

Epistemic Encounters: Indigenous Cosmopolitan Hospitality, Marxist Anthropology, Deconstruction, and Doris Pilkington's *Rabbit-Proof Fence*

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In the first place, as soon as the visitor has arrived in the house of the *moussacat* whom he has chosen for his host (the *moussacat* being the head of the household, who offers food to people passing through the village ...), he is seated on a cotton bed suspended in the air, and remains there for a short while not 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.

*Jean de Léry's History of a Voyage
to the Land of Brazil, Otherwise
Called America*

IN HIS 1997 SESSIONS ON HOSPITALITY, Jacques Derrida cites de Léry's description, above, of the Tupinamba welcoming ceremony as an example of "radical hospitality," which he characterizes by the reception of the uninvited guest, the stranger, into one's home. In the context of European statecraft, such hospitality is radical because it exceeds the normative restrictions and regulations that circumscribe the movement of so-called foreign bodies across national lines. Derrida's notion of a radical hospitality lies at the heart of a welcoming cosmopolitanism and

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the fulfilment of the desire for an unfettered movement of bodies across European national boundaries. That Derrida would radicalize hospitality by way of referencing a Tupinamba welcoming ceremony points to the many ways *aboriginality* constitutes an origin story in the European text of civility and civilization. While the Tupinamba laws of hospitality lie at the *root* of Derrida's conception of a *radicalized* European hospitality, for indigenous peoples in North and South America the colonizing effects of European imperialism in the postcolonial nation have hardly been reconciled, let alone acknowledged. Thus, the question emerges: How to *decolonize* this European notion of cosmopolitan hospitality? On the one hand, it would seem necessary to open the text of a European critical account of cosmopolitan hospitality to its own imperial history and the consequences of that history for the contemporary global tensions being fought across, within, and beyond its state lines that impact on any given nation's laws of hospitality.

While this question places the emphasis on the problem of the economic and political conditions that determine the global system in which the postcolonial nation is required to operate or survive, such an approach, while recognizably critical and committed to the political ideals of transnational social justice, nevertheless can only register the resistant pressures and agency of the postcolonial world within such conditions. However, a more radical position exists, I would argue, in re-positioning the epistemological conditions of postcoloniality by taking into account indigenous epistemologies rather than focusing only on the exploitative and appropriative conditions and disavowals that attempted to marginalize and silence such epistemologies over a large period of time, no less than in the twentieth century where in Canada, for instance, the federal government legislated policies to assimilate indigenous peoples, notably the Indian residential school system, which was targeted toward the destruction of indigenous cultural and pedagogical practices. In an effort to construct a genealogical assemblage¹ of texts from the multi-faceted postcolonial archive, this paper articulates, as in hinges together, a set of materials

1 A knowledge assemblage involves hunting down, gathering, and redistributing blocks of knowledge. Knowledge assemblages facilitate processes of distribution that enable the transfer of necessary information. More than this, however, they bring lines of contact of human exchange into existence. New communications technologies such as the Internet greatly enhance the possibilities of knowledge assemblages, but they might also fracture networks of distribution and maintain firewalls of inaccessibility. The methods of knowledge assemblage benefit from the creation of ethical protocols and, also, from an understanding of the limited resources of both animate and inanimate matter.

which include Derrida on hospitality as deconstruction, Marx and Engels on communism, Henry Lewis Morgan on the Iroquois laws of hospitality, and Doris Pilkington's memoir, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. The following section explicates the problem of origin stories in the figure of aboriginality. The subsequent section draws out the linkages between Derrida's notion of cosmopolitanism and Marx and Engels's use of Morgan's study of the Iroquoian laws of hospitality in their formation of communism. The final section focuses on the significance of Pilkington's text to an indigenous ethics of hospitality, homelessness, and homecoming.

Origin Stories and Other (in)Hospitable Acts of Writings

There is nothing new in the use of *aboriginality* (*ab-origine*) to signify the so-called primitive or savage stage of human development from which European civilization apparently emerged and upon which it improved. In Rousseau's enlightened *Discourse on the Inequality Among Men*, for example, Primitive Man figured positively as a model of simplicity and manly strength in opposition to the material and effeminate commodity excesses of the aristocracy, what he derisively challenged as their unmanly love of fashion (Emberley, "Economies of Dissimulation" 2005). The post-modernizing of aboriginality for the purpose of advancing a politically progressive model for social change finds its contemporary niche in Derrida's use of the Tupinamba welcoming ceremony to build a so-called radical form of European cosmopolitan hospitality.

The postmodern value of aboriginality for displaying international hospitable relations was in evidence in a Sheraton Hotel television advertisement that appeared in July of 2006, during the annual Wimbledon tennis competition. This television commercial showed, among other images, a scene with two indigenous men greeting each other by clasping one another's upper arms and simultaneously touching their foreheads. The

What is knowledge but a mobile network of interconnections that have no originary context and no beginnings or endings? Building an assemblage of knowledge opens up multiple points of access and departure. Always open to reconfiguration, knowledge assemblage spurs on new ways of thinking with new, however provisional, results and new conclusions. If an historical process of scientific knowledge operated through paradigmatic shifts in meaning from one institutionalized and totalizing form to another, in the worldings of knowledge assemblage there is no paradigmatic shifting between systems of meaning but an accumulation of new parts and fissures that fall away and reconstitute meanings along several axes and dimensions of contact. Systems of meaning no longer own or control the proliferation of signs, for it is movement and not stasis that conditions the material force of knowledge.

advertisement, I subsequently discovered, was accessible on the Sheraton Hotel website and was titled “Belong.”

The advertisement begins with the voices of children singing “We belong.” After three repeats, women’s voices come in singing “Whatever we deny or erase, / for worse or for better, / we belong, belong together,” followed by a male voiceover saying “The greetings are different. / The need to feel welcome is the same. / You don’t just stay here. / You belong.” Eighteen images make up the thirty-second advertisement, all of which are carefully crafted to depict a multinational range of welcomes and acts of hospitality, both intimate and formal.² In the final image, a white woman in her pajamas jumps onto a hotel bed beside a white man. The man and woman can be seen, somewhat obliquely, behind the Sheraton symbol, cuddling, tossing and turning over each other as a prelude to something else.

There is nothing surprising about the hospitality industry globalizing the consumption of hotel accommodations and hospitality for tourists, government agents, and businessmen. What did strike me about the advertisement, however, was how its semiotic coverage dovetailed with recent philosophical discourses on hospitality and the ethical purchase acquired by ethnographic and anthropological discourses when they remain open and “hospitable” to accommodating the other. The welcoming apparatuses deployed incorporated a multiplicity of rhetorics, myths, and semiotics of identity and belonging acceded to by recent ideological ventures into multiculturalism and globalization. For example, the expression “global neighborhood” dominates the Sheraton website, conflating Marshall

2 There are eighteen “scenes” in the advertisement. I do not have the space here to describe all of them in order, but I will mention a few. In the first scene, a man and a woman embrace and kiss. The scene has an intertextual reference to the famous scene taken in France of a young couple kissing, sometime during the years of World War II. The place is Europe, and the scene an intimate display of the welcoming apparatus. The next one shows three Buddhists bowing to each other with hands clasped in a dark stone place much like the inside of a monastery. The welcome is formal and comes as close to a sacred welcoming ritual as the welcoming apparatus will allow without fully crossing over its secular boundary. In the third, two white farmers shake hands and then embrace each other with fraternal affection. Further scenes contain a child in an urban setting, a school scene, young white male surfers, white businessmen, a white bride embracing her white friend at her wedding reception, working-class men enjoying a drink together in a pub, Japanese businessmen bowing to an elderly white man in a dark suit, a blond-haired father embracing his two blond-haired daughters in a typical airport scene and a plethora of blond hair is presented, and, finally, a white woman in her pajamas jumping on a hotel bed beside a white man.

McLuhan's well-known communications trope, the Global Village, with the rhetoric of the "local." This desire to belong to a global neighbourhood seems to be a productive consequence—productive for and by the military-industrial complex—of the anxieties generated by violent dispossession "elsewhere" and a hoped for promise to preserve the economic powers and privileges of a G-nation, predominantly although not exclusively, white and male middle-class to consume, travel, purchase, and enjoy the good life, globally. Such a reading of this advertisement shores up its ideological limits; there is, however, something else that washes over me in this semiotic wave of images as I begin to read this advertisement somewhat differently: as an allegory of a refined conceptual assimilation of aboriginality into a heterosexual commodification of sexual difference.

In this allegorical framework, the advertisement also comes up against a limit of what is representable, a limit that marks the boundary between the obvious, the taken-for-granted, and, even, the critically or reasonably permissible, and, yet, something unthinkable, absurd, descends into consciousness. For it is precisely the absurd, in a moment of excess beyond all reason, and to some a certain madness, which is evoked by the mere depiction of a desirable white female body frolicking on the king-size hotel bed. This body is not absurd in and of itself; it is, after all, the commonsensical figure of a female body inscribed by the narratives of sexual desire, heterosexual reproductivity, and the need to belong to the civilized family. The song sung by children and women, followed by a single male voiceover, and coupled with a final primal scene of belonging, sets in motion a series of longings for pleasure and the value of who or what belongs or is entitled to such pleasure. Although it is the narrative of desire at work (or should I say "play") behind the Sheraton logo, I cannot get it out of my head that this white woman has come to this white male body as a female body constituted solely by its *reproductive potential*. By harnessing this potential, the white man, presumably a businessman, lays the groundwork for securing the world's natural resources and, thus, business (and tourism) as usual. The words to the song, "Whatever we deny or erase, / for worse or for better, / we belong, we belong together" reverses the terms of the marital contract "for better or worse" and grants the right to deny or erase whatever—in lives, histories, relationships?—that is necessary for this "we," the predominantly white middle-class, to belong together. The image of the two aboriginal men greeting each other, is, on the one hand, a reminder of a Neolithic dream and, on the other hand, a remainder from the beginning, *ab origine*, of a late-capitalist globalized civilization: primitive men, whose incorporation into the brotherhood of

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égalité, fraternité, et liberté provide a modern foundation for an enlightened homosocial contract between men to which even the Noble Savage (*qua* Dryden and Rousseau) can aspire.

Absurd, you will say! All this simply from the depiction of a woman seeking the pleasure of a man in a hotel advertisement. And yet, I intend to cross the abyss of the unthinkable, to attend to the worlding of representation and to challenge, critically, the hetero-reproductive hypothesis (that is, the notion that the value of the female body resides in a naturalized depiction of its reproductive potential coded through the commodification of desire in such forms as national and postnational longing and belonging). Against all fundamentalist odds and in contradistinction to the appropriation of family values by a conservative right-wing agenda, I would, nevertheless, suggest that a spirit of change lies not with the fraternal bonding over an absolute hospitableness of the female body but with the “ends” of Woman—the constitution of a reparative body capable of assembling humanity by an embrace with an historical and contemporary otherness-within. With this in mind, I return to the Tupinamba welcoming apparatus as Derrida’s cosmopolitanism-within.

As an exemplary instance of hospitable relations, the Tupinamba laws of hospitality stand at the *root* of contemporary European nation-states. Thus, in the account cited by Derrida, the weeping women are the original ambassadors in an already overextended myth of aboriginality that serves as the origin story to European development, its civil society and state formations. Regardless of whether or not he intended to radicalize the Tupinamba welcoming ceremony in this way, Derrida nevertheless opens up the discussion of hospitality to aboriginality and sexual difference, especially, I argue, to the question of the in/hospitable reception of indigenous women in the home, the nation, and the world.

In this assemblage I situate hospitality in the context of the historically contingent forces of European imperialism, postcolonization, and indigenous laws of hospitality. In reference to these forces I discuss Doris Pilkington’s story, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, a tale about colonization and resistance by Aboriginal people in Australia that focuses on the traumatic effects of colonial violence to indigenous mother/child relations. Pilkington (whose traditional name is Nugi and kinship name is Garimara) begins her story with reference to nineteenth-century colonial history in order to stress the intertwined realities of territorial dispossession and sexualized violence toward Nyungar women. What defeats the Nyungar people, she writes, is their hospitality. Initially, the “friendly, hospitable [Nyungar] people” extended hospitality toward white men, including

“pirates, desperados and escaped convicts” and the crews of “American whaling ships,” who betrayed them and kidnapped the Nyungar women (*Rabbit-Proof Fence* 4–5). The women were raped, “brutalized and later murdered” (*Rabbit-Proof Fence* 5). The theme of the stolen women will reappear later in Pilkington’s narrative, when she tells the story of three “half-caste” young girls, one of whom was her mother, who were taken from their mother’s camp in the 1930s under the rule of law to a boarding school hundreds of miles away from their indigenous territory.

Pilkington’s story also includes references to weeping ceremonies of welcome and of mourning. With reference to the latter, she writes that after the first two children were forcibly taken:

The two frightened and miserable girls began to cry, silently at first, then uncontrollably; their grief made worse by the lamentations of their loved ones and the visions of them sitting on the ground in their camp letting their tears mix with the red blood that flowed from the cuts on their heads. This reaction to their children’s abduction showed that the family was now in mourning. They were grieving for their abducted children and their relief would come only when the tears ceased to fall, and that will be a long time yet. (*Rabbit-Proof Fence* 45)

I will return to develop the significance of weeping ceremonies in Pilkington’s text, but first I want to account for some intellectual histories on hospitality. My intent here is to complicate Derrida’s notion of hospitality with reference to Henry Lewis Morgan’s ethnographic writings on the laws of hospitality among the Iroquois confederacy in nineteenth-century America.

Lewis Henry Morgan’s *Ancient Society* was a foundational document in the theory of communism taken up by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the latter half of Europe’s nineteenth century (see Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, and Engels, *The Origin of the Family*). Morgan’s work, however, focused on what he called “the communistic household.” Another set of assumptions underlying those who wait for the foreigner to arrive is laid out in his meticulous analysis of the laws of hospitality governing the social formation of this communistic household among North American Indians in *Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines*, published originally in the year of his death, 1881.

Morgan argued that the explanation for the communistic household “must be sought in the ownership of lands in common, the distribution of their products to households consisting of a number of families, and the practice of communism in living in the household” (61). The principle of

the “communistic household” was formulated by Morgan on the basis of his fieldwork on the laws of hospitality among the Iroquois and through numerous references and citations of European explorers and their observations of indigenous societies ranging from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. The communistic household was part of a grand narrative of the origins of civilization which Morgan situated in an “ethnic” (that is, racial) connection to the lower order of “barbarism.”

Morgan’s developmental theory of civilization included three determining moments: savagery, barbarism, and civilization. The developmental model of progress remained arrested for the Indian tribes at the stage of barbarism, interrupted, he stated, by the seemingly inevitable “appearance” of Europeans. Further to how the principle of communism was reflected by the three stages of social progress from “the family” to “the state,” from barbarism to civil society, Morgan writes:

Among all these forms, as stated by different observers, the substance of the Iroquois law of hospitality is plainly found namely: If a man entered an Indian house, whether a villager, a tribesman, or a stranger, and at whatever hour of the day, it was the duty of the women of the house to set food before him. An omission to do this would have been a discourtesy amounting to an affront. If hungry, he ate, if not hungry, courtesy required that he should taste the food and thank the giver. It is seen to have been a usage running through three ethnic conditions of the Indian race, becoming stronger as the means of subsistence increased in variety and amount, and attaining its highest development among the Village Indians in the Middle Status of barbarism. It was an active, well-established custom of Indian society, practiced among themselves and among strangers from other tribes, and very naturally extended to Europeans when they made their first appearance among them. Considering the number of Spaniards often in military companies, and another fact which the aborigines were quick to notice, namely, that a white man consumed and wasted five times as much as an Indian required, their hospitality in many cases must have been grievously overtaxed.[...] The common and substantially universal practice of this custom [of hospitality] among the American Indian Tribes, at the period of their discovery, among whom the procurement of subsistence was their vital need, need be regarded as evidence of a generous disposition, and as exhibiting a trait of character highly creditable to the race. (61–62).

The conflation of the principle of communism with racial characteristics allowed Morgan to grant the existence of another mode of sociality and, yet, refuse to acknowledge its political significance. Additionally, framing of the laws of hospitality in terms of its domestic space and philanthropic agency places household communism in a moral context and not a political one (Morgan 51). Thus, it is a liberal ideal of benevolence in hospitality that is upheld by Morgan where domestic communism is represented as a primitivist formation, located merely in the household sphere. While indicative of a “generous disposition,” it nevertheless lacks a sophisticated or modern political context. For Marx and Engels then, the challenge was to bring this primitive and domestic communism into the advanced politics of European nations, which they did through the figure of the male, working-class labourer and a critique of the commodity form—and not the gendered construction of sexual difference, the creation of commodity desire through that difference, and its founding relationship to a sexual division of labour—and, in so doing, eschewed domestic labour as the determining feature of the communistic household and communism in general (further to this point, see Emberley, “Economies of Dissimulation”). Marx and Engels’s theory of communism deterritorialized the Iroquois laws of hospitality, along with its maternal-based genealogical political formation, and reterritorialized it within its contemporary patriarchal division of public and domestic spheres. One could well ask, how could communism ever materialize, historically, when the basis of its affiliative laws of hospitality and principle of household communism had been so radically exorcised from its so-called modern (read patriarchal) conception?

Morgan’s own representation of gender in hospitality, of course, made such an elision possible. While he acknowledged the supervisory role of indigenous women in the home (“Every household was organized under a matron who supervised its domestic economy [...] It shows that their domestic economy was not without method, and it displays the care and management of women, low down in barbarism, for husbanding their resources and for improving their condition” [64]), he nevertheless resorted to the infamous association of female indigenous labour with drudgery and oppression: “But this influence of the woman seems to have commenced and ended with the household. This view is quite consistent with the life of patient drudgery and of general subordination to the husband which the Iroquois wife cheerfully accepted as the portion of her sex”

(122).³ At this point, Morgan was addressing the question of female and male lines of descent and the laws of inheritance. He invokes J.J. Bachofen's theory of gynocracy and mother-right in this context to underscore the point that kinship and domestic modes of production fall at the lower end of social, political, and cultural development and that the apex of civilization, represented implicitly by nineteenth-century European and Euro-American society, is, in its fullest formation, not only capitalist but also patriarchal with patrilineal lines of descent and inheritance dominating (see Bachofen).⁴ The nineteenth-century division of public and private or domestic spheres in bourgeois capitalist society is thus *naturalized* as a reflection of the place of domesticity at the lower end of social organization, fundamentally stateless and therefore lacking in politicality—the rightful place for women, children, and aboriginals.

The nineteenth-century rhetorics of racial and sexual difference served in Morgan's discursive context to de-politicize hospitality, to render it an inferior, primitivist, domestic, or naïve formation and not fully political as a recognizable mode of distributive power and justice. Morgan's work on the communistic household situated communism in relation to the domestic sphere but in so doing also denied the communistic household legitimate power as a genealogical or kinship body of political and economic organization.⁵ It is a problem to which Marx and Engels also

3 Further to the making of the figure of indigenous female labour as drudgery, see Emberley, "Economies of Dissimulation."

4 As Morgan elaborates:

Here was communism in living carried out in practical life, but limited to the household itself. Having found it in one stock as well developed as the Iroquois, a presumption of its universality in the Indian family at once arises, because it was a law of their condition.[...] In these households, formed on the principle of kin, was laid the foundation for that "mother power" which was even more conspicuous in the tribes of the Old World, and which Professor Bachofen was the first to discuss under the name of gynocracy and mother-right. Since the mothers who dwelt together were usually sisters, own or collateral, and of the same gens, and since their children were also of the gens of their mother, the preponderating number in the household would be of gentile kin. The rights and the influence of the mother were protected and strengthened through the maternal as well as the gentile bond. The husbands were in the minority as to kindred. In case of separation it was the husband and not the wife who left the house. (121–22)

5 More along the lines of an oecumy (that is, an economic mode of existence centred on the domestic sphere or familial politics), Morgan's "communistic

subscribed, due to their failure to take into account the divided rule of the public and domestic spheres under bourgeois governance—something they viewed as merely an ideological problem and not, as it was, a key strategy in maintaining *fraternal* or homosocial bonds of political power, among, say, European working-class men.

This investigation of hospitality and the domestic archive in Morgan is in no way intended to demonstrate the possibility of any influence on Derrida or Morgan's work; rather, bringing Morgan and Derrida into conversation is, I think, somewhat significant, even provocative, in terms of thinking about what constitutes the materialities, knowledges, and ethics of hospitality today, especially in non-European territories. My point being that Morgan's theory of the communistic household destabilizes the European formulation of a cosmopolitan ethics of hospitality.

We can now perhaps begin to locate Derrida's notion of hospitality in the imperial palimpsest of territorial and epistemic dispossession. As I have noted, the notion of hospitality is complicated by Morgan's work and its appropriation by Marx and Engels. Despite its deterritorializations and reterritorializations, however, despite Marx and Engels's appropriation of a domestic and household-based conception of communism for a supposedly European invention of communism as a politics of subsistence and the equitable distribution of food and goods, despite their failure to acknowledge the role of matriarchal kinship relations of distributive power as the basis of such a *political economy*, it was nevertheless a domestic or genealogical mode of kinship affiliation that lay at the heart of the critique of transnational capitalism and the possibility of a different mode of social, political, and economic formation that was non-exploitative but distributive and relational in its model of "political power."

The Spectre of Communism is Haunting Derrida

Hospitality, writes Derrida, is a name or an example of deconstruction: "Of the deconstruction of the concept, of the concept of concept, as well

household" differed in significant ways from Marx and Engels's theory of communism. Of particular note is how Marx shifted the critique of capitalism and his theory of communism from its domestic location to the public sphere and predominantly male sites of labour, entirely in keeping, of course, with the emergence of bourgeois politics and its division of public and private spheres in the nineteenth century. Engels, on the other hand, both in *The Origin of the Family, the State, and Private Property* and, I would suggest, in the *Communist Manifesto*, insisted upon the "reproduction of human life" and "the family" as key aspects along with the production of human subsistence via labour.

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as of its construction, its home, its 'at-home' [*son chez-soi*]. Hospitality is the deconstruction of the at-home; deconstruction is hospitality to the other, to the other than oneself, the other than 'its other,' to an other who is beyond any 'its other'" ("Hospitality" 364). To deconstruct, then, is to be hospitable to the other, to accept an invitation to come home, to accept oneself, to be at home with one's self, and to let the other in, to inhabit the other, in a never-ending set of possible invitations. Derrida's various inscriptions of hospitality put into motion the conditional and unconditional terms of the invitation; what transpires, for example, when you invite someone into your home or someone invites herself or himself into your home. Hospitality belongs to a variety of conceptual fields, of course, that stretch beyond the habitations of everyday life to the politics and policies of state immigration practices and military occupations. Without explicitly drawing the historical or geopolitical limits of his discussion of an ethics of hospitality, Derrida nevertheless incorporates the transnational flows of bodies under contemporary conditions of globalization or what he terms "cosmopolitanism" (2001).⁶

One of the effects of the juxtaposition of domestic hospitality to cosmopolitanism is that it regenerates a multiplicity of tensions and contradictions between divided public and domestic spheres, inherited from nineteenth-century colonial bourgeois governing strategies.⁷ As such, it begs the question, As a metaphor for cosmopolitan affiliations, can hospitality address the material and immaterial or emergent specificities of domestic relations of power, especially violence toward women, in colonial and neo-colonial as well as global contexts? As a philosophy of the *ethos* of hospitality, Derrida's deconstructive move would appear to be implicated in effacing the daily struggles of women, children, and the poor, rendering its significance for a critique of the global exploitation of male, female, and infantile labouring bodies, itinerant and otherwise, questionable. Derrida acknowledges that the juridical power of hospitality lies in a paternal and phallogocentric model. He writes, for example, that it is "the familial despot, the father, the spouse, and the boss, the master of the house who lays down the laws of hospitality" ("Step of Hospitality/No Hospitality" 149). Further-

6 This is not to say that Derrida is uninterested in extending programs of research that would take account of the question of the foreigner in histories of colonization and decolonization. In "Step of Hospitality/ No Hospitality," for example, he considers briefly the history of citizenship in the French colonization of Algeria and especially its uneven distribution between Muslim and non-Muslim Algerians (*Of Hospitality* 141, 143, 145, and 147).

7 For a historically specific and geopolitically contextualized look at colonization and the division of public and private spheres, see Emberley, 2007.

more, these patriarchal powers and the images they invoke of authority represent the darker and “other” side of hospitality. They are constitutive to the moment when the concept of hospitality “opens itself to its opposite” (Derrida, “Hospitality” 362). Such is the occasion for Derrida also to note that “to be hospitable is to let oneself be overtaken [*surprendre*], to be ready to not be ready, if such is possible, to let oneself be overtaken, to not even let oneself be overtaken, to be surprised, in a fashion almost violent, violated and raped [*violée*], stolen [*volée*] (the whole question of violence and violation/rape and of expropriation and de-propriation is waiting for us), precisely where one is not ready to receive—and not only not yet ready but not ready, unprepared in a mode that is not even that of the ‘not yet’” (“Hospitality” 361). The place of domesticity and the domestic realm as that which contains a Violated Female/Feminine Other is the site of the impossible other, the site, not of an invitation but violence, the site of inhospitable home invaginations.

Thus, at the heart of the supplementarity of the home is the figure of the uninvited visitor, the one who invades this sacred zone of feminine and vulnerable bodies—women and children, of course—who crosses the threshold of the home in the name of friendship but who violates their bodies without impunity. Although hospitality is linked to the act of invitation, in keeping with the dialogic method in which the contradictory position must be asserted, radical hospitality “would have to consist in receiving without invitation, beyond or before the invitation” (Derrida, “Hospitality” 360).

My intervention into Derrida’s invitation to consider the domestic meanings of hospitality is, in part, concerned with how differences between settler cultures and indigenous societies hinge on the contradictory meanings of hospitality. In relation to diasporic movement, for example, it is possible to track how conditions of economic, religious, military, or political violence create *substitutive* territorial events whereby settlers claim an originary status—a type of *homecoming*—over that of the indigenous inhabitants who are said to be already *at home* on the land to which settlers eventually lay claim. It is this *substitutive* relation that is constitutive of imperialism and that blocks a materialist analysis of hospitality as an embrace with the *other-within*.

The Tupinamba’s welcoming ceremony addresses the question of the unwanted visitor—the one who arrives and will not leave, who does not think that his coming and going is related to an invitation at all. In his speculations on the cosmopolitan aspects of an ethics of hospitality, Derrida writes that

Hospitality consists in doing everything possible to address the other, to grant or ask them their name, while avoiding this question becoming a “condition,” a police inquisition, a registration of information, or a straightforward frontier control. A difference both subtle and fundamental, a question that arises on the threshold of “home,” and on the threshold between two inflections. An art and a poetics, but an entire politics depends on it, an entire ethics is decided by it. (“The Principle of Hospitality” 67)

By what “name” can the visitor be called: foreigner, refugee, or immigrant; guest worker, ghost, child, or holy spirit (*hôte*)? And by what name can the supposed invitee be called? Hostess? Receptionist? Mother? Tupinamba weeper? What are the subtle and fundamental differences that circumscribe these names? One appears to be always in movement, in a state of flux between coming and going. The other appears to be sitting at home, waiting for the doorbell to ring, waiting for the conquistador to brandish his sword under a canopy of trees, waiting for the bombs to light up the sky under cover of darkness.

Waiting for the foreigner, the settler, the hunter to arrive is, on the one hand, an end game of continual deferral and, on the other, a designated position, not one that has been freely chosen but a position given by virtue of a set of calculated assumptions. Consider, for example, a gatherer/hunter mode of production, in which nomadic movement is a material reality for the purposes of acquiring food and other necessities of life. The nomad asks for hospitality from the earth, as well as nation-kin and nation-kinships, but not necessarily the family, the country, or the nation-state. She is always asking the earth to deliver up its hospitable fecundity, to replenish the lives and needs of her people on a daily, if not hourly, basis. What binds the nomad and the refugee-cum-settler together is the mutual condition of their homelessness: the fact that neither of them is at home in the sense that both seek hospitality from an other. Only the translation from indigenous/aboriginal hospitality—the earth as host and table of plenty—to the hospitality of the nation-state requested by refugee, immigrant, and foreigner, hinges on the Euro-American state and its self-proclaimed right to determine who will take up residency on a land that apparently belongs to no one but is a place of living for many. The entrepreneurs of private property, the landlord who is also a nominal figure in the lexicon of hospitality, willfully choose to disavow this reality by re-inscribing the earth as its servant and not its host. To be in service to humanity, however, is not the same as reducing humanity to servitude.

No one is at home, but that is perhaps because they are elsewhere for the moment. In other words, their momentary absence does not necessarily constitute a state of *terra nullius*, but when no one answered the door, when no one answered the call to arms, when no one answered “Hail to the King of England,” someone took the liberty of saying, no one is at home.⁸ They did not check the traplines or the song lines.

In his discussion of the refugee, Giorgio Agamben writes that this (European) figure is “the paradigm of a new historical consciousness” (14). He further extols the significance of the (European) refugee as follows: “Inasmuch as the [European] refugee, an apparently marginal figure, unhinges the old trinity of state-nation-territory, it deserves instead to be regarded as the central figure of our political history. We should not forget that the first camps were built in Europe as spaces for controlling refugees, and that the succession of internment camps—concentration camps—extermination camps represents a perfectly real filiation” (21). In addition, Agamben would do well to remember the implementation of reserves and reservations as the colonial birthplace of the internment camp. What happens, then, when the refugee arrives at his non-European destination and having sought the right of habitation becomes then a new person, a new native, the settler? Such questions are immediately invoked by the Palestinian/Israeli conflict in the Middle East, but it is equally important to point out that this conflict has other historical and geopolitical contexts in Euro-colonial relations.

Cosmopolitanism cannot do with its Other(s). The history of such “othering” is the history of Canada as a nation-state engaged in transnational relations and also a history of Canada as a postcolonial state engaged in the perpetuation of postcolonial relations of economic and political power,

8 The basis for the doctrine of *terra nullius* is usually traced to the seventeenth-century liberal philosophy of John Locke, who in his *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (1690), argued that to claim property right over the land was the right of the individual who laboured to cultivate and settle it. His denial of such property ownership to the indigenous peoples of America was advanced by such comments as the following:

There cannot be a clearer demonstration of any thing, than several nations of the Americans are of this, who are rich in land, and poor in all the comforts of life; whom nature having furnished as liberally as any other people, with the materials of plenty, i.e. a fruitful soil, apt to produce in abundance, what might serve for food, raiment, and delight; yet for want of improving it by labour, have not one hundredth part of the conveniencies we enjoy: and a king of a large and fruitful territory there, feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day-labourer in England. (Sec. 41)

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domestically and globally, toward indigenous peoples. Connecting the privileged figure of the diasporic subject, the (European) refugee, with the settler becomes vital in a context in which both histories must be written. Otherwise indigenous subjectivity is in danger of being vacated and subjected to an endless process of substitution and the refugee is in danger of perpetual homelessness.

The mediating discourse for legislating the status of the refugee exists in the metajudicial sphere of human rights. Human rights, Agamben reminds us, is the “originary figure for the inscription of natural naked life [the human being], in the political-judicial order of the nation-state” (19). This concept of naked life refers to the legal fiction of birth and citizenship; in particular, it is Agamben’s metaphor for the human being as determined by the nation-state:

Nation-state means a state that make nativity or birth [*nascita*] (that is, naked human life) the foundation of its own sovereignty [...] The fiction that is implicit here is that *birth* comes into being immediately as *nation*, so that there may not be any difference between the two moments. Rights, in other words, are attributed to the human being only to the degree to which he or she is the immediately vanishing presupposition (and, in fact, the presupposition that must never come to light as such) of the citizen. (20)

The signification of birth here as a legal fiction remains uncomplicated for Agamben as an equally problematic biopolitical fiction that has heavily circumscribed the lives of women and indigenous peoples. This biopolitical fiction is always already a discourse of *affiliation*, a discursive production of the female body’s reproductive potential as the site of naturalization in all its essentialist connotations. Agamben re-essentializes the reproductive potential of the female body as an instance of *filiative bare life*. This is not a rhetorical problem; it was a resolutely political one that Agamben ignores and thus sets back the gains of feminism and its struggle over violence toward women and children.

While for Agamben it is the question of the refugee that must be addressed, within the terms of this discussion it is the more complicated question of the interrelations among the “foreigner,” “the refugee,” and the “aboriginal” that needs elaboration. Consider the colonial context of Antigua and Jamaica Kincaid’s work of postcolonial criticism, *A Small Place*, in which she examines not only the figure of the tourist who invades Antigua but also other inhospitable guests such as the refugee and the teacher dispatched by the colonial office:

Let me tell you about a man; trained as a dentist, he took it on himself to say he was a doctor, specializing in treating children's illnesses. No one objected—certainly not us. He came to Antigua as a refugee (running away from Hitler) from Czechoslovakia. This man hated us so much that he would send his wife to inspect us before we were admitted into his presence, and she would make sure that we didn't smell, that we didn't have dirt under our fingernails, and that nothing else about us—apart from the colour of our skin—would offend the doctor [...] Then there was a head mistress of a girls' school, hired through the colonial office in England and sent to Antigua to run this school which only in my lifetime began to accept girls who were born outside a marriage; in Antigua it had never dawned on anyone that this was a way of keeping black children out of this school. This woman was twenty-six years old, not too long out of university, from Northern Ireland, and she told these girls over and over again to stop behaving as if they were monkeys just out of trees. No one ever dreamed that the word for any of this was racism. (28–29)

The ideologies of reproduction (“girls who were born outside a marriage”) and racial difference (“apart from the colour of our skin”) mediate the refugee status of the man who escapes from Hitler's fascism and the woman who comes from another British imperial holding, Ireland, and works as a British agent. Their inhospitable behaviour becomes both a strategy of comprehension and resistance from the Antiguan point of view: “We felt superior, for we were so much better behaved and we were full of grace, and these people were so badly behaved and they were so completely empty of grace” (30). But what this deployment of the rhetoric of civilization, turned against the civilizer themselves, accomplishes is very little by way of exposing the relations of power and racism, as Kincaid ironically discloses in the following passage:

Our perception of this Antigua—the perception we had of this place ruled by these bad-minded people—was not a political perception. The English were ill-mannered, not racists; the school head-mistress was especially ill-mannered, not a racist; the doctor was crazy—he didn't even speak English properly, and he came from a strangely named place, he also was not a racist; the people at the Mill Reef Club were puzzling (why go and live in a place populated mostly by people you cannot stand), not racists. (34)

As Kincaid's ironic display of disbelief demonstrates, the rhetoric of civilization masks the material realities of racial violence. Hospitality also belongs to this rhetoric of civilization, to the palimpsest of imperial textuality and its material practices of invasion. The archeological weight of layers of colonial civility add to the smothering and denial of the history of slave labour and the story of people who did not willingly immigrate to Antigua, who were not invited nor welcomed to Antigua, but who were forcibly placed there. The history of the movement of bodies is not a simple one, it is complicated and troubled by histories of violence, uprootings, various kinds of fascisms, and racisms. Marking the coordinates of this vast web of movement is a hegemonic political project designed to locate, however provisionally and partially, points of contact and dispersion, moments of proximity and flight.

My objective is to move beyond imperial and textual acts of substitution that emerge with the use of domestic hospitality as an unruly metaphor for cosmopolitan in Derrida, or, as I have argued, the use of the communistic household as a primitive form of communism in Marx and Engels. And I want to achieve this objective by asking how the laws, spaces, and discourses of hospitality may or may not contain *the possibility of rendering the indigenous femaled body in/hospitable to violence*. This question, phrased as it is, in a double negative, is premised upon how the indigenous femaled body is being reconfigured globally as an hospitable or in/hospitable body in the home and the nation by such testimonial indigenous storytelling practices as Doris Pilkington's memoir, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*.

Repairing the Mother's Body

As I noted earlier, Pilkington's narrative of colonial violence included the sexual violence and murdering of the Nyungar women. By telling the history of colonization from the perspective of its violence toward indigenous women, its transformation of indigenous bodies into domestic and agricultural labourers, and its use of physical forms of incarceration to secure the British rule of law, Pilkington prepares the reader for the story that is to come, the story of a homecoming that will defy the colonial logic of incarceration and turn its tools of boundary maintenance into a pathway home. This is the story of three children, Molly, Daisy, and Gracie, who escape from a boarding school, the Moore River Native Settlement, and walk thousands of miles over a period of several months to return to their mother's camp.

The children, whose father was a white man, are forcibly removed from their mother's camps because they are identified as half-caste. Pilkington tells us that "Official concern shifted from the decreasing numbers of traditional or full-blood Aborigines to the half-castes and part-Aboriginal children who were being born all over the country. The common belief at the time was that part-Aboriginal children were more intelligent than their darker relations and should be isolated and trained to be domestic servants and labourers" (*Rabbit-Proof Fence* 40). The Australian government introduced the Aboriginal Act in 1906 that mandated government officials to take so-called half-caste children from their aboriginal families and place them in colonial boarding schools. Likened to other forms of incarceration taking place under fascism in Europe at the same time, Pilkington writes that the Moore River Native Settlement "was more like a concentration camp than a resident school for Aboriginal children" (72).⁹

This narrative of flight, I want to suggest, is also a story of homecoming, returning to their home territory, to their mother's camp, and to their mothers. Thus, the motivation to flee was not only due to the oppressive conditions of the Moore River Native Settlement but also to their desire to return to their mother's camp. Strangely enough, the way back is guided by a barbed-wire fence, which on the one hand is the rabbit-proof fence, a boundary created for colonial containment, and, ironically, as Pilkington writes "a symbol of love, home and security" (109). It was their umbilical connection to their home, their kin, and their land.

The pangs of homelessness drive the girls toward their destination: "But most of all they were missing their mothers and wished that they were back home with them" (89). When the children arrive at their aunt's camp, "Molly's step-father's sister greeted them in the traditional manner

⁹ As Anne Brewster notes, one of the remarkable aspects of *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* is how it figures

the invasion of the private by the public sphere, a fact of life for indigenous people since colonization. The fashioning of the self in this account is post-romantic; a subjectivity unmediated by the trans/national public spheres of governmentality and global forces is unthinkable.[...] I refer to both national and global arenas here since the assimilationist policies formulated in the 1930s were not an isolated regional blip in a former outpost of empire; the mobilization of eugenics in the state management of minoritarian peoples during this period was a global phenomenon. Hitler became the Fuhrer of the National Socialist party in 1934, for example, and, by 1943, 30 states in the US allowed the sterilization of individuals deemed genetically "unfit" such as those in mental institutions. (2002)

by crying with them for those who had passed away since their last meeting” (119). Upon entering her own territory, which is referred to as her “memory’s landscape,” she experiences a “feeling of nostalgia [that] brought tears to her eyes as memories of her childhood flashed before her” (122). The weeping welcome ceremony is repeated when Molly and her sister enter her mother’s camp: “The girls walked slowly towards their mothers’ camp where their family sat awaiting their arrival. The wailing began softly at first then grew louder as more people joined the group” (123).

The weeping welcome is a language of mourning; it contains within it the dual struggle of remembering the dead and reassembling the living. This language of weeping, of tears, of mourning and grieving is also, I would suggest, a language of hospitality, the recognition of the common state of homelessness and the desire for homecoming. The Nyungar people extended hospitality to the whalers and military governing colonial settlers that eventually did violence to them. Such violence succeeded because of the imperial rule of substitution that disavowed, rather than acknowledged, an ethics of hospitality. The rule of substitution is constitutive of capitalism and its logic of accumulation in which labouring bodies become substitutive objects and commodities, as do slaves and sexually violated women, who become desiring objects of property and capital. This is a meaning of *alienation* and the alien is thus an operative figure of the rule of substitution. A maternal ethics of hospitality, however, is about extending oneself to the other and in so doing embracing the other with-in, knowing and empathizing with an other’s pain one embraces and recognizes as one’s own. One welcomes the other in to heal one’s own sense of *homelessness*. It is in this sense that homelessness becomes the condition for the reassembling and remembering of humanity. Thus, Emanuel Levinas is partially correct when he writes: “No one is at home. The memory of this servitude assembles humanity” (as quoted in Derrida, “Hospitality” 404).

To come home to the mother, the mother’s camp, and the mother’s body is, I would venture to say, the desire of all homecomings. Homelessness is also the dispossession from the womb and the amniotic fluid that is the sign of security and peace. To cry or to water the land is to reproduce the original fluidity of home and dispossession. To produce tears is to water the seeds of home, to nurture relations of love.

It is, in the end, however, Doris herself, the author of this text, who returns to the mother’s body via the telling of her mother’s story. In the final chapter titled “What Happened to Them? Where are They Now?” we learn the following:

Molly was trained and employed as a domestic help on Balfour Downs Station where she married Toby Kelly, a stockman. She had two daughters Doris (the author) and Annabelle. On 18 November 1940, after Molly's discharge from the Royal Perth Hospital where she had undergone surgery for appendicitis, she was transported once again under ministerial warrant to Moore River Native Settlement. Nine months later, Molly received a letter from home advising her of the deaths from self-inflicted wounds to the head, a customary action of the distressed and the anguished and a common expression of grief and despair. In this case the lacerations were inflicted when Molly and her children had departed months earlier. Others die from whooping cough.

Permission to return to Balfour Downs was refused. Unable to settle down, Molly absconded on 1 January 1941, taking eighteen-month-old Annabelle with her and leaving Doris behind at the settlement. She and her baby daughter arrived safely at Jigalong months later, following the same route she had taken nine years earlier. She moved back to Balfour Downs Station with her husband Toby and baby Annabelle. Three years later Annabelle was removed and sent south to the Sister Kate's Children's Home in Queens Park. Molly has not seen her since. (*Rabbit-Proof Fence* 131–32)

This story of flight, a repetition of her earlier one, is the crux of the narrative, for in this moment of repetition a child is left behind, irrevocably separated from her mother. Doris has written her mother's childhood story of escape and return, and in so doing she has arrived at a place of connection and perhaps reconciliation with her mother. But the story of her own abandonment is written into the folds of this other narrative, a narrative of colonial violence that actively sought the rupture between mother and daughter as a final blow to aboriginal kinship relations and society. It is this *history of homecoming* that still needs to be written. And indeed Pilkington's subsequent book, *Under the Windamarra Tree* (2003), stories her mother's return as an adult to her home and the loss of her two children. *Rabbit-Proof Fence* and *Under the Windamarra Tree* are important contributions to decolonizing colonial history and telling the story of homecomings.¹⁰

10 In an interview, Doris Pilkington explains that

Windamarra is the traditional name for the Mulga tree that grows widely throughout the Pilbara and other regions. I was born under one of these, so the tree is symbolic of so many things that I want

This is the continuity of history into storytelling that is a key aspect of contemporary indigenous knowledge.

At the conclusion to Pilkington's narrative and after learning about Molly's second homecoming and the abandonment of Doris herself, the story concludes: "Under traditional Aboriginal kinship Molly has 18 grandchildren, 29 great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-grand-children" (*Rabbit-Proof Fence* 132). The maternal child lives on and is not some relic of a past, seemingly obsolete, communalism but the living embodiment of a communal matrix of love, inheritance, proximity, and belonging.

The value of Pilkington's memoir is as a reparative text that invites the reader to consider this story as an historical confrontation with the forces of colonial violence, and especially its effect on women and children. In acknowledging the weeping ceremony of the Mardu women Pilkington initiates the possibility of a reparative relation between unknown entities, reducing the violence of paranoia and the fear of the unknown. Thus, embedded within Pilkington's text is its own ethics of hospitality, an invitation extended to the reader, a potential foreigner, sister, settler, refugee, and even mother, to listen to a story about the history of colonization, to listen to a different way of storying history that attends to the material, corporeal, and contingent complexities, politics, and poetics of everyday living. This is the continuity of history into storytelling that is a key aspect of contemporary indigenous knowledge.

A text such as *Rabbit-Proof Fence* invites the reader to listen and learn and to reassemble humanity through a common understanding and appreciation of a collective homelessness and the precariousness of state-sanctioned fictions of reproductive belonging. The material conditions of the laws of hospitality are made visible by such welcoming apparatuses as the Tupinamba weepers as well as those in Pilkington's text. They are uniquely intended to prepare one for the unknown visitor. Such laws of hospitality would seem to suggest that alternative possibilities have and do exist to the possibility of violence—especially against women—as the seemingly inevitable result of extending hospitality to the unwelcome foreigner as in

to say about life on Balfour Downs Station and the effect of being taken away, how it affected my grandmother and my mother and that the cruelest thing I ever did in my life was to accuse my mother of giving me away and putting me in a home. The Sorry Day stories you hear are of people telling these stories and how it affected them. It wasn't until I did research for *Follow the Rabbit-proof Fence* that I read how government policies were implemented, how children were removed under ministerial warrants and their mothers had no say in the matter. While my sister and I didn't come under ministerial warrants, the government did it in a rather cunning sort of way. (Martin)

Derrida's conception of a paternal and phallogocentric *ethos* of hospitality. But this, of course, is a hospitality that already exists in vestigial forms and one that is to come.

A maternal ethics of hospitality embedded in indigenous genealogical and maternal social formations is also present in the published writings by indigenous peoples who invite non-indigenous people to extend themselves toward healing the effects of colonial violence. To respond to that invitation is to listen, to be responsible for and accountable to emergent conditions of reciprocity and exchange that are *to come*, to a *homecoming* that turns and returns on the knowledge of colonial violence and re-reading the contemporary continuities of history into storytelling as a basis for implementing projects for social justice and change. These, I would venture to speculate, are the terms of the invitation to listen and respond, where weeping tears of pain and joy are, of course, permissible, if not encouraged.

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