer starts early in the novel, in fact at the end of the same passage which cause Gorman and O’Brien to respectively consolidate a colonialist and feminist subject position in the narrative. Cather concludes the passage by remarking that Jim Burden’s encounter with the prairie was more than other-worldly:

I did not believe that my dead father and mother were watching me from up there; they would still be looking for me at the sheep-fold down by the creek, or along the white road that led to the mountain pastures. I had left even their spirits behind me. The wagon jolted on, carrying me I knew not whither. I don’t think I was homesick. If we never arrived anywhere, it did not matter. Between that earth and that sky I felt erased, blotted out. I did not say my prayers that night: here I felt what would be would be. (11)

As in *O Pioneers!* where Alexandra’s relationship with the land exceeds rules of inheritance, owning, keeping, and domesticating, Jim Burden’s perception of the land also exceeds laws of inheritance from his parents. Jim remarks that his father and mother

would have no idea about the place he is in now. Without a doubt, then, Cather's vacant land, as Gorman suggests, erases Native Americans, but it hardly turns Jim into a colonist for he feels himself obliterated by the land.

Jim's sense of obliteration in the face of the land is what I have been calling unfurnishing in which the land becomes the occasion and condition of the arrival and reception rather than an object or property for ownership and mastery. This new relationship to the land reveals a form of hospitality in which the frontier is portrayed as a negative place or the clearing, to employ Heidegger's term, and the immigrant as an unfurnished subject of dissimulation. Jim's relationship to the land cannot be defined in terms of homelessness or exile either, for he feels no homesickness. For him, the prairie is neither home nor the opposite of home. It is neither the earth nor heaven. It represents neither the family property to be inherited nor general and free property to be appropriated. This negative place of the frontier turns Jim into a perpetual stranger, rather than a master, pioneer and explorer; and the West, as the possibility or promise of welcome, provides him refuge and hospitality.

As a legal counsel for one of the Western railways, Jim's relationship to the land is far from being merely romantic. He could, as critics have pointed out, convert the land into property for the railway company. Yet his professional treatment of the land as lawyer does not exhaust his relationship to it. We can see a glimpse of his new consciousness of the land in his reflection about the changing landscape on the prairie due to homesteading. Scanning the land around Mr. Shimerda's grave, Jim notices that the open-grazing days of the past have disappeared, the land is ploughed under the red

grass, fields are fenced and the roads follow the surveyed section lines. The only thing that survives from the old days is Mr. Shimerda's grave:

Mr. Shimerda's grave was still there, with a sagging wire fence around it, and an unpainted wooden cross. As grandfather had predicted, Mrs. Shimerda never saw the roads going over his head. The road from the north curved a little to the east just there, and the road from the west swung out a little to the south; so that the grave, with its tall red grass that was never mowed, was like a little island; and at twilight, under a new moon or the clear evening star, the dusty roads used to look like soft gray rivers flowing past it. I never came upon the place without emotion, and in all that country it was the spot most dear to me. (74)

After the passage of the Homestead Act in 1862, the landscape of the Nebraskan prairie changed irreparably due to the introduction of fences and farms, crisscrossing roads and surveyed settlements. The homestead law granted every applicant who was the head of a family or above the age of twenty two "one hundred and sixty acres of public land or less quantity in legal subdivisions, free of charge" (Satō 176). Amidst this "furnishing" of "free land" stands an unfurnished island with its lone dweller – Mr. Shimerda – who was buried in the plot. Jim, the legal counsel to the Western railways, becomes the bridge to this island. Mr. Shimerda occupies this island of which Jim is not only an emotional investor but also a frequent guest and visitor. This form of "homesteading" and his visitations to the island in order to escape both New York and Black Hawk filled with strange people and their children, constitute not only a new consciousness of the land but also a new culture of hospitality in which one relates to the land not through property ownership but through death and loss.

It is in this sense that Lena Lingard mysteriously remarks: "it ain't my prairie" (104). In other words, beyond the relationship of owning, domesticating, complete identification and relating oneself at the level of the mastery and settling lies the new relationship of unfurnishing or hospitality in the frontier. Marilee Lindemann reads

Lena's observation as a sign of the dispossession of women by the male narrator of the novel. She calls Jim's narrative stratagems forms of "absolute presence, power and authority" in the novel (120). In stating that the prairie is not hers, Lena articulates "a rhetoric of dispossession" in the frontier that is "at once linguistic, sexual, economic, legal and territorial" (125). Lena, Lindemann claims, relates the prairie to women's bodies. However, Lindemann overlooks the fact that Lena maintains both the land and the body above the rhetoric of keeping and owning. As one cannot own the prairie, one cannot possess Lena's desires "rooted" in the prairie either.

Lindemann believes that Jim's rhetoric of owning starts with *Ántonia*, who for Jim "is a symbol to be decoded, an object to be 'lost,' 'found,' named and claimed: '*My Ántonia*'" (112). As we saw in Butler's discussion of the novel as well, it is not only Jim who employs the possessive 'my' for *Ántonia*. Besides him, two other characters in the novel address *Ántonia* with the possessive "my" as prefix. On his first visit to the Shimerdas, Mr. Shimerda put a book in the hands of Jim's grandmother, "looked at her entreatingly and said, with an earnestness which [Jim] shall never forget, 'Te-e-ach, te-e-ach my *Ántonia*!'" (23). Mr. Shimerda "offers" *Ántonia* as disciple to Jim's grandmother as she was, in Mr. Shimerda's eyes, the only gifted person to learn not just the language but the art of living in the New World. Mr. Shimerda's "gift" of the disciple to his neighbors comes at a time when he feels taken hostage by Krajiek, the only Bohemian in Black Hawk who sold the homestead to the Shimerdas at an exorbitant price. For Krajiek, as for Jake, *Ántonia* is just a newly minted and bright dollar to be exploited. As opposed to his countryman's purely economic and exploitative relationship to his family, Mr. Shimerda seeks a different relationship with the Burdens, which depends on learning a

foreigner's language. In this context, his use of the possessive "my" is curious, for he knows that as soon as *Ántonia* starts learning the language and culture of the new world, she will become a stranger. Mr. Shimerda feels compelled to add "my" before *Ántonia*'s name at the precise moment at which he knows he is about to lose her.

At the end of the chapter titled "The Pioneer Woman's Story," *Ántonia* asks: "Ain't it wonderful, Jim, how much people can mean to each other?" (192). As if she were not a person but a sign open for interpretation, evaluation and judgment (which was what *Ántonia* was facing at the time after her scandalous affair with Donovan), *Ántonia* asks how she could "mean" so much to Jim. Her question immediately follows Jim's confession that since he has been away from Black Hawk, he thought of her more than anyone else in that part of the world. He adds: "I'd have liked you for a sweetheart, or a wife, or my mother or my sister – anything that a woman can be to a man" (192). Earlier in the section Jim notes that he met with *Ántonia* "like the people in the old song, in silence, if not in tears" (191). Just as *Ántonia* considers herself to be a sign, Jim himself thinks of their meeting as a silent song. By deploying the trope of the old silent song to describe the meeting, Cather seems to entreat us to read the meeting as "the inexplicable presence of the thing not named." The meeting signifies the presence of the thing not named not because Jim could not read the sign or the silent song called *Ántonia*, but that in spite of his ability to read, he could not articulate what the sign means to him. Does the song mean sweetheart or wife or mother or sister or all or none of them? *Ántonia* seems to mean so much to him that even she wonders how it might be possible. The overdetermined nature of the silent song makes it difficult for Jim and readers to categorize or classify it as only the song of pioneers, immigrants, settlers or colonialists.

Jim is unable to categorically determine the meaning of the silent song not because he casts the context of the meeting in magical terms. Though he calls his meeting with *Ántonia* during his visit to the Cuzaks a “miracle” (199), he knows that what he meets is not the same daring, outgoing, and at times condescending Tony, but a “stalwart, brown woman, flat chested, her curly brown hair a little grizzled” (199). He admits, it “was a shock” to see *Ántonia* so much transformed and “battered” that he could recognize her only when she spoke “in the husky, breathy voice” he remembered so well (199). The feeling of shock and unfamiliarity is mutual as *Ántonia* also fails to recognize him, but for the opposite reason. She explains: “I can’t believe it’s you, sitting here in my own kitchen. You wouldn’t have known me, would you Jim? You’ve kept so young, yourself. But it’s easier for a man” (201). The shock of momentary misrecognition and the feeling of estrangement come from the fact that unlike the furnished narratives of the frontier (such as Cooper’s leatherstocking tales) in which the hero is completely rejuvenated and reborn at the end of the narrative after completing the epic journey involving domestication of the wilderness, *Ántonia*’s narrative culminates in the emergence of a figure which is battered, bruised and changed to the point of misrecognition.¹⁰⁰ She owns a kitchen now, whereas in the past she used to work as a maid in the kitchens of others. She also has a garden and a parlor, which signifies that she might have realized the American Dream or might have successfully assimilated into American culture, reinforcing what Guy Reynolds in *Willa Cather in Context* calls “America’s myth” of immigration according to which “America is once again perceived

¹⁰⁰ In *Foreign and Female*, Doris Weatherford describes the lives of immigrant women of mid-nineteenth- to early twentieth century America by noting that immigrant women then “could generally expect to have a considerably greater chances of dying in childbirth than their American counterparts” (9). These women, she adds, “aged sooner, their children were more sickly and more of them died, and mother themselves rolled up appalling death statistics” (9).

as paradise, as Eden; and through the Americanization process the land is literally named for the first time” (82). Yet, unlike Lazarus’s colossal mother of exiles standing firm amidst waves and tides in the sea to welcome the hungry and poor of immigrants, the welcome that *Ántonia* – the source of “a veritable explosion of life” (203) – manages to extend is “I declare, Jim, I loved you children almost as much as I love my own” (201).

Unlike the mechanical welcome of Lazarus’s mythical hostess, *Ántonia*’s motherly welcome to Jim reveals the cruel and gendered economy of the frontier in which it is easier for a man to stay young, as if he could stay wholly in the present and avoid being old or like the past. Instead of being a bloated and magnified self containing the multitudes (as is the case in the Whitmanian notion of the individual) and perpetually renewing the urge to expand, *Ántonia*’s diminished self reveals a domain of nurturing and care as depletion and unfurnishing. In being the veritable source of all the “children” she gave birth to or cared for including Jim and the trees in her garden, she affirms her relationship to the land. Instead of claiming or appropriating the garden, the land, and the trees, she acknowledges that she “belong(s) on the farm” (206). She belongs on the farm first as the mother of the trees, which she admits “were on [her] mind like children,” and she would carry water for the trees in a dry season (204). But the trees are also her refuge from the indigent life of relentless hardship and servitude in the town. By revealing this relationship of belonging with the farm and the land, *Ántonia* reaffirms her being-in-the-world “like the founders of early races” (211). She does not become the founder of the early races – that would be appropriating, displacing and conquering. It is through her unfurnishing that the founding figures of the early races emerge. As an unfurnished

immigrant, *Ántonia* is a guest/host-stranger, a diminished mother through whom the founders of the early races return.

In “Willa Cather’s Entropology,” Guy Reynolds remarks that Cather’s works are narratives of “entropology” of American culture. He defines “entropology” as the “writing of a culture” devoted to the entropy of that culture and its imminent extinction” (225).¹⁰¹ Instead of taking “entropology” as a natural process of historical transition, however, Cather’s novels foreground moments of interruptions in which immigrants act as unfurnished beings at once visiting as guests or welcoming back the founding figures of early races. The reception of these early races and times is captured also in *O Pioneers!*, especially in the scene describing Alexandra’s “illusion” of levitation, “of being lifted up bodily and carried lightly by someone very strong” (119). This illusion of levitation is first mentioned in the novel in a section which begins with the clarification that lack of imagination is Alexandra’s blind side. The narrator implies that her illusion of being lifted is not something imaginary, but is rooted firmly in the land:

Sometimes, as she lay luxuriously idle, her eyes closed, she used to have an illusion of being lifted up bodily and carried lightly by some one very strong. It was a man, certainly, who carried her, but he was like no man she knew; he was much larger, stronger and swifter, and he carried her as easily as if she were a sheaf of wheat. She never saw him, but, with eyes closed, she could feel that he was yellow like the sunlight, and there was a smell of ripe cornfields about him. (119-120)

In his essay “Widening Gyre,” John Murphy remarks that *My Ántonia* is a variation on *O Pioneers!* marking a significant difference: *Ántonia* is “more maternal than Alexandra, and she works the soil where Alexandra merely manages the farm. She is described in

¹⁰¹ For Reynolds, Cather’s works revolve around this structure of multiple vanishing and extinction: “the colonial Spanish America lost to Anglo-America after the Mexican War; the French America lost to the British; the pioneer West lost to “standardization” and a banal conformism; the defeated confederacy of Cather’s ancestors; the Cliff-Dweller settlements” (225).

earthly imagery” and Alexandra is not (Murphy 55). Unlike John Murphy’s assessment that Alexandra is more cut off from the land, therefore more ethereal than *Ántonia*, Alexandra’s reverie of being lifted brings her back to the earth, to the cornfield and to the sheaf of wheat. Towards the end of *O Pioneers!*, she is once more visited by the illusion, this time the spell is clearer and lasts longer. The man lifted her up and carried her very far. When he finally “laid her down on her bed,” she could see him properly as he stood by the doorway of her room. His white cloak fell over his face, his head was bent down and his “shoulders seemed as strong as the foundations of the world” (165).

Alexandra’s experience of levitation occurs not only in the wake of the tragedy of her brother Emil and her friend Marie’s murder, but also when she feels the approach of her own death. Thus, her characterization of the figure who lifts her and transports her far away neither represents the founding and renaming of America (in the sense Reynolds interprets it) nor does it refer to the frontier as the foundation of American empire. As a ground of negativity in the sense Agamben uses the term to describe the simultaneous emergence of the Voice and the withdrawal of the voice at the very moment of the taking place of language, Alexandra’s rescuer is the foundation of the world in the same way *Ántonia* is like the founders of early races. Alexandra is visited by a figure, on the one hand, who smells of ripe cornfields, hence resembles Caliban, but also wears a white cloak, thus reminds of Ariel, the magician. Alexandra’s reception of this stranger, her desire to be rescued by him and her perception of him as the foundation of the world make her at once a guest of the stranger as well as his host. By constructing figures like *Ántonia* and Alexandra, Cather not only interrogates the mythical notion of hospitality promising plentitude, expansion and appropriation of land, she also posits immigrants as

unfurnished subjects critiquing appropriation and heralding the arrival of other foundations and other founders.

Chapter V:

Welcoming One's Own: Hospitality in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Judea's refuge cities had power
To shelter, shield and save
E'ven Rome had alters: 'neath whose shade
Might crouch the wan and weary slave
But Ohio had no sacred fane
To human rights to consecrate,
Where thou may'st thy hapless ones
From their darkly gathering fate.

- Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, "The Slave Mother:
a Tale of the Ohio."

In the first chapter of the dissertation I discussed a scene of welcoming a fugitive slave in Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. In this concluding chapter, the dissertation comes full circle to address the same site of hospitality in Toni Morrison's neo-slave narrative, *Beloved*, a story of another fugitive and her reception of the eponymous character of the novel. Besides bringing the discussion back to where the dissertation began, Toni Morrison's novel at once complements and complicates Whitman's famous scene of hospitality to the "thick-lipped slave." As a narrative of a fugitive's escape from slavery in the South to freedom in the North, Morrison's novel complements Whitman's scene of welcoming the runaway slave.¹⁰² In *Leaves of Grass*, the scene of welcoming the fugitive

¹⁰² *Beloved*'s narrative structure brings it close to what Bernard Bell calls "neo-slave narratives" a postmodern fabulation in which "black fabulators combine elements of fables, legends and slave narratives to protest racism and justify the deeds struggles, migrations, and spirit of black people" (285). Following this cue, Charles Hegler argues that *Beloved* is a neo-slave narrative, adding, "just as 'classic' slave narratives are a form of auto-biography, neo-slave narratives are a form of historical fiction" appropriate for black female writers such as Morrison and their female protagonists to narrate "the slave woman's story of slavery, freedom and family" (149).

is only a vignette, one scene in a series of such scenes, important but only complementary to the whole celebration of hospitality that is America. Whitman depicts the fugitive as an isolated case, almost without a history or past. The readers know little about where the fugitive came from, how he arrived at the speaker's place, and what happened to him after he left his host's house. It looks as if the host in Whitman's poem, though sympathetic, even willing and ready to emotionally and ideologically trade places with the fugitive, circumvents the future or the past of the fugitive as he is more concerned about his vision of America. As readers of Morrison's novel note, *Beloved* is "the reclamation of black history in its fullest array" (Tally xv). It "constructs a parallel between the individual processes of psychological recovery and historical or national process" (Krumholz 107). In "Daughters Signifyin(g) History," Ashraf Rushdy remarks that *Beloved* exemplifies the aesthetics of accommodating "inherited culture, an inherited 'history,' and the understanding of the ways that any given artistic work negotiates between those cultural/historical worlds it inhabits" (141). By making the story revolve around the past, present and future of the runaway slave, Morrison expands Whitman's scene of hospitality to include not only the larger historical and cultural contexts in which the narrative takes place, but also to conjure a figure of the guest/ghost-stranger in which the intensities of all times and many places accumulate.¹⁰³

Apart from extending and expanding the scene of hospitality to the fugitive, Morrison's novel also complicates Whitman's paradigmatic scene of welcoming the

¹⁰³ Recalling the genesis of Morrison's *Beloved*, Marilyn Sanders Mobley describes how the novelist runs into a story of Margaret Garner, a slave woman who killed her child, in *The Black Book*. This story "documents the historical basis" for *Beloved* in which "history simultaneously becomes both theme and narrative process" (68). Another critic argues that *Beloved* shows "how history is not over and done with" (Aki 1). Morrison seeks to revise and understand "African American history through non-western eyes by retelling history through the lives of former African slaves" (Aki 1).

stranger. *Beloved* complicates the scene of hospitality not just because it is written by an African American writer. As John Ernest reminds, African American literature is not exclusively written by African Americans, for a number of nineteenth-century African American “autobiographies” were “written by white amanuensis” (2).¹⁰⁴ Morrison makes the scene more complicated by re-appropriating it.¹⁰⁵ She articulates, to use her own formulation from her Tanner lecture, “Unspeakable Things Unspoken,” the silences and absences by tracing “the ghost in the machine” (11). Though her lecture urges critics to search for the ghosts of Afro-American presences in the founding texts of nineteenth-century American literature, she conjures up the ghosts of the Afro-American past in her own works as well.

Beloved the novel is overwhelmed by the ghostly presence of Sethe’s daughter. This haunting is central to many of Morrison’s other novels. For example, the ghost of Dorcas Manfred in *Jazz* occupies the mental landscape of Joe and Violet Trace. Similar psychological ghosts haunt *Sula*. For example, Chicken Little’s ghostly presence preoccupies Sula Peace; and Pecola Breedlove of *The Bluest Eye* is spooked by her own newly tailored self. *Song of Solomon*’s Milkman Dead has his paternal great-grand father, Shalimar of Solomon, as his guiding spirit. What is the significance of conjuring these ghosts in Morrison’s works? One answer to this question is that ghosts speak the unspeakable things left unspoken by the founding works of nineteenth-century American

¹⁰⁴ The question of authorial signature in writing has historically been a contentious and controversial issue for African American writers and critics. In the introduction to the edited volume of *Critical Inquiry*, “Writing ‘Race’ and the Difference it Makes,” Henry Louis Gates, Jr. notes that the question of who the author was mattered in the debate on slavery and race because writing during the Enlightenment period in the West was taken to be the visible sign of reason, and “Blacks were ‘reasonable,’ and hence ‘men,’ if – and only if – they demonstrated mastery of ‘the arts and sciences,’ the eighteenth century formula for writing” (8).

¹⁰⁵ Following Zora Neale Hurston, Michael Awkward argues that “the American is an ‘appropriative creature, that ‘while he lives and moves in the midst of a white civilization, everything he touches is re-interpreted for his own use’” (366).

literature. It implies, to recall Morrison's lecture again, a shift from "silencing the witnesses and erasing their meaningful place in and contribution to American culture," so that "it is no longer acceptable merely to imagine for us. We have always been imagining ourselves" (8-9). It implies making Afro-Americans "the subject of our own narrative, witnesses to and participants in our own experience, and, in no way coincidentally, in the experience of those with whom we have come in contact" (8). Morrison suggests that the path to imagining oneself for an African American writer and critic lies through the ghosts or absences and silences in the literary and historical texts.

Critics who discuss Morrison's deployment of ghosts and haunting in *Beloved* and elsewhere argue that for Morrison "the visionary artist or writer serves as a medium" in order to make it "possible for the surviving spirit of African cultural traditions to manifest itself on the physical plane" (Mullen 627). If Morrison urges critics to search for ghosts in literary texts, for Mullen the artists deploying ghosts act as mediums who help manifest the diasporic sign of African spirituality. For both Morrison and Mullen, a search for the ghost in the machine enables African Americans to reclaim their narrative, history and identity. The ghost in the machine of American literature locates and "manifests" the Afro-American presence in American literature. In her Tanner lecture, Morrison was primarily concerned about locating the ghosts or presences in the machine of American literature, whereas Mullen's assessment on deploying ghosts as a means to mediate Africanism relates primarily to Morrison's literary works. Yet, as critics who have examined Morrison's Africanism in her literary and critical works note, dusting off "the survival of West and Central African traditional civilizations that Christianity

obscures in the Western hemisphere” constitutes Morrison’s overall aesthetic goal (Jennings 2).

In contrast to Morrison’s search for the ghost and Mullen’s manifestation of diasporic identity through African spirituality, the “ghost” in *Beloved* arrives as an unexpected and unwelcome guest. As we know, the terms “ghost” and “guest” share parallel etymology in their proximity to Teutonic “gast.”¹⁰⁶ The novel opens unexpectedly with the ghost – “124 was spiteful. Full of a baby venom” (3) – as if the ghost did not give any time to the narrator to properly announce its arrival or as if *it* preceded the act of narrating itself. By beginning with the ghost, Morrison seems to suggest that the ghost is what provides the “ground” for the story. More precisely, the ghost acts as the host to the narrative. A similar unexpectedness surrounds Beloved’s appearance in Cincinnati where a “fully dressed woman walked out of the water . . . nobody saw her emerge or came accidentally by. If they had, chances are they would have hesitated before approaching her” (50). A little later in the novel the narrator describes Beloved as a peculiar “guest,” and implies that her unexpected and mysterious appearance in town can only be explained in terms of visitation or apparition; and she can only be called a guest. By deploying this figure of the ghost/guest-stranger, Morrison not only revises Whitman’s scene of welcoming the fugitive, but also suggests that hospitality is unthinkable without first welcoming this ghost who exceeds all expectations and defies any categorization.

What, then, is this figure of the ghost/guest-stranger? Can we ever consider a ghost a guest apart from their common etymology? Why or how is ghost a stranger?

¹⁰⁶ *A Glossary of North Country Words* describes the etymological affinity between *ghost* and *guest* by noting that the latter was often used to denote the former, for both derive from Saxon *gast* or *gaast* (202).

Above all, a ghost is invisible; but this invisibility is the ghost's power. Being invisible at once augments the sense of mystery, terror and power of the ghost. A ghost may be powerful and capable of generating terror, but it is homeless, a spirit without a place or presence to be seen. In spite of its homelessness, it is intimately related to the past, which it is supposed to bring back with all its added force and purpose, for a ghost comes back or returns from the past only when it has some correction, restoration or reparation to perform. A ghost is something or someone who does not die, but cannot live with us either forever as humans or animals. Its return for a specific purpose makes it a guest, rather than a family member or a friend or a member of the community or nation. Insofar as communication and co-existence with it is impossible, it is up to the ghost to lay down the rules of visitations, arrival and reception. The arrival or haunting of the ghost constitutes a radical hospitality, for the ghost singlehandedly decides when to visit or how. It is this indeterminacy or unexpectedness of the ghost that makes it a host or the master/mistress of the place it haunts. By making 124 a haunted house and by conjuring the ghost of Sethe's daughter, Morrison implies that there is an unfinished business in Ohio, and by extension in the United States, which cannot be thought without being held hostage by this figure of the guest/ghost-stranger.

Besides complicating Whitman's scene of hospitality to the fugitive, Morrison's *Beloved* also helps me recall and revisit other sites and scenes of hospitality I have engaged with in the preceding chapters of the dissertation. Sethe's infanticide, her mourning for the dead child and her subsequent search for healing enables us to recall the site of hospitality in the frontier, especially Chingachgook's mourning for Uncas, I discussed in the second chapter of the dissertation. *Beloved's* foregrounding of the house

and the return of the past take us back to the issue of home and haunting, which I examined in chapter three through a reading of a novel by John Dominis Holt. *Beloved* provides a fascinating transition from Melville's description of Typees and Happers, who strategically present one another as cannibals probably in their bid to thwart European arrival on and invasion of the islands. Seethe uses a similar ruse when she projects herself as an infanticide while protecting her children from being recaptured by Schoolteacher. Morrison's haunted house and her evocation of African diaspora also evokes concerns of chapter four in which I explored Antonia and Alexandra's houses and gardens and Thea's visit to the ancient ruins in Cather's immigrant and frontier novels.

In contrast to Whitman's dyadic structure of hospitality involving the fugitive as guest and the speaker representing "America" as host, Morrison presents a complicated tripartite structure, which begins in Sweet Home, Kentucky. Before Mr. Garner's death, and before Schoolteacher's take-over of Garner's estate, Sweet Home was true to its name where, to recall Mr. Garner's words, "[y]oung boys, old boys, picky boys, stroppin boys. Now at Sweet Home, my niggers is men every one of em. Bought em thataway, raised em thataway. Men every one'" (10). Morrison is quick to add that the Sweet Home of Mr. Garner, which prides itself on being a crucible for minting masculine slaves and for providing them shelter, was no refuge for women, for among these manly men of Garner's "rape seemed the solitary gift of life" (10). Thus very early on in the novel, Morrison makes it clear that in escaping the brutality of slavery, she was also escaping Sweet Home, which, despite being relatively more hospitable to slaves than other estates, provided no refuge to slave-women.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Just as Morrison suggests that imagining a monolithic Afro-American culture and experience is impossible, critics have also warned against assuming that there exists a monolithic Black female language.

The second structure or location of hospitality or its abuse in the novel is the other side of the Ohio – Cincinnati, where Sethe is greeted by a ghostly figure that she thought had “no business walking around the hills” (78). That ghostly figure was Amy Denver, who nursed Sethe’s wounds and helped Sethe deliver a daughter. The painful process of delivering the baby repeats itself when Sethe returns from the carnival and finds Beloved at 124. This opens the third structure of welcome in the novel, which unfolds a peculiar relationship of ghost/guest/host between Sethe and Beloved. And this is the structure that interests me the most in the novel, for I have been investigating this structure of hospitality throughout the dissertation, especially tracing the figure of the guest/host-stranger in literary texts ranging from James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* to Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*. It is at the level of this structure or moment (of the emergence of the guest/ghost-stranger) that hospitality ceases to be merely anti-colonial, anti-imperial or anti-hegemonic, and begins to reveal relations or processes of decolonization. An examination of this structure or moment of welcome shows that hospitality does not merely signify determining who the host or guest is or the space (national, communal, familial or domestic) in which the encounter and reception of strangers should take place; it also represents a moment at which one opens to and is exposed to otherness in such a way that one’s relationship with the other moves from being hegemonic, stable, accommodating, co-existential and inclusive to that of being unsettling, indistinct and radically open to strangers.

By unsettling and indistinct I mean destabilizing the conventional binaries of host and guest, which colonial and other hegemonic relations seek to consolidate and maintain

In “New Directions for Black Feminist Criticism,” Deborah McDowell asks: “Do Black female high school dropouts, welfare mothers, college graduates, and Ph. D.s share a common language? Are there regional variations in this common language” (431)?

on their own terms. In contrast, an other-directed hospitality marks the cultivation of decolonization, which in turn resists the ontological and spatial constructions by moving beyond binaries such as guest and host, north and south, or slave and free. The unsettling subject of hospitality who I call guest/host-stranger in the dissertation cannot be thought in terms of ontology or traditional notions of spatiality. The figure of the ghost and its “incarnation” as Beloved in Morrison’s novel exemplify this figure of the guest/host-stranger, who is neither a being in the present (that is how ontology would define “being”) nor simply memory from the past. Nor can this figure be understood in terms of the standard meaning of hospitality as “living together” by sharing the time, space and resources (e.g. food, gifts) as host and guest. As a ghostly incarnation, Beloved is neither alive nor is she entirely a contemporary of Sethe and others. As her rambling monologue in the novel reveals – “. . . there is no place where I stop . . . I need to find a place to be” (210, 213) – Beloved cannot share a definitive or bounded place with them.

As a recurring theme, I have been stringing together traces of this figure of the guest/host-stranger throughout the entire dissertation. I tried to locate glimpses of this figure in Sigourney’s address and invocation of the host who would welcome the “Indian.” I found the echoes of the same figure in Whitman’s fluid and free-flowing songs. Cooper’s mourners, Silko’s marching healers, Melville’s mobile and perpetually shifting mariner or beachcomber, Holt’s native historian, and Cather’s uncanny immigrants and artists evoking pre-colonial “races,” all provide, in their singular ways, various degrees and flashes of the figure of the guest/host-stranger. Though I read this figure in opposition to other figures or subject positions, the figure of the guest/host-stranger cannot be placed in a dialectical relationship to any subjectivity. That would be

treat them as positive entities. This figure is radically different from (rather than just opposed to) Whitman's transcendental or imperial subject containing the multitudes, Cooper's sentimental subjects deploying mourning as a tool to institute the politics of forgetting, Melville's critical subjects unwittingly aiding and reinforcing the program of colonialism, and Cather's furnished subjects shoring up the myths of expansion and empire. Even Silko's contraband subjects and Holt's nostalgic genealogists do not entirely subsume this figure.

Morrison's *Beloved* captures the essence of this figure by virtue of portraying it as someone not easily recognizable, identifiable and locatable in terms of life and death, host and guest, and family and stranger. *Beloved* is not entirely an "incorporated" subject even after her "incarnation" in flesh. Morrison underscores the indeterminate and indistinct features of *Beloved* as a guest/host-stranger by portraying her first as a guest at 124, and then as a virtual host at the house where the guest takes care of Sethe as if the latter were a child to be nursed or a lover to be comforted. Instead of positing hospitality of the North as a revolt against the slave-owning and inhospitable South, Morrison traces a new relationship and new world or space of hospitality by conjuring up this figure of the guest/host-stranger.

In thinking about this figure of the guest/host-stranger, I have been following Jacques Derrida's mediation on the topic in *Of Hospitality*. Derrida begins his inquiry with the "question of the foreigner [*l'étranger*]," which he believes best characterizes the foreigner and, by extension, hospitality. After proposing that the foreigner is a "being-in-question" who also puts the host in question (3), he moves on to distinguish between two

figures of the foreigner. ¹⁰⁸The foreigner in the Kantian sense comes, like Washington's stranger I discussed in the Introduction, comes from outside, is protected by the cosmopolitan rights and laws of hospitality, "possesses a family name" (23) and is a "subject in law" (27). The other figure of the foreigner is the "absolute other;" and Derrida describes this figure as "an anonymous new arrival and someone who has neither name, nor patronym, nor family, nor social status, and who is therefore treated not as a foreigner but as another barbarian" (25). For Derrida, this barbarian demands what he calls the absolute hospitality beyond the rights, laws and duties of hospitality. A little later in the text, he calls this the "wholly other" who "is relegated to an absolute outside, savage, barbaric, precultural, and prejudicial, outside and prior to the family, community, the city, the nation, or the State" (73).

Unlike the foreigner in the Kantian sense, Derrida's foreigner is not only a man or woman outside of society, family, city or state; as someone savage and barbaric he or she also comes before culture and the juridical system as we know them. The precedence that this figure of the stranger claims – both as a revenant from the past, and as a specter who cannot be made contemporaneous to ourselves, hence who remains always "to come" or be fully present – makes it a host of whatever and whoever comes after him or her. The stranger not only lays down his or her own laws, he or she is justice itself. Though *Beloved* might have a few characteristics resembling the foreigner in the Kantian sense (she has a name, even if the name comes from the headstone of Sethe's daughter), she resembles Derrida's figure of the absolute other. This doubling in *Beloved*'s "foreignness" makes her a guest/host-stranger who is also justice incarnated.

¹⁰⁸ I would like to thank Professor Susan Scott Parrish for helping me read this section from Derrida's text.

Though coming prior to the family, the city, the community and the nation, Beloved, however, is not severed from these political and social structures. Her “return” as a revenant confirms her association with these structures. As a figure of the guest/host-stranger that “embodies” the split self, Beloved enables these structures to come into existence as spaces of hospitality. That is the reason why Denver starts to dream about the perfect family after Beloved’s arrival. “My daddy was an angel man,” says Denver, adding that they “should be together. Me, him and Beloved” (208-9). By returning to 124, Beloved is making possible for Denver to imagine the family once again, even though she is not entirely “of” the family. In spite of the fact that Beloved herself is “homeless” and she can only be a shifting referentiality, she, however, “grounds” the structures of the family, community and nation as much as she interrogates or interrupts them. The guest/host-stranger represents justice in the sense that the figure heralds the arrival or return of a family or community as it was prior to its violent undoing by slavery in the south. The figure does not return to or revive a pre-colonial, pre-national and pristine past, but by engaging with these structures and responding to their founding violence, she seeks to re-imagine spatiality or being-in-the-world. Beloved as a guest/host-stranger exemplifies new forms of being and spatiality, which cannot be mapped by ontology or the notion of spatiality represented by the nation or community. As a spectral figure she is not entirely present in 124, which is to say, she is neither wholly in the past (dead) nor fully back to life in the present. As such, some part of her being-in-the-world remains only a promise “to come,” thereby irrevocably relating her to the rituals of arrival, reception and hospitality. As a guest who remains to come, Beloved brings promises of justice in the form of correction, restoration or reparation to history. As a figure torn

between the precultural or prenatal (to which I will return shortly) past and the promise of justice to come, she belongs to the time of the future anterior.

In spite of being an indeterminate subject of haunting and visitation, the figure of the guest/host-stranger is always in relation to the space of visitation and to others. In fact, we can only think of this figure as a being-in-the-world, and in-relation-to-others. It is being-in-the-world in the sense that like the ghost in 124, it is *there* in the house. As opposed to the concept of the individual premised on the care of the self, the figure of the guest/host-stranger cultivates the care of otherness, hence his or her position as precultural, i. e., prior to the culture of an undivided subject or a being conceived through the dialectic of repression and resistance. Not only in psychoanalysis and postcolonial theories, but also in early American studies, which defines the American as an exceptional individual who resisted the Old World values, a subject is conceived through the dialectic of repression and resistance. One of the examples of such a figure is Richard Slotkin's regenerated American through violence. The figure of the stranger interrupts this dialectic by adding responsibility to the binary of repression and regeneration.

In Morrison's *Beloved*, the house, 124, lies literally outside the city, nation and community. It is an indeterminate space beyond simple relations of ownership of property, family and community. Yet it constitutes the space of hospitality in the novel not just because it used to be sort of an inn for the travelers and fugitives on their way to freedom, for Morrison multiplies the sites of hospitality within the field of (neo)-slave narratives.¹⁰⁹ The narrator recalls the days when 124 was a "way station where messages

¹⁰⁹ The plurivocal and recursive structure of Morrison's novel is only one example of what Karla Holloway calls a multiplied text, a recurrent feature in the works by contemporary African American women writers. For Holloway, the "plurisignant text" by African American women writers "has a multiple generation as

came and their senders. Where bits of news soaked like dried beans in spring water until they were soft enough to digest” (65). By deploying the figure of the ghost and its unexpected arrival or reappearance, in short, by framing her narrative in terms of hospitality to and by the ghosts, Morrison (a) reinvents the traumatic reliving or remembering of history; and (b) revises our notions of identity, being and ontology not as autonomous entities but beings exposed to the return of the guest/ghost-stranger.

On the one hand, the house and home in *Beloved* represent, to cite Marilyn Chandler, “ideas in relation to which women in every generation [and] in every situation have had to ‘work out their salvation’ and define their identities” (291). On the other, this crucible of identity is also a space of hospitality to the guest who is also a ghost. While Whitman’s reception of the thick-lipped slave aims at consolidating the figure of the national character through the inclusion or accommodation of the fugitive, Morrison conceives of identity in relation to the ghost which not only defies easy characterizations but also resists inclusion. By imaging the figure of the guest in terms of spectrality, Morrison suggests that in spite of our best efforts, something still remains un-articulated in the oblivion of the past and someone still remains to come, who also holds the promise of a just future. No attempts at recognition, re-memory and reception can make all of history accessible, transparent, fully present. Whitman’s grand scene of reception is opposed to this principle of repetition which requires that we continue thinking about and cultivating hospitality, continue preparing for someone or something who always remains “to come.” The figure that remains to arrive can best be understood as a spectral guest; and waiting for that ghostly figure, being perpetually exposed and open to the arrival of

well as multiple presence” (Holloway 388). Holloway notes that a shift in language when these African-American women’s texts acknowledge non-Western experience and value.

this figure is how Morrison characterizes hospitality in the novel. If Beloved is a peculiar guest, Sethe's waiting for her, and her submission to the point of driving herself mad for Beloved exposes Sethe to the spectral visitation of the guest/ghost. It is in this sense of waiting for and welcoming the spectral figure of the stranger that Morrison has both Sethe and Denver exclaim: "I waited for you" (217).

The impossibility of definitively identifying or "placing" Beloved reveals the aura of ambivalence and indeterminacy surrounding the figure of the guest/(g)host-stranger. In contrast to Whitman's scenes or events of hospitality as accommodation or inclusion in which the guest is easily identified as a thick-lipped slave, Morrison's spectral hospitality defies easy identification of the guest, and easy characterization of hospitality as managing difference through cohabiting, feeding, nursing and caring. The very distinction of the living and the dead, on the one hand, and guest and host, on the other, seems to disappear in Morrison's novel as it describes a relation between the guest and the host which cannot be called cohabiting. It is not clear who is being fed and nursed by whom in the novel.

Beloved has been interpreted as a ghost story in which the venomous baby ghost of Sethe's elder daughter haunts Baby Suggs' house and returns in flesh and blood as Beloved. According to Dean Franco, "*Beloved* is a ghost story" (416). It is "a literary subgenre or antigenre" of "ghostly discourse," writes another critic for whom the novel is "an interruption of 'real' history, a bad joke in the middle of a sad story" (Kiely 215). *Beloved*, for David Lawrence, "brings into daylight the 'ghosts' that are harbored by memory and that hold their 'hosts' in thrall" (189). It is "a Gothic novel, a ghost story, a mystery, a fantasy novel, or a historical novel" (Skinner 89).

Yet, ambivalence regarding the novel as a ghost story and *Beloved* as a ghost persists in the Morrison scholarship. Taking an exception to these “fantastic” readings, Elizabeth House contends that “uniform acceptance” of *Beloved* as a ghost “is surprising, for evidence throughout the book suggests that the girl is not a supernatural being of any kind but simply a young woman who has herself suffered the horrors of slavery” (17). Another critic adds that “[i]dentifying what *Beloved* is *not* is at least as important as pinning down what *Beloved* is: *Beloved* and the ghost that haunts 124 at the beginning of the text are not synonymous” (Schroeder 98). If Schroeder distinguishes between the baby ghost and *Beloved*, Dale Bailey distinguishes between a ghost story and what she calls “the haunted house formula” found in the works of authors including Poe, Hawthorne and James; and she argues that *Beloved* can be understood in terms of the latter. She contends that the “link between houses and success” characterizes “a key component of the American Dream” (8). For Bailey, haunted houses such as 124 in *Beloved* “serve as ironic symbols – and extraordinarily versatile ones – for all that has gone fatally awry in the American experiment” (9). In other words, the house in *Beloved* represents the American nightmare. It is this spatial aspect of haunting in the novel together with the contemporary issues of discrimination in housing and the high imprisonment rate among African Americans that leads Samira Kawash to argue that the problem of color line “is not biological but spatial” (67). Avery Gordon locates new interconnections between space and spectrality in the novel by noting that “*Beloved* the ghost’s double voice speaks not only of Sethe’s dead child but also of an unnamed African girl lost at sea, not yet become an African American” (140). Long before Gordon, Deborah Horvitz had argued that as a “powerful corporeal ghost who creates

matrilineal connection between Africa and America, Beloved stands for every African woman whose story will never be told” (157). Whitman’s dyadic scene of welcome involves a thick-lipped slave who received nourishment and nursing from the host. Beloved’s arrival at 124 and her reception by Sethe evokes not only reception, nourishment and nursing, but also a question and a call for justice regarding slavery, Sethe’s rape, Africa and the Middle Passage. The veil of indeterminacy or overdeterminacy surrounding Beloved, thus, interrupts any scene of hospitality involving a neat dyadic relation between the host and the guest.

Sethe once suggested to Baby Suggs that they move out of 124 in order to get rid of the baby ghost. Baby Suggs replied that it would be pointless to move out of the house, for “[n]ot a house in the country ain’t packed to its rafters with some dead Negro’s grief” (5). She adds that they were lucky that the ghost was a baby; if her husband or all of her children were to return, they would worry their “house into evil” (5). Contrary to Baby Suggs’ expectations, Beloved seems to combine the ghostly transfiguration of Baby Suggs, her children, Sethe’s daughter and many other dead Africans lost to the Middle Passage. As some critics have suggested, Sethe’s story about the legacy of slavery mediated through a mother’s infanticide is not only a story based on the tragedy of Margaret Garner’s killing of her child; “it is the affirmation and reclamation of the millions of voices lost as the result of the middle passage” (Beulieu 31). Toward the end of the novel, Paul D asks Denver if she thought Beloved was her sister; as if echoing the epigraph with which the novel begins – Sixty million and more – Denver replies: “At times. At times I think she was more” (266). Beloved embodies this ambivalent subjectivity not only straddling across the realm of the living and the dead, individual and

collectivity, and mother and daughter but also stretching from the continent of North America to Africa.

By conjuring the specter of Beloved representing the sixty million and more Africans lost to the Middle Passage, Morrison not only reveals that the house of America is haunted to the rafters by Afro-American grief, but she also suggests that haunting in America not only belongs to the nation (as Dale implies through her trope of the haunted house), but it also involves larger spatial forces involving Africa, the Atlantic and the Middle Passage. Beloved as the collective figure of the ghost is not only a guest, a visitor from the other side of the world, but she also makes visible the world or space of hospitality. Beloved at once represents the ghostly visitor and the host who reveals the space of hospitality. It is her return that makes it possible to recall and receive the narrative of millions of enslaved Africans lost and forgotten to the Middle Passage. And it is also through Beloved that Sethe desires to correct her own violent act as if Beloved is not only a host but also justice itself. As someone who waited “on the bridge” (75), Beloved acts as a bridge between nations and continents, and this and the other world. She represents a “beloved community,” which constitutes not a national community, but a larger spatiality encompassing multiple continents.¹¹⁰ Beloved’s embodiment of spatiality is not only indicated throughout the novel by her attempts to reunite with Sethe across the world and to create a precarious family and community of long lost or estranged relatives, but also by the survival of the water and weather invoked in the concluding paragraph of the novel:

¹¹⁰ Paul D believes that Sethe’s love for Beloved stems from “her sweet name,” especially “the remembrance of glittering headstone” that Sethe builds for her daughter’s grave (53). But naming or nicknaming is through which “many of the characters of the novel lose or reclaim their identities” (Lyles-Scott 201) as names have this capacity to evoke spaces of hospitality and refuge.

By and by all trace is gone, and what is forgotten is not only the footprints but the water too and what it is down there. The rest is weather. Not the breath of the dismembered and unaccounted for, but wind in the eaves, or spring ice thawing too quickly. Just weather. Certainly no clamor for a kiss.
Beloved. (275)

In her reading of the novel, “Acting Bits/Identity Talk,” Gayatri C. Spivak cites this very paragraph in which the narrator sums up the disappearance or exorcism of Beloved:

That too is time. Geological time, however slow, is also time. One must not *make* history in a deliberate way. One must not respect the earth’s tone. One might be obliged to claim history from the violent perpetrator of it in order to turn violation into the enablement of *idamvada* [identity] . . . After the effacement of the trace, there must be no project for restoring the origin. That is “just weather,” here today as yesterday.
With this invocation of contingency, where nature may be the great body without organs of woman . . . we begin to see that the project of translating culture within the politics of identity is not a quick fix. (794)

By interpreting the ending of the novel as an assertion of the geological time, which is the time directly opposed to the historical time of the perpetrator or the one who makes history deliberately, violently in order to reaffirm his identity, Spivak seems to misread Morrison’s reference to the time and space left vacant by Beloved’s disappearance. Yet for Spivak Beloved’s disappearance marks what she calls in “absolute contingency” or “the experience of planetarity” in which occurs a simultaneous disappearance of all traces and the emergence of the geological time (88). This moment of contingency remains inaccessible to human time, but without this contingency, there is no time or space. Beloved’s disappearance at the end of the novel thus signals the very possibility of the emergence of the other world and other time, the emergence of planetarity without which there cannot be any trace or ghost or its visitation. This experience of planetarity marks the culmination of Beloved’s story: the event of Beloved’s ghostly appearance in the wake of her disappearance as Sethe’s incarnated daughter. Beloved’s persistence as a

ghostly apparition even after the disappearance of all traces is what Derrida in *Adieu* describes as hospitality of the stranger:

It is necessary to welcome the other in his alterity, without waiting, and thus not to pause to recognize his real predicates. It is thus necessary, beyond all perception, to receive the other while running the risk, a risk that is always troubling, strangely troubling, like the stranger (*unheimlich*), of a hospitality offered to the *guest* as *ghost* or *Geist* or *Gast*. There would be no hospitality without the chance of spectrality. (111-2)

Beloved's disappearance coincides not only with the emergence of planetarity, but also with the appearance of alterity beyond all perceptions and recognition. Her disappearance defies claims of family, community and identity. Morrison concludes the narrative with "Beloved" as if to welcome her not as Sethe's daughter or Denver's sister, but as troubling alterity of an *unheimlich* ghost or guest. Daniel Erickson calls Morrison's conjuration of Beloved and baby ghosts in the novel "spectral ontology." Even though he qualifies the terms by rebranding them as "indeterminate ontological states" (32), Beloved and the baby ghost also defy ontology, which etymologically is a science of being, and both Beloved and baby ghost exceed the temporality of being. As specters representing (alterity) otherness or (*unheimlich*) strangeness, they lie beyond the regimes of perception and recognition. And as apparitions drifting, to cite the novel, "from ruin" (52), they exceed the boundaries of home or nation. The ruination which Beloved embodies unfolds as a site which makes visitation of the other and haunting of the ghost possible. We cannot think of welcome or hospitality without first invoking, recalling and welcoming the guest/host-stranger.

Beloved's spectrality unmoors her from the historical time of being or ontology as presence. As an absolute contingency (Spivak's term) or alterity (Derrida's term) inhabiting a form of future anteriority, Beloved is bound to the time of the now or to

urgency in the present.¹¹¹ Many theorists including Lyotard, Lacan, Negri and Derrida have used this concept of the future anterior to signify many aspects of one's relation to time, history and to others. Lacan uses the phrase to characterize the nature of trauma, which refers not to the time the traumatic event actually took place in the past but to the time in the future when the traumatic experience will return. In this sense the trauma in *Beloved* is the future anterior, for the time of the future anterior implies that it is traumatic retroactively.¹¹² As Donald Pease explains in the introduction to C. L. R. James's *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*, the future anterior links a past event with a possible future upon which the past event depends for its significance" (xviii). History's dependence on the future is not limited to acquiring meaning. As Derrida reminds us in *Points*. . . , memory, history, and the past also depend on the future for their traumatic repetition as the monster. A future, he writes, that is not a monster is not a future; rather it is a predictable, calculable, and programmable tomorrow. He adds:

All experience open to the future is prepared or prepares itself to welcome the monstrous *arrivant*, to welcome it, that is, to accord hospitality to that which is absolutely foreign or strange, but also one must add, to try to domesticate it, that is, to make it part of the household and have it assume the habits, to make us assume new habits. This is the movement of culture. (387)

¹¹¹ In *Ecrits: A Selection*, Lacan explains that what is "realized in my history is not the past definite of what was, since it is no more, or even the present perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming" (86). Cesare Casarino relates the concept of the future anterior to Benjamin's concept of messianic power that Benjamin linked to the idea that our coming was expected on the earth. Casarino comments: "I am not sure that the past and its generations were waiting for our arrival, but I am sure that some of us still wait for *theirs*. I am sure that some of us wait and work for our own past to happen in the form of the future anterior" (13).

¹¹² "The original scene" [such as Sethe's killing of her daughter] writes Todd McGowan "is only traumatic retroactively, in the future anterior – it will have been traumatic" (11). Along the same line, Mikko Tuhkanen situates future anteriority in relation to race to argue that race in African American literature, especially in Richard Wright, functions like the Lacanian real, which "may actualize the future anterior of a symbolic constellation, 'the will have been' of a future whose contingency can be narrated only in retrospect" (100).

Like all traumatic experiences exposed to future anteriority and to the arrival of a monstrous arrivant or visitor, *Beloved*'s claim to be welcomed comes not entirely from the past but from the future as well. In other words, unlike a ghost or memory from the past haunting the present, *Beloved* demands hospitality as a monstrous arrivant from the future. As an arrivant from the future, she is an absolute stranger who at once represents a traumatic return of the past and the promise of the future. The novel is not, as some critics believe it is, "a talking cure."¹¹³ Though Paul D wants Sethe to "talk it out," Sethe knows that the traumatic event of killing the daughter cannot be talked out or discussed. Even after a comprehensive narrative or talk, the monster always remains to come, and it always threatens to return and demands to be welcomed in the present.

Susan Bowers argues that *Beloved* is apocalyptic. The novel, for her, differs from white American apocalyptic literature, for unlike in a white American apocalyptic literary text depicting the new world as new beginning or rebirth, in *Beloved* "only when characters recover the past do they begin to imagine a future" (Bowers 211). While Bower makes *Beloved*'s capacity to imagine the future contingent upon the novel's ability to recover the past, I would argue that *Beloved* reveals a curious form of temporality which engages not only the past and the future but also the present. Bower's notion of apocalypse in *Beloved* implies the birth of a subject who recovers the past in order to move into the future, whereas I would argue that the threshold of the present on which this passage from past to future takes place is more important, for it is at that moment of their interface that the stranger or "monster" from the future anterior arrives.

¹¹³ According to Jennifer Fitzgerald, *Beloved*'s intertwined narrative is "talking cure" (110). Each of the "protagonist has experienced not only material horrors of slavery but also a psychic trauma which underlies their sense of self" (120).

This singular engagement with the future anterior in the novel motivates me to discuss it in the conclusion of my dissertation, for it has so much resonance today, “the future” in relation to the time of its writing or setting. It is this resonance that J. Hillis Miller evokes in his essay “Boundaries in *Beloved*,” in which he examines the novel’s relevance to the present. He notes that the novel is traversed by many boundaries including North/South, free state/slave state, Ohio/Kentucky, black/white, man/woman and this world/the other side. He argues that “the apparently clear figuration of human life by way of boundaries . . . breaks down when investigated carefully,” thereby exposing our situation to be always and at all times living in a borderland, where inside and outside overlap or are superimposed” (28). There is hardly anything new about Miller’s deconstruction of boundaries in *Beloved*, for long before him Homi Bhabha – who Miller does not cite – had located in Morrison’s novel a similar logic of the unhomely in which “the borders between home and the world become confused” (Bhabha 9), and “we see how [Sethe’s] most tragic and intimate act of violence is performed in a struggle to push back the boundaries of the slave world” (Bhabha 17). However, Miller’s interpretation of the novel takes some shocking leaps when he equates Sethe’s deconstruction of boundaries to the “behavior of Islamic ‘terrorist’” suicide bombers and that of George W. Bush. Miller locates in *Beloved* what he calls the fractal logic of self-similarity in which a community seeks to define itself in relation to itself and to the “other-side”:

It [the fractal logic] is essential also to understanding the behavior of individuals within that community, as in Sethe’s decision to cut her baby daughter’s throat with a handsaw so she can get her to safety on the other side, that is, to kill the best part of herself. In a similar way, the behavior of Islamic “terrorist” suicide bombers only makes sense if we take into account their belief that they will become holy martyrs and go straight to a

glorious life in heaven, just as the behavior of George W. Bush and Company only makes sense in the context of their belief that the end of the world is at hand and that only the Christian faithful will be saved, and just as, Derrida observes, the techno-capitalist system depends on faith in the working of more and more complicated machines whose functioning we do not understand. (31)

Miller's analogy, which not only collapses the historical and geographic boundaries but also the ideological and ethical boundaries, is shocking, because unlike the "Islamic terrorists" who annihilate themselves in the hope of a celestial future *for themselves*, and unlike Bush and Company's war on terror to save the Christian faithful *at the cost of the others*, Sethe's decision is directed towards the safety of her children. As opposed to the teleological future of Islamic terrorists, Bush and company, and the techno-capitalist system, Sethe evokes a radically different kind of futurity not for a community of people but for individuals who by the very virtue of being killed cannot have any future nor occupy any place. While acts of terrorism, Islamic or otherwise, are directed towards annihilating otherness and difference from the world, Bush and Company's war on terrorism seeks to "occupy" otherness. While Miller relates Sethe's infanticide to the violence and terror of our own time, thereby extending and intensifying the resonance the novel has for us, Miller's conflation of Sethe's violent act with terrorism now, however, neutralizes the ethical boundaries, which distinguish her act as annihilation of oneself for the other.

Sethe confesses that she "decided" that her family should escape from slavery. She particularly reminds Paul D that it was she and not Halle who was responsible for their escape to freedom:

"I did it. I got us all out. Without Halle too. Up till then it was the only thing I ever did on my own. Decided. And it came off right, like it was

supposed to. We was here. Each and everyone of my babies and me too. I birthed them and I got em out and it wasn't no accident. I did that. I had help, of course, lots of that, but still it was me doing it; me saying, *Go on*, and *Now*. Me having to look out. Me using my own head. But it was more than that. It was a kind of selfishness I never knew nothing about before. It felt good. Good and right. I was big, Paul D, and deep and wide and when I stretched out my arms all of my children could get in between. I was *that* wide. Look like I loved em more after I got here. Or maybe I couldn't love em proper in Kentucky because they wasn't mine to love. But when I got here, when I jumped down off the wagon – there wasn't nobody in the world I couldn't love if I wanted to. You know what I mean?" (162)

Sethe takes the credit for planning and executing her family's escape from slavery without the help of her husband or of any of the other Sweet Home men. The repetitive reference to "I" and "me" and "mine," however, does not imply possession, occupation and selective redemption of faithful Christians (as in the case of the war on terror) or desire for a celestial reward, personal redemption and revenge (as in the case of Islamic terrorism). Sethe admits that in the process of planning and carrying out the escape, she became aware of her selfishness; but instead of making her individualistic and self-centered, this selfishness amplified her, made her wide – wide enough to embrace and welcome her own. Sethe's renewed and amplified self, therefore, differs from Miller's terrifying and terrorizing subjects precisely in the expansion of her capacity to love. Freedom from slavery for her is not an expansion of ideology or empire; it is rather a widening of her capacity to love and to "embody" her own children.

Miller's deconstruction of boundaries ironically ends up consolidating boundaries by placing Sethe firmly in one community, by making her represent that community, in fact, by making her symbolize the communitarian logic of "terrorism" and "faith." As a result, Miller fails to see how Sethe explodes any stable and monolithic notion of self and community. While Miller convincingly traces the fractal logic of self-similarity between

Sethe's infanticide and terrorism, he overlooks instances of explosions in Morrison novel, which deconstructs monolithic notions of self or community.

Sethe literally explodes while giving birth to Denver on her way to Cincinnati. Upon her arrival, Baby Suggs notices that she is "all mashed up and split open" (135). When seeing Sethe's back, Amy exclaims: "It's a tree, Lu. A chokecherry tree. See, here is the trunk – it's red and split wide open, full of sap, and here's the parting for the branches" (75). Sethe recalls how "Schoolteacher made one [boy] open up my back, when it closed it made a tree" (17). These explosions differ from both the self-suicidal explosions of terrorists and the explosions carried out in the war on terror as they aim not at achieving martyrdom or at procuring a safe haven for a certain community at the cost of others. On the one hand, Schoolteacher's commission to assault her leaves her a split in the body, a perpetually divided body in search of healing. On the other hand, Sethe's exploded self, indicate opening oneself – both physically as well as emotionally – so that the other can be born and find a place of refuge in the world. Splitting oneself open, exposing oneself to the other and making oneself vulnerable, as Emmanuel Levinas would put it, constitute being hospitable to the other in *Beloved*. In *Otherwise Than Being*, Levinas defines vulnerability as the "anarchy of the Good," which differs from an "act" of an agent [e.g. terrorist or warrior against terrorism] because the anarchy of the Good is non-initiative and passive (75). This passive sensibility of having been offered without any holding back is "what all protection and all absence of protection already presuppose: vulnerability itself" (75). To be vulnerable is at once to protect and to effect an absence of all protection. Sethe kills her daughter while seeking to protect her children precisely by eliminating all protections (to live) for them and herself. Sethe's anarchic

good through which she wounds herself in wounding her daughter makes room for Beloved to be received. The production of this space or “ethos” is what makes Sethe’s anarchic response in protection of her children an “ethical” or hospitable relationship with the other.

A little later in the same text, Levinas relates vulnerability to maternity and writes: “Maternity, vulnerability, responsibility, proximity, contact – sensibility can slip toward touching, palpation, openness upon . . . , consciousness of . . . , pure knowing taking images from the ‘intact being’” (76). In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas comments on this sensibility of maternity and vulnerability by noting that it constitutes the very interiority of home itself:

[The home] refers us to its essential interiority, and to the inhabitant that inhabits it before every inhabitant, the welcoming one par excellence, welcome in itself – the feminine being. Need one add that there is no question here of defying ridicule by maintaining the empirical truth or countertruth that every home *in fact* presupposes a woman? The feminine has been encountered in this analysis as one of the cardinal points of the horizon in which the inner life takes place – and the empirical absence of the human being of “feminine sex” in a dwelling nowise affects the dimension of femininity which remains open there, as the very welcome of the dwelling. (157-58)

When we read these two moments from *Otherwise than Being* and *Totality and Infinity* together, a more comprehensive understanding of Levinas’s concept of hospitality emerges. Levinas discusses all three aspects of hospitality that I have been exploring in the dissertation: hospitality as an ethical relationship beyond the guest and host binary; the ethos or space of hospitality beyond conventional structures of welcome including home, community and nation; and tracing of the guest/host-stranger as the subject of hospitality. By relating vulnerability to maternity Levinas interrogates conventional notions of host as the master of the house, and proposes a different relationship of

hospitality in which the host or, to be more precise, the hostess puts herself in danger herself in order to give birth. This anarchic relationship of vulnerability reveals home as the space of hospitality, but the home is not the space dominated by the master of the house; Levinas instead traces in that space a form of welcome coming from the figure of the feminine, whom he calls *the* inhabitant before all inhabitants. Levinas's evocation of the feminine being as the original inhabitant of the home, thus, posits the figure of the hostess as the subject of hospitality. On the one hand, Levinas defines vulnerability as maternity, which is one sensibility, expression or experience of femininity, which he relates to the interiority of the home and its essential welcome. On the other hand, by equating woman to home and to welcome, Levinas reduces femininity to the dwelling or home. Levinas's understanding of hospitality in which gender seems to play a crucial role in fact makes "the empirical" presence of the human being of feminine sex redundant. Like Levinas, Morrison makes the anarchy of Goodness revealed through vulnerability essentially maternal and feminine; but unlike Levinas for whom coming to one's own or being at home with oneself is merely a feminine experience in which the figure of the woman is merely coincidental, Morrison in *Beloved* makes the exploding body of the mother an essential dimension of welcome. Sethe's already split-open or deconstructed and dismantled body, which prefigures the killing of her child, is an irreducible "truth" in which *Beloved* is the best part of herself:

Because the truth was simple, not a long-drawn-out record of flowered shifts, tree cages, selfishness, ankle ropes and wells. Simple: she was squatting in the garden and when she saw them coming and recognize schoolteacher's hat, she heard wings . . . and if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nono. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them. Over there. Outside this place,

where they would be safe. (163)

As in Spivak's concept of planetarity, Levinas's equation of home and hospitality enables us to see the interface of the space and subject of welcome. However, if the figure of the mother is central both in Spivak's planetarity and Morrison's beloved community, in Levinas it is merely accidental. Whereas Levinas identifies the interiority of home with femininity (thereby rendering familiar the space, subject and relationship of hospitality), Morrison makes the exterior of home – the bridge, the clearing, this side and the other side of the world – more important for the arrival of the “monsters” or the guest/host-strangers. Morrison's subject of welcome emerges through a series of explosions of interiority and exposures and openness to the exterior. Sethe is a hostess who makes room for her children by exploding herself, and she is also a guest/ghost who seeks through murder an outside where her children will be safe.

Morrison's explosion of bodies in *Beloved* differs radically from Miller's terrorist explosions. Drawing inspiration from Jacques Derrida's “auto-immunitary logic” according to which an organism or community seeks to boost its immunity contradictorily through an act of self-destruction, Miller contends that Sethe's killing of her daughter follows this auto-immunitary logic in which “she is prepared to sacrifice them [her children] in order to save them” (35). Deploying the Derridian logic of auto-immunity enables Miller not only to locate this self-destructive impulse in Sethe, but it also helps him trace its origin in the slave-holder community. For Miller, Sethe imitates the slave-holders' destruction of slaves, their property, in order to save the structure and institution of slavery. Sethe illustrates the logic of self-similarity in which she repeats with a difference the same principle of auto-immunity that a slave holder upholds by

lynching slaves, or an Islamic terrorist demonstrates by blowing himself up, or Bush and company imitate by engaging in War on Terror. This logic complicates the critical paradigm of resistance which interprets Sethe's act as "resistance to inscription by the powerful that prompts her to act, run away, kill the child and later attack Bodwin – a passionate refusal of the dominant discourse" (Tally 19).¹¹⁴ Like other postmodernist critics such as Raphael Pérez-Torres, who detects in *Beloved* a subtle "interplay between presence and absence, accepting and rejecting, appearing and disappearing" (Perez-Torres 130), Miller also identifies a formalist structure or logic which he calls auto-immunitary or fractal. Yet, by comparing Sethe's passive act (to use Levinas's terms) to terrorism, occupation and empire, Miller fails to properly relate Morrison's text to the present as he overlooks traces of the ethos and the anarchic relationship on which *Beloved's* narrative is built.

While Miller relates *Beloved* to the present by tracing the fractal logic of self-similarity inherent in contemporary acts of terrorism and the war on terror, I would like to recall a moment from bell hooks' *Belonging: A Culture of Place*, which attempts to relate the novel to a different present and to a different world. According to bell hooks, Sethe "conquers the terror through perverse reenactment, through resistance, using violence as

¹¹⁴ The paradigm of resistance is exhaustive in the Morrison scholarship. Inderjit Grewal calls Sethe's infanticide a "monstrous" act "a necessary means of resistance against a patriarchal slave system" (63). Teresa de Lauretis includes Sethe in what she calls the figures of resistance (256). Mae G. Henderson locates Sethe's story in the larger genealogical context of a black mother's sacrifice and resistance. *Beloved*, writes Henderson, "is a story that enables Sethe to reread or reemplot her own experiences in the context of sacrifice, resistance, and mother-love" (96). Similarly, Carl Plasa reads Sethe's action as "one extreme point in a range of possibilities in which mothering or the rejection of it becomes a register of female resistance to the condition of enslavement and the commodification of the female body" (126). Jennifer A. Stollman notes that *Beloved* "investigates the shocking form of resistance effected by female slaves and the psychological and social consequences of those choices" (46). Sethe's 'exercise of power,' writes another, is "a declaration of independence in an unsympathetic community' (Furman 72).

a means of fleeing from a history that is a burden too great to bear” (103). Speaking of the importance of telling “our history” for “political self-recovery,” bell hooks remarks:

During the period of racial apartheid, still known by many folks as Jim Crow, it was more difficult for Black people to internalize this pretense, hard for us not to know that the shapes under white sheets had a mission to threaten, to terrorize. The representation of whiteness, and its association with innocence . . . was a sign; it was meant to torture with the reminder of possible future terror. In Morrison’s *Beloved*, the memory of terror is deeply inscribed on the body of Sethe and in her consciousness, and the association of terror with whiteness is so intense, that she kills her young so that they will never know the terror. (103)

Even though bell hooks interprets Sethe’s infanticide as an act of resistance, unlike Tally and more like Miller, she locates the inscriptions of white terror in Sethe’s body. Both Miller and hooks identify the repeating pattern of this “terror” in American history and relate it to the present – Miller to the manifestation of terror in America’s contemporary war on terror, and hooks to the psychological burden of white terror that African Americans “still” feel now. Comparing herself with Sethe, hooks believes that encountering and re-experiencing the terror of whiteness are necessary in order to “break its hold” and to “decolonize our minds and our imaginations” (105).

In *Beloved*, hooks identifies not the logic of self-similarity with auto-immunitary terrorism, but an attempt to re-experience terror. For hooks, an African American must face terror before she overcomes it. Sethe’s re-experiencing of terror, therefore, leads not to an imperial ontology of Miller’s terrorist or the warrior against terrorism but to a vulnerable subject of hospitality, who by undergoing the experience terror and self-destruction creates a world or “belonging to a place” (as bell hooks would say) for the reception of the stranger. This act of creating a space of hospitality for the reception of a vulnerable subject of welcome is what bell hooks calls decolonizing. Unlike Kathleen

Marks, who reads *Beloved* as an apotropaic novel in which Sethe, like Medusa, uses evil to ward off evil “sabotag[ing] herself by renouncing the daughter that she imagines to be a part of her” (10), hooks’ re-experiencing terror leads to decolonizing minds and imagination. bell hooks borrows a phrase P. Travis Krocke uses to describe how the re-experiencing of terror leads to the creation of a “community of care” in which “our relationships with one another can be ‘governed by conviviality rather than suspicion, by praise rather than blame’” (hooks 228).

Morrison’s *Beloved* is not part of bell hooks’ discussion of the community of care; yet the novel exemplifies hooks’ conviction that an African American’s path to a community of care and to the decolonization of her mind and imagination lies through her encounter with terror. A community shaken by re-experiencing terror is not a community in the sense the term applies to Islamic terrorists or Bush and company’s war on terrorism. If a community of care initiates the process of decolonization, it is not through the fractal logic of self-similarity (as Miller thinks is the case) in which the community of care merely mirrors a totalizing structure of community grounded on empire and occupation.

The notion of decolonization through the conviviality of a community of care differs also from Achille Mbembe’s analysis of terror in the postcolony. In “The Colony: Guilty Secret and Accursed Share,” Mbembe argues that in “African self-writing” the colony is “a place of terror and horror,” which results from the colonial potentates torture of the colonized subject (48). He adds that the horror ensuing from the potentate’s violence gives way to a feeling of “irreparable loss,” which is a feeling experienced by the colonized subject of a *disempowerment of self*,” that is, the loss or accursed share

“which will in future accompany any recollection of this event” (32). For Mbembe the postcolony represents the re-memory or re-experiencing of the graph of the terror inscribed by the potentate. The postcolonial condition for him involves a relation of debt to the colonizer, which takes a twofold form: “a debt of procreation (development; work not done)” and “a debt of hospitality (immigration; relations not undertaken)” (34-35). Mbembe believes that canonical African texts including literature, philosophy, music, art, cinema and political treatises are texts of remembrance in which they revisit the terror and fantasy, wounds and care tendered by the colonial potentate. The necromancy of colonial terror defines postcolonial literature for which the signs of wounds carry the seeds of any future recollection of the time, history and self by the colonized. Mbembe’s postcolony, like hooks’ decolonization, depends on re-experiencing the terror, and like Morrison’s conjuring of the ghost/guest-stranger, calls for “the resurrection of the dead” (Mbembe 49). Yet his “debt of hospitality” fails to recognize the reception of a guest/ghost-stranger and the re-experiencing of terror such a welcome implies in which relations are severed precisely in order to reconnect with the guest/ghost. The difference between Mbembe’s postcolony and Morrison’s and hooks’ decolonization is that whereas for Mbembe the task of a postcolonial text is to re-member the terror of the colony, for Morrison and hooks decolonization implies a different debt of hospitality in which a colonized subject imagines an (im)possible community of care to receive her own as a guest/ghost.

The process of decolonization for an African American begins with conviviality and hospitality. *Beloved* proposes a community of care by keeping the space and the subjects of hospitality open and vulnerable to the arrival of the stranger. The community

of care and by extension decolonization represents an impossibility of constructing a community in a hegemonic or totalitarian sense. By evoking an anxious and precarious community of care, Morrison makes welcome of the guest/ghost-stranger inextricable from decolonization. *Beloved* illustrates what I have called in the dissertation the cultivation of hospitality as decolonization.

Epilogue

Suppose you stood facing
a wall
of photographs
from your un-lived life

as you stand looking at these
stills from the unseen film?

- Adrienne Rich, "Pierrot Le Fou"

A dissertation examining the concept of hospitality in terms of incompleteness, haunting and return naturally resists the closure of a conclusion. In lieu of a conclusion and in the spirit of Adrienne Rich's "Pierrot Le Fou," I revisit in this epilogue concepts and figures explored throughout the entire dissertation.¹¹⁵ The act of "revisiting" captures the drift of my study not only because it revisits some of the frequently discussed works of American literature but also because I trace the re-visitation of the guest/host-stranger, a specter-like figure invisible to the mythical and empire studies paradigms of interpretation in American literary and cultural studies. In the poem "Pierrot Le Fou," Rich revisits Jean-Luc Goddard's film of the same title, and suggests that revisiting the film leads to retelling the story, which in turn leads to reliving the life left un-lived and scenes not shown in Goddard's film. Revisiting the well-known and at times over-discussed works enables us to see the unseen stills of sites, scenes and figures of hospitality in American literature and culture.

¹¹⁵ In evoking revisiting, I also have Adrienne Rich's *When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision* in mind where Rich explains the importance of revision by describing the process in terms of the awakening of the dead. She notes that revision is an "act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (18).

It is laudable to explore and examine works which have received relatively less critical attention or have been entirely ignored by critics. At the same time, it is desirable to revisit the well-known works in order to identify in them questions, issues and themes hitherto left un-explored by their readers. Such a revisionist reading assumes that when interpreting a work we encounter not an autonomous author but his or her spectral shadows, not one indivisible text but a multiplicity of them. Locating this split both in the authors and their works turns the process of revision into “haunting” or “ghostly re-possession,” for it enables the readers to see the spectral return of the figures invisible to the dominant paradigms of interpretation. The analytical category of hospitality belongs to this paradigm which allows us to practice this revisionist reading.

From the colonial era to the present, American literature and culture have implied synonymy between America and hospitality.¹¹⁶ My dissertation explicitly articulates and critically examines this metaphoric representation of America as an all-welcoming host. While the myth-symbol school of American studies or early American studies depicts America as a nation extending an expansive welcome, the democratic or anti-imperial paradigm of interpretation conceives of America as a cosmopolitan space reflecting the confluence of critical synergies emanating from discourses of anti-colonialism, globalization and multiculturalism. Both of these critical paradigms present hospitality in relation to the identifiable and indivisible sites and subjects of welcome represented by figures of citizens and foreigners, hosts and guests. In this dissertation, I have traced a

¹¹⁶ While John Winthrop’s notion of the “City upon a Hill” represents the classic example of America as a refuge for the world, which, to cite Winthrop draws the “eyes of all people” of the world (10), its modern incarnation can be found in Barack Obama, whose presidency have been interpreted as a promise “to enhance America’s reputation as a land of opportunity, a nation of inclusion, and a country of hope” (Kennedy-Shaffer 126). Philip S. Gorki even traces the development of the tradition of civic republicanism from Winthrop through Lincoln, Dewey and King to Obama (179).

radically different figure of hospitality which I have called the guest/host-stranger, a figure which resists the totalizing narratives of the nation, national subjects and even the foreigner.

My dissertation has proposed a shift from the analysis of hospitality in terms of the binary of guest and host – in which the stranger is always the guest, and the host (more often than not the male master of the house) controls the ritual of reception – to a more complex and ambivalent understanding of the relationship between guest and host, and domestic (national) and foreign. I have contended that we must take a step back from the conventional agents of welcome to examine hospitality's violent foundation. I have argued that the tracing of the figure of the stranger allows us to make this critical intervention, for this figure interfaces two forms of estrangement – on the one hand, the violent and hegemonic relationships initiated by colonialism, empire and slavery; and on the other, the invocation of the guest/host-stranger. This figure, associated with the stranger yet distinct from him or her, not only exposes the violent national and imperial foundation but also rectifies, repairs and restores the scenes, sites and subjects of hospitality, thereby initiating the process of decolonization.

A visual example of the figure of the stranger who at once exposes violence and calls upon another figure – the guest/host-stranger – is Peter Hedges' *Pieces of April* (2003). In the film, April Burns – whose “pieces” the film seeks to re-collect – is an estranged daughter who invites her family to a Thanksgiving dinner. April is entirely ill-equipped for such an undertaking, for she is ignorant of the art of cooking. Living in a rundown tenement house with a dysfunctional kitchen on the east side of Manhattan, she is more like a guest or “hostage” at the mercy of her eccentric neighbors than the host

capable of organizing a Thanksgiving dinner. It is also not evident why she wants to thank anyone in her family, for they hardly consider her a member. Accused of being the cause of her mother's cancer, April's presence in her family is merely phantom-like, for she is considered dead by her grandmother and siblings, who cannot even recall a single pleasant memory from her childhood.

Aware of her strained relationship with her family, and probably also aware that she had no reason to feel grateful to any of them, April recalls the historical context of Thanksgiving, as if to suggest that only this original context can justify the extent of the trouble she has taken to prepare the feast. While explaining "Thanksgiving" to her Chinese-speaking neighbors, this figure of the stranger tries several versions including the arrival of the Pilgrims and their stealing of the land from the Indians. Implicating herself in the history of the theft of the land and genocide, April suggests that a Thanksgiving dinner is impossible to prepare without referring to the history of Native American dispossession, even though such a narrative would remain fragmented and incomplete. By narrating the context of Thanksgiving in "pieces," April Burns not only exposes the violence, she also invokes Native Americans without whom there cannot be any thanksgiving or hospitality. April's tenement house is home to people of multiple nationalities and ethnicities; the only "nationality" absent from the house is Native Americans. April's invocation of Indians at once makes the absence conspicuous and fills it with both her narratives and her makeshift dinner. April's feast serves as the occasion to recall Native Americans as figures of the guest/host-stranger, who bestow meaning upon Thanksgiving and upon April's own improbable hosting.

The mythical discourse of hospitality deploys the rigid binary of the guest and host without attending to the singularity or eccentricity of all sites and subjects of hospitality. My dissertation, “Welcoming Strangers,” shifts focus to the singular but estranged subjects and sites of hospitality in American culture and literature. It not only engages with the violent foundation of hospitality in America, but also examines how the estranged subjects expose that violence and act as mediums for the arrival or reception of the guest/host-strangers. This threefold mesh of “welcoming strangers” is the matrix of hospitality in American culture and literature.

Tracing the figure of the guest/host-stranger complicates the guest-host binary which seeks to consolidate America as the universal host extending welcome to abstract strangers. My dissertation critiques the estrangement initiated by colonialism and empire, but it moves from the estranged subjects of empire, colonialism and slavery such as Native Americans, African Americans and immigrants to tracing the tentative figure of the guest/host-stranger. This figure seeks to undo both the rigid binary of the guest-host and the violence it implies in order to initiate the process of decolonization by which I mean not only undoing colonialism but also rethinking new relationships to home, land, nation and self, and to one another. This new relationship emerges only when we look at hospitality through the lens of the tentative figure of the guest/host-stranger, which is a divided, ambivalent and uncanny figure as opposed to the sovereign and autonomous subject of the host.

While the hosts such as Thoreau, and visitors such as the Peace Corps volunteers or myself belong to the guest-host binary, the processes, places and relationships of learning and exchange of ideas that these strangers bring into existence provide the

occasion for the divided figure of the guest/host-stranger to emerge from the grand narratives depicting the Peace Corps as an extension of the frontier. The preface traces the figures of the guest/host-stranger in the form of Thoreau's railway workers; Walden, the Native American; Thoreau's students in his uncommon lyceum, and the Peace Corps volunteer Wylie's subaltern students in Nepal. These figures are guests as well as hosts, for, on the one hand, they must be welcomed by Thoreau or the volunteers, on the other, these figures are also hosts as only they make all acts of hospitality meaningful. Hospitality remains impossible without first welcoming these figures.

In the first chapter of the dissertation, I have traced the figure of the stranger in Whitman's poetry in which I find a clear deployment of the guest-host binary. Whitman discusses hospitality in relation to the abstract figure of the host (represented by the lyric I) welcoming the thick-lipped slave, receiving the copious humanity immigrating to America, identifying with the red savage, and marching towards the new frontier of the Pacific. Whitman's comprehensive engagement with these sites provides a framework in which I detect four major historical sites of hospitality or abuse of hospitality in American culture: expansion of the frontier through westering and Whitman's identification with the "free flowing savage;" the Pacific as an extension of the frontier; immigrants as guests to be received by America, the cosmopolitan host; and "slavery" represented by Whitman's reception of a runaway fugitive. In the manner of April Burns' fragmented history of Thanksgiving, my dissertation narrates in piecemeal the history of American literature and culture through the lens of hospitality beginning with James Fenimore Cooper's Seven Year's War in *The Last of the Mohicans* down to Morrison's *Beloved*, which J. Hillis Miller interprets as a pre-figuration of the war on terror. Unlike

the narratives in early American studies depicting American history as a movement towards the Promised Land, and unlike accounts (mostly propagated by the New American studies) of America as an uninterrupted march towards empire, my dissertation explores the *traces* (not the presences) of the guest/host-strangers. The totalizing and transcendentalist narratives of the Promised Land and the immanentist discourses of empire (as they appear, for instance, in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's works) downplay the multiplicity and unevenness of the sites of hospitality of the guest/host-strangers. These grand narratives ignore the disjunctive landscape of the sites and the split nature of the subjects of hospitality involved not only in "contact"¹¹⁷ but also in pursuing, courting, addressing, opening and being exposed to the figure of the guest/host-stranger.

"Welcoming Strangers," therefore, moves from Whitman's poetics of hospitality as containment towards Sigourney's self-lacerating hermeneutics, Cooper's "tearing" of selves in order to produce the affects of welcome and the unsettling and uncanny exposure of Melville's cannibal hospitality. Silko's welcoming healers, Holt's revenants welcoming Hawaii's history and genealogy, Cather's "un-furnished" hospitality, and the spectral welcome in Morrison's *Beloved* further intensify the ambivalent hospitality of the guest/host-stranger, who at once exposes the estrangement of colonialism, slavery and imperialism, and ushers in the promise of decolonization. In taking the risk to reassess these diverse texts, this project shows how it is desirable to shift focus in American literary and cultural studies from the critique of national subjectivity and empire to one at

¹¹⁷ I use "contact" in order to imply the following three senses invoked by historians and critics: i) clash of civilization and wilderness, and regeneration through violence as formulated by Frederick Jackson Turner and Richard Slotkin; ii) encounter as "marvelous possession" as theorized by Stephen Greenblatt, who detects in the encounter between Europeans and the New World 'imaginative operations' geared toward possessions (23-24); iii) contact zone as theorized by Mary Louise Pratt.

whose center stand the welcoming strangers and possibilities of national identity beyond the simple binaries of margin-center, host-guest or colonizer-colonized.

Like democracy, freedom and liberty, hospitality is a crucial aspect in American history and culture. Besides articulating an important but hitherto overlooked issue in American literature and culture, my dissertation underscores the significance of engaging with the multiple yet singular sites and subjects of hospitality. The analytical category of hospitality provides a critique of the grand narratives of the nation, empire, globalization and cosmopolitanism; it also provides an alternative discourse which enables us to think about subjectivity and belonging beyond the apparently autonomous ethnic studies paradigms in American cultural studies. On the one hand, “Welcoming Strangers” has tried to practice a sort of comparative ethnic literary studies by engaging with immigrant stories and neo-slave narratives. On the other hand, it foregrounds the issue of place, home, land and indigeneity by examining Native American literature and Hawaiian literature. The figure of the guest/host-stranger I trace across genres and ethnic and indigenous literatures complicates the ethnic studies practices of putting the ethnic subject at the center of the discourse.¹¹⁸ Once we complicate and displace the dyadic structure of hospitality implied by the guest-host binary, the space such a deconstruction creates opens the possibility of practicing comparative ethnic literary studies in a reinvented form. The dyadic hospitality of both the early American and the New American literary studies is grounded on the autonomous figure of the host, who, as the sovereign master of the house or nation, extends or denies hospitality to ethnic strangers. Once this dyad is destabilized and its inherent violence exposed the space it opens does

¹¹⁸ An example of the ethnic studies practice of foregrounding the ethnic subject is Mary Helen Washington’s proposal to put African American studies at the center of American studies (1).

not only teem with the multiple sites of hospitality but also with multiple ethnicities and nations with all their singularity, unevenness and disjunctions. The tentative and unfinished nature of the guest/host-stranger implies this polypohonic or polymorphic subjectivity which can only be approached through a comparative ethnic/nation studies lens.

Hospitality as a theoretical lens which traces welcoming strangers in the triangular form I mentioned above helps us move from the myth-symbol discourse of hospitality in early American studies and from the critique of the violent foundation of hospitality in the New American studies toward imagining the work of decolonization. This triangular formulation of welcoming strangers transforms theories of hospitality by unsettling their roots in Greco-Roman myths and in the legal paradigms of the Enlightenment. My dissertation shifts the discursive location of hospitality from its “originary” domain in the European legal theories, debates of immigration, cosmopolitanism and human rights to the analysis of American literature and culture. Tracing the uncanny and elusive figure of the guest/host-stranger to emphasize the moment of epiphany and estrangement foregrounds the role literature plays in reframing hospitality.

“Welcoming Strangers” has its share of delimitations. First of these delimitations is that in spite of its aspiration to provide a comprehensive discussion of hospitality in American literature and culture, the dissertation overlooks several prominent sites or discourses of hospitality. These discourses include narratives of Thanksgiving, southern hospitality, the fireside poets, literary works examining the movements of refugees or asylum seekers and the legal questions raised by such movements. The dissertation also

suffers from oversight regarding another important site of hospitality very poignantly depicted in the borderland literature. The volunteers called “Border Angels,” who put food and water bottles along the U. S. Mexico border for the travelers crossing the border exemplify what the dissertation calls “welcoming strangers.”¹¹⁹ These are directions for future inquiry and expansion of the scope of this project and for future work in this field.

In the Preface, Introduction and the opening chapter, I mentioned Thoreau, George Washington and Whitman’s invocation of the “scriptures” of hospitality. For Thoreau, the Vishnu Purana represents the Ur-text, whereas for Washington and Whitman, the Declaration of Independence constitutes the scripture of hospitality. Unlike this mytho-political discourse of hospitality with fixed texts, authors and injunctions, the hospitality of the guest/host-stranger derives from a multiplicity of texts with contradictory and ambivalent voices and injunctions. It traces the divided, tentative and unfinished subjects of this hospitality who cannot even say “I” or “I welcome” but nevertheless provide the unstable, unfurnished, incomplete “ground” for hospitality.

¹¹⁹ I am grateful to Wendy Brown for introducing me to the activities of this group of people involved in rescuing hundreds of travelers crossing borders in the Imperial Valley desert and other areas along the US Mexico border.

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