

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: AMERICAN HOSPITALITY:
THE POLITICS OF CONDITIONALITY
IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY U.S. FICTION

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Dissertation directed by: Peter Mallios, Associate Professor of English

American Hospitality rereads the canon of American literature by focusing attention on the centrality of hospitality to the twentieth-century American literary imagination. It argues that twentieth-century U.S. authors employ scenes of hospitality (scenes of welcoming and withholding, of invitation and rejection, of accommodation and imposition) and figures of hospitality (hosts and guests, strangers and trespassers, homes and thresholds, gifts and reciprocations) for three specific purposes: first, to reproduce dominant American discourses of hospitality; second, to critique these same discourses; and third, to model an alternative ethics of hospitality. Faced with the closing of the western frontier, rapid increases in immigration, the growing need to provide assistance to large segments of the population, an escalating call to secure and police the national borders, and the widespread demand to make public accommodations in all parts of the

country more hospitable to racialized others, U.S. authors during the twentieth century utilized discourses of hospitality to reflect on the effects that sweeping historical changes were having on the nation's ability to remain hospitable to peoples both inside and outside its borders. In examining discourses of hospitality in twentieth-century U.S. fiction, *American Hospitality* makes three principal contributions to scholarship. First, it opens the canon of American literature to reconstruction by tracing the central importance of scenes of hospitality across a wide range of twentieth-century American texts and genres, from highly canonical texts like Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* to less canonical texts like Zitkala-Ša's *Old Indian Legends* and Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris's *The Crown of Columbus*. Second, it expands on existing work on the subject of American exceptionalism by showing how American exceptionalist narratives rely heavily on scenes and figures of hospitality to justify and disavow acts of exclusion, dispossession, exploitation, and violence. Third, it lays the foundation for theorizing an alternative ethics of American hospitality. Modeled by the texts featured in *American Hospitality*, this alternative ethics, which I term *affirmative hospitality*, has four core principles: recognition of the conditional nature of all hospitality exchanges, affirmation of the singularity of the individual, accommodation, and deliberation.

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by

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Dedication

To my parents

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List of Abbreviations

All texts below are by Jacques Derrida.

Full citation information for each text is provided in the Works Cited.

“A”	“Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides” (2003)
“D”	“ <i>Différance</i> ” (1967)
“E”	“Ellipsis” (1967)
“EJ”	“Edmond Jabès and the Question . . .” (1964)
“H”	“Hostipitality” (1997)
“HJR”	“Hospitality, Justice, and Responsibility” (1999)
“PH”	“The Principle of Hospitality” (1997)
“PS”	“La parole soufflée” (1965)
“SSP”	“Structure, Sign, and Play . . .” (1966)
“TC”	“The Theater of Cruelty . . .” (1966)
“TL”	“Talking Liberties” (2001)
“UG”	“Ulysses Gramophone” (1984)
“UWC”	“The University Without Condition” (2002)
“VM”	“Violence and Metaphysics” (1964)
“WB”	“Women in the Beehive” (1984)
<i>A</i>	<i>Adieu: To Emmanuel Levinas</i> (1997)
<i>M</i>	<i>Memoires: For Paul de Man</i> (1984)
<i>OH</i>	<i>Of Hospitality</i> (1997)
<i>S</i>	<i>Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles</i> (1978)
<i>SM</i>	<i>Spectres of Marx</i> (1993)

INTRODUCTION

Toward a Theory of Affirmative Hospitality

The first evening I spent under the wing of his hospitality, we sat a full hour at table by ourselves, without the least interruption, after the family had retired. I was extremely oppressed by a severe cold and excessive coughing, contracted by the exposure of a harsh winter journey. He pressed me to use some remedies, but I declined doing so. As usual after retiring, my coughing increased. When some time had elapsed, the door of my room was gently opened, and on drawing my bed-curtains, to my utter astonishment, I beheld Washington himself, standing at my bedside, with a bowl of hot tea in his hand. I was mortified and distressed beyond expression. This little incident, occurring in common life with an ordinary man, would not have been noticed; but as a trait of the benevolence and private virtue of Washington, deserves to be recorded.

-Elkanah Watson,
Men and Times of The Revolution (244)

Elkanah Watson's narrative of his visit to Mount Vernon in 1785 introduces a paradox that is central to this dissertation. On one hand, Watson's text idealizes George Washington as a figure of consummate hospitality. Possessing extraordinary "private virtue," Watson's "immortal" Washington offers strangers unconditional welcome and does so with no "ostentation" (243-44). On the other hand, Watson's written document undermines its own romantic portrait of Washington through embedded traces of critique. More specifically, *Men and Times of the Revolution* draws attention to the roles that textual production and textual transmission play in licensing and disavowing exclusive cultures of American hospitality. By asserting that Washington's "private" act of hospitality "deserves to be recorded," Watson attests to the public nature of all hospitality

and to the importance that a textual mythology about Mount Vernon had in establishing Washington's reputation as a generous host.¹ But Watson's narrative also reveals how that reputation involved a carefully managed practice of selective hospitality at Mount Vernon that was dependent on an aristocratic tradition of written correspondence.

Watson, a businessman from Massachusetts, gains admittance to Washington's stately Virginia home only because he arrives bearing letters of introduction from a general and a colonel (243). Although Watson lauds Washington for receiving him with unconditional hospitality, his written "record" testifies to the conditional quality of its origins. Accordingly, we come to see that the epistolary tradition that grants Watson the privilege to narrate his experiences at Mount Vernon simultaneously withholds the privilege of narration from those strangers who arrive without written evidence of their investment in the social system that provides Washington with his power. In the end, it is a cycle of written attestations that determines what is and is not "recorded" at and about Mount Vernon. Watson, for instance, romanticizes Washington's "servants" as "[s]miling" and the "domestic arrangements" at Mount Vernon as "harmonious," thereby disavowing the very real and always present threat of violence that compelled Washington's labor force of over two hundred slaves to perform the grueling work that made their master's offerings of hospitality possible (244).² What Watson's account of his visit to Mount Vernon illustrates more than anything else is how the introduction of *writing* into the processes of hospitality serves both to substantiate the truth claims of hosts like George Washington and to lay the groundwork for the deconstruction of these same claims.

The paradoxical logic of disavowal employed by Watson in *Men and Times of the Revolution* is a central component of American discourses about hospitality. It is rooted in the contradictions of American exceptionalist mythology and manifested in countless official federal documents: in the idealistic proclamations of Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, in the abstract avowals of the US Constitution's Preamble, in the categorical claims endemic to American treaties with Indian nations, in the self-contradictory judicial decisions that defined racial segregation as "separate but equal," and in the disingenuous legal contracts presented by government agencies to foreign guest workers. It is likely that Jacques Derrida has this American practice of paradoxical discourse in mind when he distinguishes between the utopian promise of an absolutely hospitable "America" and the historical reality of a guarded, circumspect "United States" (M 18). "America is deconstruction," Derrida tells us, inasmuch as the toponym "America" signifies the infinitely deferred promise of a space that is unconditionally "receptive" to the "themes and attributes of deconstruction" (M 18). With this in mind, Derrida reminds us that we must never stop deconstructing the American politics of "today" as a way of confirming and keeping alive our "messianic" faith in perfecting the imperfectible ideal of "America" (SM 94). In this sense, we might say that no modern nation has been more responsible for inviting its own deconstruction, for both opening itself to critique and simultaneously committing itself tirelessly to the project of deferring this critique. Ironically, then, in its own obsession with projecting a national ethos of hospitality, the United States has been exceptionally *hospitable* to deconstruction.

This dissertation argues that American literature both contributes to and deconstructs exceptionalist myths about American hospitality. In the process, it rereads

and rethinks the canon of American literature by focusing attention on the centrality of hospitality to the American literary imagination. Even before nationhood, Phillis Wheatley testified in verse to the paradoxical politics of American hospitality, ironically extolling God for bearing her in chains from Africa's "dark abodes" to the "safe" welcoming bosom of America (6). During the nineteenth century, American authors turned to discourses of hospitality to project and critique romantic visions of a burgeoning nation. We see this ambivalence at play in the countless scenes of intercultural hospitality featured in James Fenimore Cooper's frontier fiction; in the inclusive, all-embracing voice of Walt Whitman's democratic Muse; in the cruel hospitality of Mark Twain's Colonel Grangerford; and in the majestic "world-wide welcome" of Emma Lazarus's "Mother of Exiles" (Lazarus 6-7).

But not until the twentieth century do we witness an escalation of American literary engagements with hospitality. Faced with the closing of the western frontier, rapid increases in immigration, the growing need to provide assistance to large segments of the population, an escalating call to secure and police the national borders, and the widespread demand to make public accommodations in all parts of the country more hospitable to racialized others, American authors during the twentieth century employed scenes and figures of hospitality in order to examine the effects that sweeping historical changes were having on the nation's ability to remain hospitable to peoples both inside and outside its borders. We see this national preoccupation with hospitality in Zitkala-Ša's turn-of-the-century Dakota fables of intertribal exchange; in Margaret Mitchell's deconstruction of the South's romantic nostalgia for antebellum hospitality; in the formative moment of withheld hospitality at the door of a plantation home that causes

William Faulkner's Thomas Sutpen to embark on his grand dynastic design; in the improvised ethics of migrant hospitality adopted by John Steinbeck's Joads; in the "new humanist" hospitality of Margaret Walker's *Vyry*; and in Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris's revisionist portrait of Christopher Columbus as a usurping, presumptuous guest. All of these authors, texts, and characters, some canonical and others underappreciated, are remarkable for their repeated engagement with tropes of hospitality—tropes that have, nevertheless, largely escaped serious scholarly attention.³ It is on this terrain of twentieth-century American fiction that I focus my attention.

Americanists have by no means shied away from exploring the ways in which the doctrine of American exceptionalism has been used to perpetrate and disavow acts of inhospitality against various marginalized groups. Donald Pease's work, in particular, has helped us begin to understand the "psychosocial structures" that have permitted Americans to deny the disparity between the "fantasy" of an exceptional America and the reality of state-sponsored exclusion, deportation, confinement, and false welcome (12). Amy Kaplan has demonstrated how American exceptionalist discourse constructs and depends on racial and gender "demarcations of otherness" (184). Noting that "exceptionalist" and "domestic" discourses work together to "generate notions of the foreign against which the nation can be imagined as home" (184), Kaplan encourages us to think more critically about the discursive processes through which the U.S. state established and maintains its status as a privileged space. However, despite the suggestiveness of her insights about the relationship between exceptionalism and domesticity, Kaplan fails to follow her line of inquiry to its logical conclusion. She fails to recognize the central role that literary narratives of hospitality play in her own critical

project. We cannot adequately address how and why American exceptionalist discourse uses metaphors of domesticity to advance racist and gendered notions of “America” as “home” without first engaging in a deliberate and pointed investigation into the ways in which that discourse is grounded in racist and gendered tropes of hospitality. We cannot sufficiently interrogate the “psychosocial structures” of American exceptionalism without identifying how literary narratives have informed and been informed by American cultures of hospitality. If we are to perform the kinds of deconstructions of “America” that Derrida urges us to perform, we need to begin thinking more critically and precisely about what American literature does—both formally and thematically—with respect to American discourses of hospitality.

In *American Hospitality*, I argue that twentieth-century American authors use their fiction to model an alternative ethics of hospitality. This alternative ethics, which I term *affirmative hospitality*, is marked by its attentiveness to the real-life conditions and contingencies of hospitality exchanges. In this way, the ethics of affirmative hospitality modeled by the authors in this dissertation represents something distinct from traditional Western conceptualizations of hospitality, which tend to treat exchanges of hospitality as theoretical encounters between abstract binary figures (hosts and guests, natives and foreigners, friends and enemies, the self and the other) rather than as historically contingent events taking place between singular, embodied, interdependent individuals. In attending to the lived experience of hospitality, the authors featured here resist the kinds of disavowal that abstract theorizations of hospitality tend to enable. In the process, they not only critique but also refashion American discourses of hospitality by generating alternative forms of recognition that affirm the conditions and possibilities of engaging

the other—alternative forms that traditional liberal American norms of hospitality tend to obfuscate and ignore.

In defining affirmative hospitality and reading scenes of affirmative hospitality in American fiction, I draw on the work of several theorists, most notably Jacques Derrida. Derrida's work on hospitality is particularly useful for elucidating the ways in which twentieth-century American fiction foregrounds the inherent conditionality of hospitality. The foundational principle of Derrida's theory of hospitality is his distinction between "unconditional" and "conditional" hospitality.⁴ For Derrida, unconditional hospitality is a purely theoretical idea denoting a utopian form of hospitality offered without any conditions at all. Unconditional hospitality could be offered only to someone who is completely unknown and would require welcoming this unknown stranger without establishing any prerequisites for their stay and without asking anything of them in return ("HJR" 69-70; *OH* 25; "PH" 7). An act of unconditional hospitality would also require welcoming the other without any concern for or knowledge of established laws, codes of behavior, or forms of social exchange ("A" 129; *OH* 135).

Recognizing that unconditional hospitality is a practical impossibility, Derrida notes that all acts of hospitality are conditioned by prejudices, expectations, obligations, and pre-existing power relationships ("A" 129). Because no host is ever willing to surrender fully their sovereignty, every act of hospitality is both a welcoming of the other and an act of self-protection: "We offer hospitality only on the condition that the other follow our rules, our way of life, even our language, our culture, our political system" ("A" 128-29; "H" 3).⁵ By simply asking a guest to provide their name or by requesting that they adhere to cultural norms, a host establishes the conditions under which a guest is

welcomed (*OH* 25). What's more, the very act of extending an invitation of hospitality, of offering to surrender space to the other, doubles as an act of self-affirmation, a confirmation of one's own power as host ("H" 4, 14; *OH* 54). In turn, by accepting hospitality, a guest enters into a kind of "contract" with their host, one that involves explicit and/or implicit obligations ("H" 4-8; "HJR" 69; *OH* 23; "PH" 6). These obligations, whether restricted to private forms of reciprocal exchange or operating as part of generalized networks of public exchange, are bound to repeat and multiply, to engender future exchanges and obligations. The inevitability of this repetition of exchange prevents any act of hospitality from being offered as a disinterested gift.⁶

Derrida's distinction between unconditional and conditional hospitality is central to this dissertation for three reasons. First, as we have already seen, dominant American narratives of hospitality are often predicated on abstract claims to unconditionality. Being able to identify and articulate the ways in which these narratives traffic in pretensions to unconditionality helps us understand how American discourses employ utopian visions of unconditional hospitality to disavow exclusion and oppression. Second, although narratives of unconditional hospitality are often used to disavow violence and exclusion, unconditional visions can also be employed to highlight the differences between rhetoric and reality, between American claims to unconditionality and the conditioned realities of American life. When used for this purpose, narratives of unconditional hospitality take on an aspirational quality; they present us with impossible yet necessary fictions that allow us to see more clearly how existing practices and policies of hospitality fall short of American ideals. Third, Derrida's idea of unconditional hospitality is valuable because it helps us appreciate the affirmative nature of conditional hospitality. As Derrida points

out, it is the notion of unconditional hospitality that allows us to recognize the positive value of acts of conditional hospitality. It is the “thought” of a hospitality liberated from the constraints of contingency that enables us to understand what it means to offer hospitality in a world filled with contingency (“A” 129). The ethics of affirmative hospitality modeled by the authors in this dissertation begins with this recognition of the positive value of acts of conditional hospitality.

In labeling the model of hospitality that I observe in twentieth-century American fiction an affirmative ethics, I intend to apply two different meanings of the word “affirmative.” First, affirmative hospitality is *affirmative* in the sense that it represents a positive response to the question posed by the arriving other. Faced with the call of the other, a host offering affirmative hospitality says “yes” (Derrida “TL” 180).⁷ This “yes” represents an affirmation of the other; it signifies faith in the positive potential of the other. Second, acts of affirmative hospitality are *affirmative* in the sense that they represent affirmative actions—which is to say that they are actions taken with deliberation and with the intention of engaging critically and actively with the other. Derrida refers to this kind of active and relational engagement with the other as a “living yes” (“UG” 56).⁸ The acts of affirmative hospitality that we see in *American Hospitality* are offered in the active, relational spirit of Derrida’s “living yes.”

The texts in this dissertation model four fundamental principles of hospitality. These four principles form the basis of the ethics of affirmative hospitality that I outline in *American Hospitality*. These four principles are (1) a recognition of conditionality, (2) affirmation of the singularity of the individual, (3) accommodation, and (4) deliberation. Affirmative hospitality is grounded first and foremost in a recognition of the conditional

nature of all exchanges of hospitality. Hosts who offer affirmative hospitality do so with the understanding that the hospitality they offer is conditional. In openly recognizing the conditional nature of their hospitality, these hosts do not pretend that they can or are willing to offer hospitality to everyone. They acknowledge that there is a limit to what they can provide, that they must take into account their own needs and obligations when deciding whether to welcome guests and under what conditions they are willing to welcome them. This includes recognizing that hosts and guests have explicit and/or implicit obligations to one another. These obligations may include the guest following certain rules or guidelines, the guest reciprocating the host's hospitality at a later time, or the host affording the guest certain privacies, among others. Similarly, affirmative hospitality's recognition of conditionality involves an acknowledgment that acts of hospitality do not take place in isolation from society, that exchanges between hosts and guests are informed by pre-existing power structures. Hosts and guests who engage in affirmative hospitality do so in a spirit of keeping these power structures in mind rather than disavowing them. This does not mean that they seek to reinforce these power structures; it means that they make efforts not to use exchanges of hospitality as a means of reproducing these power structures. Moreover, affirmative hospitality's emphasis on conditionality involves a recognition of the interdependent nature of the host-guest relationship and of all human exchange. This recognition of interdependency includes attention to concerns of body and affect—concerns that tend to challenge static character typologies and the presumptions that underlie them. Finally, affirmative hospitality attests to the vital role that hospitality plays in cultivating cultures and enabling intercultural exchange. Thus, the scenes of affirmative hospitality that are featured in this dissertation

often draw attention to the function that these scenes play in cultivating communities and bringing people of different backgrounds together.⁹

In addition to this central focus on recognizing and affirming conditionality, the texts in this dissertation model three additional principles of hospitality. These additional three principles are secondary to and grounded in affirmative hospitality's main emphasis on conditionality. Although all texts in *American Hospitality* promote an ethics of hospitality that foregrounds conditionality, only some emphasize these three additional principles. The first of these principles is affirmation of the singularity of the individual. Hosts affirm the singularity of the individual by making a concerted effort to view and treat their guest as a singular human being. This effort begins with a recognition that the other can never be fully known to us, that the other is always more than what we can possibly know or understand.¹⁰ Putting this principle of hospitality into action means doing everything in one's power to resist prejudging people and treating them according to established stereotypes. It means resisting the instinct to "thematize" the other, to treat them as "an object, thing, or theme" (Derrida *A* 48). At the same time, however, this emphasis on not thematizing the other does not mean that hosts and guests should pretend that we are all the same by disavowing one another's differences. On the contrary, an ethics of affirmative hospitality is committed to treating all forms of difference (race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, disability, political affiliation, etc.) as qualities to be affirmed rather than demonized or denied. This resistance to thematization also involves an effort to think beyond determined oppositions (host-guest, self-other, friend-enemy, native-foreigner, citizen-non-citizen) by remembering that we are all more complex than we might at first appear. By resisting the instinct to think in terms of

determined oppositions, acts of affirmative hospitality seek to de-emphasize the hierarchical nature of the host-guest relationship while still recognizing the importance of honoring the essential privileges and obligations of hosts and guests.

The second of the three additional principles of affirmative hospitality is accommodation. Hosts who are accommodating strive to be considerate, open, and flexible in their interactions with guests. Being a considerate host means trying to consider things from the perspective of the guest. It means imagining oneself in the position of the guest and thoughtfully contemplating their needs and expectations.¹¹ This may include recalling one's own previous experiences being a guest and drawing on these personal memories to identify with what the guest is experiencing. Being an open host means being receptive to the needs and expectations of the guest. It means listening to the guest with an open mind. Derrida describes this kind of openness in a host as receiving the other "with one's hand held out" (*A* 26). This image of the host holding their hand out to the guest points to an important component of openness: being open includes making it apparent to the guest that you are open and receptive; it means signaling your openness explicitly and purposefully.¹² An accommodating host is also flexible, which means they are willing to and capable of adapting to given contexts, responding creatively to unforeseen contingencies, and engaging in compromise. Flexible hosts recognize that the host-guest relationship is dynamic, that relations between hosts and guests can be complex and unpredictable. They show creativity in their relations with guests by thinking outside existing norms and finding new and sometimes even unsanctioned ways of providing hospitality. We see this kind of flexibility in hosts who offer hospitality under atypical conditions, such as during migration, war, or other forms

of crisis. Under such conditions, it is often necessary to think creatively in order to reach some form of compromise that is mutually beneficial to host and guest. This willingness to seek and reach compromise is often what enables scenes of affirmative hospitality to take place.¹³

It is important to note that the kinds of accommodation that authors in *American Hospitality* promote should not be thought of as forms of tolerance. As Derrida points out, tolerance amounts to a “circumspect” form of hospitality (“A” 128). When we are tolerant, we offer hospitality “only on the condition that the other follow our rules, our way of life, even our language, our culture, our political system” (128). In this sense, hosts who are tolerant are intent on limiting their welcome in order to protect their own sovereignty (128). In contrast, the hosts in *American Hospitality* who are accommodating are intent on being considerate, open, and flexible in order to make their guests feel welcome. Accommodating hosts aim to affirm the otherness of their guests; tolerant hosts aim to reaffirm their own beliefs, customs, and sovereignty.

The third and final additional principle of affirmative hospitality is deliberation. Acts of affirmative hospitality are often deliberative, which means that they arise from carefully considered decisions.¹⁴ Scenes of affirmative hospitality that are deliberative feature moments of careful consideration prior to formal invitations of hospitality. These deliberations can be independent or communal; they can be communicated to us by way of dialogue, interior monologue, third-person narration, or any other form of narrative discourse. In most cases, these moments of deliberation draw attention to potential risks involved in offering hospitality. In doing so, they underscore the *affirmative* nature of affirmative hospitality. They emphasize the fact that hosts of affirmative hospitality

respond in the affirmative to the question of hospitality, which is to say the question of the other. After carefully calculating the risks, they say “yes” when they could say “no.” It is the deliberative nature of affirmative hospitality that makes acts of affirmative hospitality ethical acts. Without deliberation, the act of hospitality is automatic, simply a matter of course.¹⁵ The deliberative quality of affirmative hospitality also points to the fact that acts of affirmative hospitality require hosts to make decisions without sufficient knowledge of their guests, their backgrounds, or their intentions. In this way, affirmative hospitality attests to the need to answer the call of hospitality – to make a decision, whether in the affirmative or the negative – despite never being in a position when it is possible to predict the future.¹⁶

To be clear, *American Hospitality* is not interested in advocating a monolithic theory or practice of hospitality. It is interested in identifying and describing the ways in which twentieth-century American fiction models an ethics of hospitality grounded in a commitment to recognizing and affirming conditionality.

When in this dissertation I talk about narratives of hospitality, I am talking about established narrative conventions in American fiction and in Western literature more broadly. These conventions include known character types, such as hosts, guests, strangers, uninvited guests, and trespassers. These conventions also include identifiable narrative events, such as invitations, greetings, gatherings, potlucks, and leave-takings. Because the authors in this dissertation are particularly intent on challenging traditional models of hospitality and scrutinizing the conventional tropes associated with them, the scenes of hospitality examined in *American Hospitality* often feature but also critique these established conventions.

American Hospitality carries out three distinct but interrelated investigations across four chapters. Along the way, it explores the ways in which twentieth-century American fiction reproduces prevailing American discourses of hospitality, critiques these same discourses, and models an ethics of affirmative hospitality. I begin in Part One by recovering the crucial role that narratives of American hospitality played in framing and challenging dominant formulations of the nation during the first decades of the twentieth century. In Chapter One, I show how John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* explores the terms, conditions, and limitations of American hospitality during a time of national crisis. I argue that Steinbeck delivers a sympathetic critique of New Deal welfarism that both endorses Roosevelt's Depression-era policies and draws attention to the limited capacities of the federal government to effect real and lasting changes for migrant laborers and their families. In contrast to previous critics, who emphasize the significant role that *The Grapes of Wrath* played in convincing the Roosevelt administration to increase federal relief for California's migrant population, I conclude that Steinbeck was more concerned with galvanizing the American public to embrace a culture of individual responsibility. By calling attention to the myriad ways in which the material demands of migrant life destabilize traditional Western conceptions of hospitality, *The Grapes of Wrath* urges us to recognize that New Deal welfarism is insufficient unless complemented by a culture of hospitality that is based on accommodation, deliberation, and affirmation of the individual. In the process, Steinbeck's narrative of the Joads lays the groundwork for imagining and theorizing a model of affirmative hospitality.

Whereas Part One of *American Hospitality* considers Steinbeck's engagement with questions of hospitality at a national level, Part Two shifts to a regional focus on the Jim Crow South and argues that southern writers during the middle decades of the twentieth century employ scenes and figures of hospitality to interrogate the racial, gender, and class politics of the South. In making this argument, Part Two calls for a reconsideration of three major novels of the period: Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With The Wind*, William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, and Margaret Walker's *Jubilee*. I contend that all three of these novels are centrally invested in examining the ideological functions and implications of southern hospitality. I begin with a reading of *Gone With The Wind* that diverges from the conventional reading of the novel as an apology for the South. Focusing attention on Mitchell's characterization of Rhett Butler, I show how Mitchell uses the figure of the stranger to lay bare the lived contradictions of southern hospitality. Through Rhett's outsider perspective, Mitchell reveals the privileged role that strangers, particularly white male strangers, can play in recognizing and exploiting these lived contradictions. In addition, I demonstrate how Mitchell uses her characterizations of Ashley Wilkes and Frank Kennedy to expose the ideological pretenses that allowed white male hosts to disavow their violence toward and exploitation of women, blacks, and poor whites in the South, both before and after the Civil War. Wilkes and Kennedy reveal the extent to which the role of the southern host consisted of a series of performances motivated by anxieties about maintaining sovereignty in private and public spaces. Finally, I show how Mitchell undermines the paternal logic of southern hospitality by presenting us with three female hosts (Ellen O'Hara, Scarlett O'Hara, and Melanie Wilkes) capable of possessing sovereignty and bestowing hospitality. Together,

Mitchell's female hosts provide us with an alternative model of southern hospitality that is based not on any essentialized notion of femininity but instead on a collective dissatisfaction with the discriminating ideology of southern male hosts.

Following my discussion on *Gone With The Wind*, I argue that Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* offers an even more complex and critical examination of southern hospitality. In particular, I suggest that Faulkner's novel portrays southern hospitality as fetishistic in nature by depicting southern codes of hospitality as predicated on strategic disavowals. Through the example of Thomas Sutpen, Faulkner shows how the South's fetishism of hospitality is motivated in large part by a desire to disavow the fact that cultures of hospitality in the South are actually designed to produce and reproduce power in the hands of privileged white men. I argue that this fetishism represents an inhospitable attitude toward history and that the novel's form mimics the South's reluctance to recognize and come to terms with its past.

In the final section of Part Two, I suggest that Margaret Walker offers readers a positive vision of interracial hospitality in the South. I argue that Walker's novel *Jubilee* communicates a redemptive narrative of southern hospitality that highlights the vital role that biblical and folk tropes of hospitality played in providing southern blacks with a means to envision scenes of freedom. Committed to what she describes as a "new humanism" that rejects racist ideologies, Walker envisions a black female protagonist in *Jubilee* who responds to the South's white patriarchy not with bitterness and hatred but with a determination to achieve redemption through acts of forgiveness and generosity. Through her acts of forgiveness and generosity, Walker's Vyry models for us a spirit and

practice of affirmative hospitality that recalls but also differs markedly from the migrant model of affirmative hospitality embodied by Steinbeck's *Joads*.

Part Three of *American Hospitality* presents a third vantage from which to reconsider American narratives of hospitality. Framed by Native American discourses of hospitality, Part Three occasions a radical rethinking of the investigations put forward in Parts One and Two. In Chapter Three, I show how Yankton Dakota author Zitkala-Ša offers a distinctly Native American critique of American hospitality that undermines American claims to original and natural sovereignty. Through readings of Zitkala-Ša's fiction and non-fiction, I also show how the Yankton Dakota author articulates what I describe as an indigenous womanist ethics of affirmative hospitality that anticipates the political and theoretical contributions of the indigenous feminist movement and the womanist movement.

In the fourth and final chapter of *American Hospitality*, I argue that Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris employ a theoretical lens of hospitality to critique settler colonialism and liberal multiculturalism. More specifically, I contend that Erdrich and Dorris's novel *The Crown of Columbus* reveals how settler colonial narratives of hospitality utilize a liberal multicultural politics of recognition to justify and disavow acts of displacement, dispossession, and exploitation. In addition, I maintain that *The Crown of Columbus* also demonstrates how indigenous peoples can and do employ discourses of hospitality to expose, critique, and resist settler colonialism. At the same time, I contend that recent revelations about the parasitic nature of Erdrich and Dorris's collaborative writing process suggest that we should read their criticisms of settler colonialism and liberal multicultural recognition as self-reflexive meditations—meditations that, in their

own strategies of repression, reproduce the same kinds of disavowal that Erdrich and Dorris aim to critique in their novel.

PART I:
THE NATION

Chapter One

Coming To Terms With Conditionality:

Affirmative Migrant Hospitality in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*

Just over three pages long, John Steinbeck's short story "Breakfast" presents us with a utopian vision of unconditional hospitality. Wandering in a valley one morning, Steinbeck's first-person narrator comes upon a young woman nursing a baby while cooking over an old iron stove. As the narrator approaches and begins to warm his hands over the fire, two men, one young and the other old, emerge from a tent next to the stove (62). Without exhibiting any outward signs of deliberation and without exchanging names or histories, the men invite their unexpected guest to "sit down" with the family for breakfast (63). Over coffee, bacon, biscuits, and gravy, the narrator learns that the men thrive in their work as cotton pickers. They are "eating good," they say, because they've had twelve straight days of work (63). Overjoyed with their own recent success, the two men ask their guest if he'd like to join them in their work for the day: "Fyou want to pick cotton, we could maybe get you on" (63). However, the narrator turns the men down, explaining, "No. I got to go along" (63). After refilling his plate and eating until he is "full," the narrator thanks the family for their hospitality. Asking for nothing in return, the old man waves his hand "in a negative" (63). The story ends with the narrator

recalling how he parted from his generous hosts and “walked away down the country road” (64).

“Breakfast,” a relatively unknown story, provides the occasion for a radical reevaluation of Steinbeck’s most rigorously studied novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*.¹⁷ Initially published in short story form in 1936, the scene from “Breakfast” reappears three years later in Chapter 22 of *The Grapes of Wrath* (290-93).¹⁸ Making only minor changes to the scene, Steinbeck replaces the first-person narrator of “Breakfast” with Tom Joad and relocates the encounter to the Weedpatch Camp, a federal relief facility where the Joads live for about a month toward the end of *The Grapes of Wrath*. The repetition of this scene of hospitality in Steinbeck’s fiction is crucial. On one hand, the fact that a story invested so categorically in a thematics of hospitality could fit so smoothly into *The Grapes of Wrath* cues us to consider the proposition that hospitality is a central concern of the novel as well. Indeed, revisiting *The Grapes of Wrath* with this episode from “Breakfast” in mind leads to the realization that Steinbeck’s novel is filled with scenes of hospitality—scenes that employ many of the same conventional tropes of hospitality that we see featured in “Breakfast”: the arrival of an unexpected guest, the invitation of hospitality, the reception of hospitality, the expression of gratitude for hospitality, and the departure of the guest. Through its reiterations of these tropes, *The Grapes of Wrath*, like “Breakfast,” treats hospitality as an indispensable component of migrant life.

On the other hand, the subtle yet significant changes that Steinbeck makes to the “Breakfast” scene in order to incorporate the events of the original story into the narrative of *The Grapes of Wrath* suggest that the novel is offering a more complex and considered interrogation into the ethical and political dynamics of hospitality than Steinbeck had

previously put forward. Devoid of context and, therefore, free of contingency, “Breakfast” imparts a naïve and isolated fantasy of absolute hospitality. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck shatters this fantasy by drawing attention to the conditional nature of the migrant experience. In the process, he transforms the meaning of the stranger’s encounter with his migrant hosts. What Steinbeck envisages in “Breakfast” as an isolated act of unconditional hospitality becomes in *The Grapes of Wrath* a contingent event of affirmative hospitality.

Steinbeck’s emphasis on conditionality in his rewriting of the scene from “Breakfast” points to a major shift in his thinking about hospitality. *The Grapes of Wrath* marks Steinbeck’s disillusionment with notions of unconditional hospitality, particularly notions of unconditional federal hospitality. (I use the term *federal hospitality* to refer to food, housing, or other form of financial or material assistance provided by the United States federal government to individuals or groups).¹⁹ Despite the prevailing critical opinion that *The Grapes of Wrath* amounts to an unequivocal and “unabashedly sentimental” endorsement of Roosevelt’s welfare agenda (Szalay 167), examining the novel’s politics through a theoretical lens of hospitality reveals that Steinbeck uses the narrative of the Joads to challenge the rhetoric and politics of federal welfarism. Accordingly, rather than interpret Steinbeck’s Weedpatch Camp as an idealistic vision of a federal “utopia,” as previous scholars have traditionally done, I read Steinbeck’s depiction of the relief camp as evidence of his belief that federal hospitality was both necessary *and* inadequate in the case of Dust Bowl migrants.²⁰ Although *The Grapes of Wrath* did play a significant role in convincing the Roosevelt administration to increase federal relief for California’s migrant population, I argue that Steinbeck was more

concerned with galvanizing the American public to embrace a culture of individual responsibility.²¹ The example of the Joads suggests that federal hospitality is not a panacea for migrant poverty. Real, lasting change would require also cultivating a culture of individual hospitality. By exploring the ways in which the material demands of migrant life destabilize the discursive tropes and juridical hierarchies that inform traditional American models of hospitality, Steinbeck offers us an alternative model of ethical engagement that is grounded in the unforeseeable and irreducible ethical relation between the host and the arriving other. Thus, *The Grapes of Wrath* provides us with a laboratory space both for theorizing affirmative hospitality and for charting the progression of Steinbeck's thinking about hospitality. It is through the narrative of the Joads' migration that Steinbeck gradually teaches us to abandon naïve visions of hospitality and to adopt more sophisticated ones.

I

In a crucial sequence early in *The Grapes of Wrath* (72-103), Steinbeck glosses the Joads and their upcoming migration through conventional tropes of hospitality. Satisfying the trope of the unexpected guest in this sequence is Jim Casy, who arrives unannounced at Uncle John's house along with Tom Joad (72). Serving as hosts to Casy are Pa and Ma Joad, who display excessive attentiveness to their guest by persistently reiterating their invitations of hospitality: when Casy first arrives, Pa assures him, "You're welcome here, sir" (72); shortly thereafter, when breakfast is served, Ma echoes, "You're welcome" (80); then, Pa once again confirms, "You're welcome" (80). Just as Pa and Ma are conscientious in their roles as hosts, Jim Casy is mindful and deferential in

his position as guest, politely waiting behind Uncle John's house while the Joads meet in a squatting circle to decide whether they will invite the preacher to join them in their trip to California: "He, out of delicacy, was sitting on the ground behind the house. He was a good preacher and knew his people" (100).²² In response to Pa's query "kin we feed a extra mouth?" Ma Joad recounts a family history distinguished for an unfailing commitment to providing hospitality to strangers: ". . . it's a long time our folks been here and east before, an' I never heerd tell of no Joads or no Hazletts, neither, ever refusin' food an' shelter or a lift on the road to anybody that asked" (102). In accordance with this longstanding family tradition, the Joads proffer an invitation to Jim Casy, one that Steinbeck depicts for us by figuring the Joads' squatting circle as a kind of metaphor for the home that the family has lost: "Casy got to his feet. He knew the government of families, and he knew he had been taken into the family. Indeed his position was eminent, for Uncle John moved sideways, leaving space between Pa and himself for the preacher. Casy squatted down like the others, facing Grampa enthroned on the running board" (103). Dispossessed of their physical "house" (99), the Joads treat the improvised squatting circle metonymically as a site of hospitality—as a space from which they can provide welcome to Jim Casy. In the process, they lay the groundwork for future scenes in which they and other migrants carry out acts of hospitality in temporary and indeterminate spaces.

The tropes of hospitality that Steinbeck utilizes in these early interactions between the Joads and Jim Casy are by no means unique to this sequence of scenes. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, we see tropes of hospitality everywhere. As early as the opening scene of the narrative, when Tom Joad hitches a ride with a truck driver, Steinbeck introduces the

foundational tropes of host, guest, and site of hospitality. Figuring the truck's cabin as a desirable space into which the driver, as host, receives Tom, as guest—"he took in the hitch-hiker"—Steinbeck establishes a precedent for treating mobile spaces as sites of hospitality (7). Thus, we are later prepared to recognize the Joads' Hudson truck as a site from which the family offers hospitality to fellow migrants. Like the squatting circle, the Hudson functions both physically and metaphorically as a substitution for the Joads' lost "house": "The house was dead, and the fields were dead; but this truck was the active thing, the living principle. The ancient Hudson . . . was the new hearth, the living center of the family; half passenger car and half truck, high-sided and clumsy" (99-100). From the Hudson truck, the Joads offer hospitality to the Wilsons when the two families decide to ride "together" in Oklahoma (148) and later to a fellow migrant in California while searching for work: "Come on, then. Git up back, an' we'll all look" (318).²³

As the examples above demonstrate, Steinbeck portrays provisional spaces, like the Hudson truck and the squatting circle, as sites of hospitality in *The Grapes of Wrath* by employing recognizable tropes that clearly identify characters in given scenes as hosts and others as guests. When Sairy Wilson invites a dying Grampa Joad to "lay down" and "rest" in the Wilsons' tent—"How'd ya like to come in our tent?"—there is no mistaking the metonymic symbolism: Sairy is figured as host, Grampa as guest, and the tent as a site of hospitality (136). Numerous other scenes in the novel are configured according to this same recognizable tropology. In Chapter 6, we see Muley Graves assume the role of host when he shares his supper with unexpected guests Tom and Casy on the front porch of the Joads' abandoned home: "You sharin' with us, Muley Graves?" (49). At a roadside hamburger stand in Oklahoma, a server named Mae acts as a host when she "h[olds the

screen door open” for a migrant family and then agrees to sell them a loaf of bread for a reduced price (160). In the woods outside Hooper Ranch, Jim Casy performs the role of host when he enthusiastically welcomes Tom Joad inside the makeshift tent that he shares with his fellow picketers: “Come on in, Tommy. Come on in” (381).

No character in *The Grapes of Wrath* is figured as a host more times than Ma Joad. We see her provide hospitality at the Hooverville camp when she decides to share a portion of the family’s stew with starving children: “I’m a-gonna set this here kettle out, an’ you’ll all get a little tas’ . . .” (258). At the Weedpatch Camp, we see her offer hospitality first to Jim Rawley—“We’d take it in honor ‘f you’d have some breakfus’ with us” (304)—and later to the Ladies’ Committee: “I’d be proud to have you ladies come an’ set while I make up some coffee” (312). And in the novel’s final scene, Ma once again assumes the position of host when she facilitates Rose of Sharon’s act of hospitality and escorts the remaining Joads’ out of the barn: “She herded them through the door, drew the boy with her; and she closed the squeaking door” (454).

However, prevalent as it is as a framing discourse in *The Grapes of Wrath*, hospitality is never treated uncritically in Steinbeck’s novel. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, unlike in “Breakfast,” Steinbeck introduces notions and images of categorical and unconditional hospitality so as to critique them.²⁴ For example, in the scene at Uncle John’s house when the Joads meet to decide whether to invite Jim Casy along on their trip, Steinbeck portrays the decision facing the family in terms of a clear opposition between two conflicting approaches to the question of hospitality. Suggesting that the Joads should “figger close” when making their decision, Pa focuses his attention on practical considerations, like whether the Joads can afford to “feed a extra mouth” and

whether there will be enough “room” in the Hudson (102). “It’s a sad thing to figger close,” Pa concedes, but he believes it is necessary for the protection of the family (102). In contrast, Ma eschews her husband’s practicality, recounting the family’s long history of categorical hospitality and arguing that the Joads would be dishonoring that history if they fail to invite Casy to join them: “As far as ‘kin,’ we can’t do nothin’, not go to California or nothin’; but as far as ‘will,’ why, we’ll do what we will. An’ as far as ‘will’—it’s a long time our folks been here and east before, an’ I never heerd tell . . .” (102). Rather than make an ethical decision in response to what Pa regards as a moment of undecidability, Ma discounts the idea of undecidability altogether. She treats the arrival of Casy not as an aporia that demands an ethical choice but as an opportunity to reassert her devotion to a pretense of categorical hospitality—a pretense that necessarily involves a stubborn disregard for contingency. In other words, the question for Ma is not whether the Joads “kin” offer hospitality to Casy but whether they “will” remain true to an impracticable family ethos. In the end, Ma’s idealism wins out over Pa’s pragmatism but not before Steinbeck uses a discourse of hospitality to depict Ma and Pa as host-figures with competing mindsets, thereby setting the stage for a dramatic upheaval in the family’s gender hierarchy.²⁵

At this early point in the novel, then, Ma Joad describes—and, to her credit, treats—hospitality as a categorical imperative. Indeed, when Steinbeck first introduces us to Ma in Chapter 8, we witness her bestow hospitality to Tom and Casy blindly and unhesitatingly, never even seeing their faces before offering to feed them:

Pa stepped into the open doorway and stood there blocking it with his wide short body. He said, "Ma, there's a coupla fellas jus' come along the road, an' they wonder if we could spare a bite."

Tom heard his mother's voice, the remembered cool, calm drawl, friendly and humble. "Let 'em come," she said. . . .

Pa stepped inside, clearing the door, and Tom looked in at his mother. She was lifting the curling slices of pork from the frying pan. The oven door was open, and a great pan of high brown biscuits stood waiting there. She looked out the door, but the sun was behind Tom, and she saw only a dark figure outlined by the bright yellow sunlight. She nodded pleasantly. "Come in," she said. (73-4)

Steinbeck uses this scene both to figure Ma as a maternal symbol of categorical hospitality and to undermine the very idea of categorical hospitality altogether. On one hand, adorned in her "Mother Hubbard" and "thick with child-bearing," Ma embodies a male fantasy of unwavering maternal hospitality (74). In her role as provider, she is "superhuman," as "faultless" as a "goddess." Like the "open" doors that surround her, she is welcoming and receptive (74). What's more, she appears fully invested in the patriarchal ideology that has assigned her the "position" of provider: "She seemed to know, to accept, to welcome her position . . ." (74).²⁶

On the other hand, despite the surface appearance of blind hospitality in this scene, the exchange between Ma and her unexpected guests actually works to undercut Ma's later claim to categorical hospitality. Ma does welcome Tom and Casy without laying eyes on them, but she does so only after Pa has vetted them. By coming to the door and asking Ma if the family "could spare a bite," Pa reveals to his wife that he has

already judged the visitors worthy of consideration. Undoubtedly, one of the unspoken implications of Pa's description of the two visitors as "a coupla fellas" is that they are *white* fellas. As Ma herself makes clear later in the novel when she recalls the time that Uncle John "converted an Injun an' brang him home," the presence of a non-white guest in the home of one of the Joads was a rare event that took place only under exceptional circumstances (396). Moreover, although Pa is performing a role in this scene in order to "fool" Ma, his behavior has important symbolic resonances (75). Standing in the open doorway to shield Tom from Ma's view, Pa himself physically embodies the conditionality that Ma's claim to categorical hospitality seeks to disavow. By "blocking" the entrance to Uncle John's house until Ma issues her invitation, Pa calls attention to the fact that receiving hospitality from the Joads does, in fact, involve a contingent process of authorization, even if that process simply amounts to a performance. In fact, it is precisely the performative nature of this scene—even if Ma Joad herself is unaware of the role that she plays—that serves to remind us that all exchanges of hospitality are always already performances of known and recognizable tropes. In short, by making us aware that a performance is taking place, Steinbeck draws our attention to the reflexive nature of Ma's welcome, thereby undermining her later claim to categorical hospitality.

Steinbeck also uses this scene to underscore the inherent dangers of a model of hospitality that seeks to disavow difference. By offering hospitality to Tom and Casy without first seeing them, Ma welcomes her guests without making any effort to recognize or affirm their singularity. Accordingly, although she wears a "kindly" expression, the invitation Ma confers is an impersonal one (74). It is only after Tom steps "over the doorsill" into the house that he and Ma experience their memorable moment of

recognition—a sunlit and hazy face-to-face encounter that emphasizes the artificial nature of the distinctions between host and guest, known and unknown, self and other (73-4). Of course, this bestowal of hospitality to the stranger who turns out to be a member of the family prepares us for the novel’s later deconstruction of traditional Western notions of family.²⁷ But, more importantly, Ma’s first act of hospitality in *The Grapes of Wrath* reveals that practicing an ethics of categorical hospitality would necessarily require an indifference to the singular difference of the other. In the impersonality of her welcome, Ma treats her own son as a trope—that is, as just another unknown guest who arrives unexpectedly. For Derrida, it is this same trope—the trope of the “absolute, unknown, anonymous other”—that makes it possible to envision an “ideal” of unconditional hospitality (*OH* 25; “A” 131). However, Steinbeck seems to be suggesting in this scene and in a number of later scenes in *The Grapes of Wrath* that perhaps unconditional hospitality is not an ideal form of hospitality, after all. Perhaps, Steinbeck’s novel seems to suggest, we should abandon the kinds of naïve visions of unconditional hospitality that we see imagined in “Breakfast” and, instead, focus on finding ways for hosts and guests to be more aware of and receptive to the irreducible singularity of the other.

Ma is not the only character in *The Grapes of Wrath* who imparts a vision of categorical hospitality early in the novel. In Chapter 6, Muley Graves proffers hospitality according to what he describes as a universal imperative. When Tom and Casy encounter Muley unexpectedly and ask if he is willing to share his supper with them, he assents but only after explaining that he has no “choice”:

Muley fidgeted in embarrassment. “I ain’t got no choice in the matter.” He stopped on the ungracious sound of his words. “That ain’t like I mean it. That

ain't. I mean"—he stumbled—"what I mean, if a fella's got somepin to eat an' another fella's hungry—why, the first fella ain't got no choice. I mean, s'pose I pick up my rabbits an' go off somewheres an' eat 'em. See?" (49)

Muley does not expand on his view of hospitality beyond what he states here, so the logic behind his maxim of universal hospitality remains unclear. Jim Casy, who is in the process of sorting out his own vision of an interconnected human soul, is unsurprisingly enamored by Muley's formulation: "Muley's got a-holt of somepin, an' it's too big for him, an it's too big for me" (49).

Although Muley is no doubt unaware, the ethics of hospitality he articulates here is very much in keeping with the model of "universal hospitality" outlined by Kant in *Perpetual Peace* (Kant 137). Like Kant, who proposes a theory of hospitality grounded not in a spirit of "philanthropy" but in an abstract notion of a universal "right to visitation," Muley characterizes the figure of the host as one who provides hospitality out of a sense of shared human obligation (Kant 138). But Muley's physical behavior and his "ungracious" tone indicate that perhaps his maxim does not, in fact, reflect his belief in a universal code of ethics. On the contrary, perhaps Muley's comments simply point to the fact that hosts feel obligated to provide hospitality because they share an innate instinct for survival. To be sure, Tom Joad, newly released from prison after serving a four-year sentence for homicide, presents an intimidating figure. One can only imagine that Tom's direct and gruff appeal to Muley's hospitality feels like a demand made by a man very capable of physical violence: "Four solemn years I been eatin' right on the minute. My guts is yellin' bloody murder. What you gonna eat, Muley?" (48). In other words, maybe it is Muley's fear of Tom Joad and not his sense of ethical obligation that prevents him

from going “off somewheres” and eating alone. In the end, the important thing is that Muley, like Ma Joad, communicates a categorical model of hospitality, one that renounces “choice” and, in the process, attempts to disavow the ethical component that a moment of undecidability makes possible. In the end, despite Jim Casy’s fondness for Muley’s universal maxim, it is Muley’s effort at universalizing that makes his model inoperable as an ethics of hospitality. It is simply “too big” to be of any practical use.

Through Ma Joad and Muley Graves, Steinbeck calls attention to the central role that disavowal plays in perpetuating myths of categorical hospitality.²⁸ Through Ma, in particular, Steinbeck introduces us to a discourse of disavowal rooted firmly in the American experience. Portraying the Joads as representatively American in their expansion westward—“it’s a long time our folks been here and east before”—Ma grounds her claim to categorical hospitality in an exceptionalist logic that takes for granted her family’s rightful claim to American lands.²⁹ We see Ma employ this same unapologetic logic later in the novel when she attempts to portray the Joads as rightful hosts unfairly divested of their hard-fought sovereignty: “We’re the Joads. We don’t look up to nobody. Grampa’s grampa, he fit in the Revolution. We was farm people till the debt. And then—them people” (307). However, despite Ma’s efforts, the history of Native-American dispossession haunts the narrative of the Joads, lurking below the surface and undermining their claims to natural sovereignty. As early as Chapter 5, Steinbeck’s intercalary narrator reminds us that the westward expansion of white Europeans and Americans was dominated not by acts of white hospitality but by gross violations of Native-American hospitality: “Grampa took up the land, and he had to kill the Indians and drive them away” (33). As we shall see, it is often through the voice of

the novel's intercalary narrator that Steinbeck lays bare the racist hypocrisies of his own characters. In the meantime, the narrative chapters often feature Ma Joad reenacting the same kind of aggressive assertiveness as her ancestors. As her multiple "revolts" against Pa indicate, Ma is willing to fight—"jack handle" in hand, if necessary—to keep her family together and to uphold the family's longstanding ethos of hospitality (168-69).

Ma's act of blind hospitality to Tom and Casy implies an indifference to race that the Joads are never given an opportunity to affirm in *The Grapes of Wrath*. At no point during the course of the novel are they in a position to offer to or withhold hospitality from anyone who is not white. In fact, according to the narrative chapters in *The Grapes of Wrath*, the Joads encounter only one non-white character during their entire journey, a half-Cherokee migrant named Jules Vitela whom Tom meets at the Weedpatch Camp (339). In place of the foreign and black migrants who had been toiling away in California's fields for decades, Steinbeck substitutes the more assimilable figure of the recently arrived white American "Okie."³⁰ And through the fetishistic stereotype of the "Okie"—a stereotype that is itself racialized by hostile Californians—Steinbeck constructs an identifiable symbol of the unwelcome guest for his white American audience. Underwriting the demonization of Dust Bowl migrants as "Okies" is a practice of racialization. Okies are, we are told, as "dangerous as niggers in the South" and not a "hell of a lot better than gorillas" (236, 221). Although Steinbeck fails to include non-white migrants in his novel, he does use the example of the Joads to draw attention to a strategy of disavowing inhospitality through a rhetoric of racialization. Fixating on the discrimination experienced by the Joads and other Okies allows Steinbeck to downplay prior and concurrent histories of discrimination in the California agricultural economy,

histories riddled with acts of racial exclusion, forced repatriation, the selective withholding of state and federal aid, wage manipulation, and unlawful land seizure. Accordingly, we might say that, as a text, *The Grapes of Wrath* is markedly inhospitable to non-white characters; or, at the very least, we might say that Steinbeck is clearly reluctant to welcome non-white characters into the dominant spaces of the narrative. Noting the absence of non-white characters in the novel, Colleen Lye has recently argued that Steinbeck achieves “migrant representability” in *The Grapes of Wrath* through a “resignification of whiteness” and a concomitant disregard for racial difference (143). However, this characterization of the novel is not entirely accurate. Although Lye and others have demonstrated convincingly that Steinbeck’s narrative of the Joads misrepresents the racial and national demographics of the California migrant population during the late 1930s, what has received less critical attention are the ways in which Steinbeck uses the intercalary chapters to challenge the repressive nature of his own narrative.³¹

In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck utilizes the dialectical structure of his novel to present us with a generally repressed but occasionally acknowledged disavowal of racial difference. Steinbeck’s intercalary narrator’s intermittent and often fleeting references to Mexican, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino migrant workers undermine the dominant narrative’s fetishizing of the Joads as representative California migrants. Chapters 19 and 23 exemplify the text’s paradoxical attitude toward race by, on one hand, drawing attention to the narrative’s disavowal of racial difference and, on the other, replicating that disavowal by reiterating the stereotypes that both enable and disguise racist acts of inhospitality in the novel. In the opening sentence of Chapter 19, for instance, the

intercalary narrator recognizes the repressed histories of Mexican and Mexican-American migrants by recalling, “Once California belonged to Mexico and its land to Mexicans; and a horde of tattered feverish Americans poured in” (231). Yet, only two pages later, Steinbeck’s text undercuts this recognition of native status for Mexicans through the voices of racist Okies: “We ain’t foreign. Seven generations back Americans, and beyond that Irish, Scotch, English, German. One of our folks in the Revolution, an’ they was lots of our folks in the Civil War—both sides. Americans” (233). Here, we see how Steinbeck uses the heteroglossia of his novel to deconstruct the signifying binaries—native/foreign, host/guest, white/non-white, American/non-American—that have been used both to expropriate and defend the rights of marginalized others in North America for centuries. In Chapter 23, Steinbeck further destabilizes these binaries by again employing a number of narrative voices to reference a similar history of expropriation in the case of Native Americans (325-27). In each of these examples, Steinbeck takes advantage of the dialectical form of his novel to interrogate and/or directly contradict the dominant discourses of hospitality voiced by the Joads and other white characters.³² In the process, he encourages us to read the narrative chapters of the novel more critically and to rethink and perhaps even reread earlier scenes with a more critical eye. In this way, Steinbeck’s intercalary chapters encourage us to be on the look out for moments when the narrative or characters in the narrative are guilty of disavowing racial difference. If the novel’s narrative chapters are inhospitable to non-white migrants—in the sense that non-white migrants do not appear as characters in the novel—then the intercalary chapters are, if nothing else, more willing to accommodate their repressed histories and points of view. Accordingly, we might say that Steinbeck’s intercalary chapters provide a space where

repressed acts of disaccommodation can be disclosed and inscribed within a historical narrative of dispossession.³³

Ultimately, Steinbeck accomplishes his most effective and insightful critiques of dominant Western discourses of hospitality in *The Grapes of Wrath* by way of his deliberate focus on the ethical complexities of migrant life. Traditional theories of hospitality are grounded in the premise that hospitality cannot be offered or received without the presence of a threshold that marks the border between the interior of the home (household, state, region, nation, etc.) and the exterior of the outside world.³⁴ It is this threshold that privileges the host as local resident and defines the guest as alien. In this sense, the act of offering hospitality both requires and affirms the boundaries of the home. The host, Derrida explains, “must be assured of his sovereignty over the space and goods he offers or opens to the other as stranger” (“H” 14). Thus, it is the host’s sovereignty over the space of the home that establishes and contributes to his or her “power of hospitality” (*OH* 54-5).

Yet, what traditional conceptions of hospitality do not take into account is what happens when the thresholds we conventionally take for granted are undefined or contested. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck uses the narrative of the Joads to demonstrate how dispossession of the home destabilizes the discursive tropes, normative codes of behavior, and juridical hierarchies that inform dominant Western models of hospitality. Along the way, Steinbeck’s novel urges us to ask ourselves: What ethical responsibilities do we have to one another when the frontiers of our sovereignty cannot be identified, when the lines between the home and the outside world, between private and public, cannot be delimited? What happens, in other words, when it is no longer

possible to distinguish between the host and the guest, between the resident and the stranger, between the one who welcomes and the one who is received?

As early as the first chapters of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck focuses attention on the disorienting effects of dispossession and displacement. When Tom Joad approaches his family home after being released from prison, he finds it abandoned and dilapidated. The house itself has been “pushed off its foundations,” and the nearby outhouse lies “on its side” (40). One corner of the house is “mashed”; the windows are “broken out”; and the fences that used to surround the house are “gone” (40-1). With cotton growing “in the dooryard and up against the house,” the territorial boundaries of the home have been breached (40). Tom is able to locate and identify the doorstep to the house, but it no longer serves any functional purpose: “Doorstep’s here . . . But they’re gone” (41).

Steinbeck’s portrait of the Joads’ deserted home functions symbolically as a metaphor for the migrant experience. As the overrun state of their home indicates, the Joads have come to experience what Homi Bhabha has called “the unhomely”: “the shock of recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world” (“The World” 141). Driven out of their home, the Joads assume a kind of “in-between” existence marked by an inability to maintain a firm and grounded interior space of their own (“The World” 148). Displaced to their Hudson truck—where home itself is, by definition, mobile—the Joads must reimagine the contours of their lives: “The families, which had been units of which the boundaries were a house at night, a farm by day, changed their boundaries” (195-96). Alongside highways, the Joads and other migrant families make and remake *ad hoc* worlds, temporary living spaces informed by the erratic demands of

nomadic life. In the evenings, they pitch their tents; in the mornings, they take them down (195). Eventually, the Joads end up in a neglected boxcar, where they cohabit with the Wainwrights. A tarpaulin initially hangs across the middle of the car to separate the families, but Al takes it down during the rainstorm to spread it over the Hudson: “Now, without the separation, the two families in the car were one” (436). Without stable and secure borders to protect and enclose the family, the Joads find that the “privacy” of the home can no longer be differentiated from the “public” of the world (Bhabha “The World” 141). Thus, for the Joads, the uncanny experience of migration entails a loss of the “private” and, therefore, a radical reassessment of the traditional distinction between “public” and “private.”

The experience of migration forces the Joads to abandon naïve visions of categorical hospitality and to accept conditionality as an undeniable factor in their interactions with others. At the gate to a New Mexico campground, the family learns that it is unlawful simply to “lay down an’ rest” on land currently unoccupied by others (186). As the proprietor of the campground informs them, “Got a law against sleepin’ out in this State. Got a law about vagrants” (186). In direct contrast to Kant’s universal “law” of hospitality, which is grounded in the cosmopolitan principle that all humans share a “common claim” to the “surface of the earth” (138), the laws forbidding vagrancy in New Mexico—and later in Arizona and California—are motivated by nativist hostility and justified according to a rhetoric of racialization. Collectively racialized as “Okies,” the Joads and their fellow laborers are always already unwelcome when they arrive in search of hospitality (236, 221). Stopping at a squatter “encampment” shortly after arriving in California, the Joads are informed in no uncertain terms that they and all other “goddamn

Okies” should move along (214). “We don’t want none of you settlin’ down here,” they are warned (213). In order to rationalize their fear of otherness and to deny the ethical implications of their exclusionary behavior, Steinbeck’s Californians maintain that their state has reached what François Mitterand once referred to as a “threshold of tolerance”: the point beyond which it is no longer “decent” to ask a community to “welcome any more foreigners” (qtd. in Derrida “A” 128).³⁵ “It ain’t big enough,” Californians argue in one of the intercalary chapters. “There ain’t room enough for you an’ me, for your kind an’ my kind, for rich and poor together all in one country . . .” (120). Through this organicist rhetoric, Californians in *The Grapes of Wrath* argue that what appears to be inhospitality is really, in fact, a necessary precaution exercised in response to a natural phenomenon. Whereas Ma Joad and Muley Graves contend that they have no “choice” but to offer hospitality to arriving strangers, Steinbeck’s Californians assert that they have no choice but to exclude them. Like Ma and Muley, then, nativist hosts in California deny the existence of a moment of undecidability. However, unlike Ma and Muley, they treat inhospitality, and not hospitality, as a foregone conclusion. For them, inhospitality takes the form of a self-evident act of collective self-preservation.

The turning point in the Joads’ struggle to come to terms with conditionality takes place at a Hooverville camp in Chapter 20. Named pejoratively after President Herbert Hoover, “Hoovervilles” were squatter villages that cropped up in areas where migrants tended to populate in search of work (Gregory 64-8; Stanley 25).³⁶ Filled with migrants in various stages of starvation, these anarchic squatter camps tested the limits of their inhabitants’ hospitality.³⁷ Not surprisingly, then, it is at a Hooverville camp that the Joads are obliged to recognize their own limitations. While cooking a pot of stew during the

Joads' first evening at the camp, Ma learns that a group of children standing around and watching her have eaten nothing but fried dough since breakfast (253). When she finishes cooking, Ma openly acknowledges that she is experiencing a moment of undecidability: "I dunno what to do. I got to feed the fambly. What'm I gonna do with these here?" (257). Forced to make a decision—to choose between her personal allegiance to her family and her feeling of ethical responsibility to the starving children—Ma ultimately decides to reduce the dinner portions for her family and to leave the children "what's lef'" of the stew (257-58). Instructing the children to find flat sticks to use as utensils, Ma sets a pot on the ground with the remaining stew, looks "apologetically" at the starving faces, and then hurries away into the Joad tent so that she does not have to "see" the children fight over the food (258).

On one hand, Ma's conditional act of hospitality in this scene constitutes an early example of the kind of affirmative hospitality that the Joads impart later in the novel. Confronted with a moment of undecidability, Ma chooses to affirm the needs of the children who stand before her, even though she knows that the hospitality she provides is limited. The novel's most vocal proponent of the integrity of the family, Ma is driven here to expand the scope of her sympathy outward and to do so at the expense of her family. As she herself admits, setting aside food for the children has left the Joads with "nowhere near enough" to eat (258). At first glance, then, this scene appears to exemplify what numerous scholars have described as a "progressively widening experience of sympathetic engagement" in *The Grapes of Wrath* (Sklar 509). Often pointing to this scene, in particular, critics have consistently argued that Steinbeck uses the narrative of the Joads to advocate for a cosmopolitan ethics that deemphasizes the importance of the

biological family.³⁸ Certainly, Jim Casy's notion of a universal and interconnected "human sperit" contributes to this impression (24).

However, when examined in terms of its impact on how the Joads approach future scenes of hospitality, this scene is significant not because it leads the Joads to begin offering hospitality to strangers without any consideration for the needs of the family but, quite the contrary, because it teaches them that they must sometimes withhold hospitality in order to save the family. Ma herself comes to this conclusion only minutes after leaving the stew for the children: "We can't do that no more . . . We got to eat alone" (258). Signaling a major shift in Ma's sense of the family's capacity to offer hospitality, this moment engenders a fundamental change in the Joads' interactions with strangers. From this point forward in the novel, every action the Joads take to feed or otherwise provide for others is carried out without a pretense of unconditionality. By the time the Joads reach the Hooper Ranch in Chapter 26, they freely admit that their own survival as a family is their foremost concern. As Tom explains to Casy, "We was outta food . . . Tonight we had meat. Not much, but we had it. Think Pa's gonna give up his meat on account a other fellas? An' Roseharn oughta get milk. Think Ma's gonna wanta starve that baby jus' cause a bunch a fellas is yellin' outside a gate?" (384). No longer deluded by Ma's impossible claim to categorical hospitality, the Joads have finally come to accept the reality of conditionality.³⁹

II

In February of 1939, two months prior to the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath*, the left-leaning *San Francisco News* featured a sketch by political cartoonist Douglas Rodger celebrating President Roosevelt's formation of an interagency federal

commission tasked with coordinating relief efforts for California's migrant labor population (Fig. 1).⁴⁰ In the cartoon, a beleaguered mother figure, wearing an apron that identifies her as "CALIFORNIA," frantically stirs a large pot at her kitchen stove while a horde of starving migrants begs at her feet. In the open doorway of the kitchen stands a dapper Uncle Sam with a Rooseveltian Cheshire-cat smile. Turning from her boiling pot, California gazes in desperate relief at the arriving male savior. Above the cartoon, a caption reads: "AND ARE WE GLAD TO SEE HIM!"



Fig. 1 "AND ARE WE GLAD TO SEE HIM!" *San Francisco News*, Feb. 21, 1939, 4.

Strikingly similar to Steinbeck's image of Ma Joad cooking stew while surrounded by starving children at the Hooverville camp, Rodger's cartoon employs a narrative of hospitality to legitimize and naturalize the exercise of federal power in California. Figuring California as a besieged female host and the US nation (through the metonym of the Rooseveltian Uncle Sam) as a long-awaited male guest, Rodger utilizes conventional tropes of hospitality to portray New Deal federal intervention as a necessary and welcome complement to state aid. Standing in the open doorway of California's kitchen, Uncle Sam, with his hat doffed out of courtesy to his host, is represented not as an uninvited alien force but as a respectful and benevolent guest. At the same time, however, by virtue of his vast capacity to provide hospitality, Rodger's Uncle Sam—i.e. President Roosevelt—is imagined here as *the* superlative host, as *the* true and overarching sovereign.⁴¹ Moreover, arriving unexpectedly during a time of crisis, Roosevelt is pictured as a savior host, a kind of *deus ex machina* of hospitality. He is, according to the gendered tropology of the cartoon, the essential male provider, capable of supplying what the female California cannot. Yet, despite the wealth, confidence, and authority that Rodger's Uncle Sam clearly exudes, the cartoon gives us no reason to believe that his power in any way threatens California's sovereignty. On the contrary, the sketch and its caption suggest instead that the arrival of a commanding and resourceful federal presence is wholly desirable. In other words, although Rodger suggests that true sovereignty lies not with the state of California but with the federal government, his image of Uncle Sam as a deferential guest works to assuage our fears about Roosevelt's use of federal power.

Rodger's cartoon is significant with respect to *The Grapes of Wrath* because it represents an image of federal welfarism that Steinbeck endorses in the years leading up to *The Grapes of Wrath* but which he eventually chooses to reject in his novel.⁴² Critics have long argued that *The Grapes of Wrath* reflects Steinbeck's unwavering faith in the efficacy of federal intervention. Ever since Edmund Wilson famously dismissed *Grapes* as a New Deal "propaganda novel" in 1941, opponents and proponents of the novel have persistently reiterated Wilson's reductive claim (42).⁴³ Cliff Lewis has gone as far as to dub Steinbeck the "literary executor of the New Deal" (35).⁴⁴ More recently, Michael Szalay has denounced *The Grapes of Wrath* for being, as he puts it, "morally didactic" in its championing of "national welfarism" (167, 182).

The prevailing theory that Steinbeck wholeheartedly supports Roosevelt's New Deal welfarism is based primarily on the claim that he idealizes the Weedpatch Camp as a federal utopia in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Characterizations of Weedpatch as a kind of federal paradise are standard and numerous in Steinbeck criticism. Henry Veggian, Michael Denning, Danica Cerce, and Michael Szalay all refer to Steinbeck's government camp as a "utopia" (Veggian 355; Denning 266; Cerce 29; Szalay 175).⁴⁵ John Seelye describes Weedpatch as a "heaven on earth" (18). Peter Lisca likens the camp to "the land of Canaan" (302). Film producer Darryl Zanuck was so enamored by Steinbeck's Weedpatch that he chose to end his 1940 film adaptation at the federal camp rather than follow the Joads to the boxcar and eventually to the rainy barn where the novel's controversial final scene takes place. In fact, Zanuck goes as far as to completely shift the setting of Tom and Ma's memorable goodbye scene from the cave outside Hooper Ranch, where it takes place in the novel, to the outskirts of the Weedpatch dance floor.⁴⁶

By altering the ending of the Joads' narrative, Zanuck contributed to the mythologization of Weedpatch—and to the federal camps more generally—as representing a solution to migrant homelessness and unemployment.⁴⁷ To those, like Leslie Fiedler, who find the final scene of the novel morbid and sentimental, Zanuck's film provides a welcome alternative, an ending that more closely aligns with what Steinbeck's detractors have themselves identified as the novel's "avowed politics" of welfarism (64).⁴⁸

Two and a half years prior to the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck himself offered a first-hand journalistic account of the federal migrant camps that has often been cited as evidence of his novel's staunch federalism.⁴⁹ Having gained a reputation as a farm-labor sympathizer in early 1936 with the publication of *In Dubious Battle*, Steinbeck was invited by the left-leaning *San Francisco News*—the same newspaper that ran Rodger's federalist cartoon—to write an editorial series about the federal government's burgeoning efforts to construct relief camps for homeless Dust Bowl migrants.⁵⁰ In August of 1936, accompanied by Eric Thomsen, the Director in Charge of Management for the Resettlement Administration (the New Deal agency initially responsible for the migrant camps), Steinbeck traveled through California's San Joaquin Valley, visiting several Hooverville camps and one federal camp, the Arvin Federal Camp in Kern County, known unofficially as "Weedpatch" because it was located close to the town of Weedpatch and situated right off Weedpatch Highway (Stanley 29).⁵¹ Opened in early 1936, Arvin was the second migrant relief camp constructed by the Resettlement Administration. By 1940, when the Resettlement Administration (RA) was transformed into the Farm Security Administration (FSA), the federal government had constructed approximately fifteen migrant camps in California

(Benson “To Tom” 163).⁵² During his visit to Arvin in 1936, Steinbeck met and befriended the camp manager, Tom Collins, who served as an invaluable source of information and later provided Steinbeck with the model for Jim Rawley, the Weedpatch Camp manager in his novel.⁵³ Steinbeck and Thomsen spent two weeks at Arvin, meeting with residents and officials, reading camp reports, attending committee meetings, and traveling around the region.⁵⁴

Steinbeck’s “Harvest Gypsies” series, a collection of seven articles published in *The San Francisco News* in October of 1936, does, in fact, idealize the Resettlement Administration’s relief camp project as an antidote to California’s migrant labor crisis.⁵⁵ Celebrating the Arvin Camp as a “success,” Steinbeck argues that the federal camp helps “restore dignity” to the migrants by reassigning them a “valid position in regard to society” (42, 39). “The result of this responsible self-government has been remarkable,” Steinbeck reports. “The inhabitants of the camp came there beaten, sullen, and destitute. But as their social sense was revived they have settled down. The camp takes care of its own destitute, feeding and sheltering those who have nothing . . .” (40). Thus, Steinbeck contends, the federal camp instills in migrants a renewed “ethics toward society,” transforming “potential criminals into citizens” (39, 42-3). In the end, Steinbeck concludes that the Resettlement Administration has created something “unique,” a new model of federal assistance that should be expanded to accommodate as many Dust Bowl migrants as possible (40).⁵⁶

In some ways, Steinbeck’s depiction of Weedpatch in *The Grapes of Wrath* replicates the federalism that he expresses in his “Harvest Gypsies” series. The Joads arrive at the fabled “gov’ment camp” at the beginning of Chapter 22 after escaping the

poverty and chaos of the Hooverville camp (280). Having already heard much about Weedpatch from their fellow migrants—“You never seen such a place” (254)—the Joads are not disappointed by what they find. In terms of the federal government’s professed objectives—“to improve the living conditions of the migrants while en route between work”—Steinbeck’s Weedpatch is exemplary (Baldwin 222). Unlike the anarchic Hooverville camp, Weedpatch boasts elected committee officers, a childcare program, running water, washtubs, basic healthcare, and even a dance hall. In addition, Weedpatch also facilitates and promotes acts of hospitality. Setting an example for Weedpatch residents is the camp manager, Jim Rawley, who quickly wins over an initially incredulous Ma Joad with his “warm” manner (304). In contrast to the numerous antagonistic and self-interested hosts whom the Joads meet during their travels, Rawley appears to have no ulterior motives when he graciously welcomes the Joads to Weedpatch: “[Ma Joad] looked for motive on his face, and found nothing but friendliness” (305). Likewise, Tom experiences similar generosity during the Joads’ first morning at the camp when, in Steinbeck’s retelling of the “Breakfast” scene, a family of fellow migrants invites him to join them for breakfast (290-93). Weedpatch also provides residents with the opportunity to invite “guests” to camp dances, a privilege that fills them with great pride: “Our people got nothing, but jes’ because they can ast their frien’s to come here to the dance, sets ‘em up an’ makes ‘em proud” (340). In other words, Steinbeck’s account of Weedpatch suggests that the federal camp makes possible otherwise impossible acts of hospitality. Endorsed, subsidized, and policed by the federal government, the exclusive space of Weedpatch affords the Joads and their fellow

migrants the protection to partake in exchanges of hospitality without fear of outside interference from hostile Californians.⁵⁷

Ultimately, however, Steinbeck's portrayal of Weedpatch is much more complex and conflicted than critics have previously recognized. Although the novel does present a favorable account of the migrant camp, it also draws attention to the limitations of federal hospitality. In short, Steinbeck's Weedpatch Camp is not an isolated federal utopia but an inherently conditional space of limited welcome. Emphasizing rather than disavowing the exclusive and contingent nature of federal hospitality at Weedpatch, Steinbeck portrays New Deal welfarism as impractical and insufficient. In the process, he rejects the FSA's detached ethics of federal hospitality in favor of an affirmative ethics of individual responsibility. By the time the Joads leave Weedpatch in Chapter 26, it is clear that Steinbeck's migrants can survive only if they individually and collectively adopt a culture of hospitality that can accommodate the unique exigencies of migrant life.⁵⁸

But what accounts for Steinbeck's changed attitude toward federal hospitality between October of 1936, when he wrote his "Harvest Gypsies" series, and May of 1938, when he began writing *The Grapes of Wrath*? How can we explain Steinbeck's disillusionment with the FSA's relief camp project during this time? After his first visit to the Arvin Federal Camp in 1936, Steinbeck returned to the San Joaquin Valley three more times before he began work on *The Grapes of Wrath*. Altogether, Steinbeck spent about two months at Arvin and in the surrounding areas visiting with migrants, learning their stories, and assisting Tom Collins in his role as camp manager.⁵⁹ The most crucial of Steinbeck's visits—and the one that was most responsible for transforming his views on federal hospitality—came in February and March of 1938 during a period of

catastrophic flooding. Dispatched to Visalia (about one hundred miles north of Arvin) by the FSA, Collins invited Steinbeck to accompany him and to assist in the relief effort. Unable to drive into the flooded areas, Collins and Steinbeck spent one night wading through wet fields before they finally arrived at a camp outside Visalia, where four thousand migrant families had been “drowned out of their tents” (Steinbeck *Life* 159). As Collins would later recall in an unpublished memoir, the two men spent their first forty-eight hours at Visalia providing uninterrupted aid: “For forty eight hours, and without food or sleep, we worked among the sick and the half starved people, dragging some from under trees to a different sort of shelter, dragging others from torn and ragged tents, flooded with inches of water, stagnant water, to the questionable shelter of a higher piece of ground” (Collins 221).⁶⁰ Collins and Steinbeck remained at Visalia for two weeks offering whatever support they could to help the starving and sick migrants (Collins 224).

Although Steinbeck spent only a short time at Visalia, the trip had a profound impact on him. Initially, he experienced this impact in the form of unprecedented physical pain: “Damn it, I know something hit me and hit me hard for it hurts inside clear to the back of my head. I got pains all over my head, hard pains. Have never had pains like this before. Make me nervous as hell” (Collins 225). Eventually, however, Steinbeck realized that this oppressive pain was a physical manifestation of the overwhelming shock of his flood experience. As he later told Collins, “I’ve seen and experienced so much I ache all over—inside. Hell, I’m all right otherwise, for I have good health. It’s something inside me, goddam it” (226). Steinbeck’s trip to Visalia was devastating for him not simply because of the destitution and misery that he witnessed. Perhaps more importantly, it was because what he saw forced him to recognize the practical limitations

of federal hospitality. Prior to his experience during the flood, Steinbeck believed that a massive, government-subsidized relief effort was the answer to the migrant labor problem in California. In a letter to a friend written only days before he left for Visalia, Steinbeck rejected outright the idea that one person alone could make a worthwhile difference in the San Joaquin Valley: “Of course no individual effort will help. Ten thousand people are affected in one area” (*Life* 159).

Yet, the failure of the FSA and other agencies to provide for the basic needs of migrants during the flood revealed to Steinbeck that federal hospitality was not the solution to migrant poverty and homelessness. No longer willing to resign himself to the rationale that it is acceptable to “do nothing” simply because it feels as if “the problem is so great,” Steinbeck resolved that it was time for Americans to stop relying on the federal government to provide hospitality to those in need (*Life* 161).⁶¹ In a letter dated March 7, the day he returned from Visalia, Steinbeck embraced a new ethics of individual responsibility: “. . . the argument that one person’s effort can’t really do anything doesn’t seem to apply when you come on a bunch of starving children . . .” (*Life* 161).

Committing himself to the project of sharing his transformative experience and using it to revolutionize the moral conscience of the nation, Steinbeck announced to Collins before he left Visalia that the time had come to start writing: “I’m going back home right now. I’ve got to get home as fast as that old pie truck can get me there. I’ve got a big job to do . . .” (Collins 226). By mid-May, Steinbeck had mapped out and begun writing *The Grapes of Wrath*.⁶²

Steinbeck uses the intercalary chapters in *The Grapes of Wrath* to express his disappointment in the federal government’s relief agencies:

Then some went to the relief offices, and they came sadly back to their own people.

They's rules—you got to be here a year before you can git relief. They say the gov'ment is gonna help. They don' know when. (433)

Indeed, the federal government's "grant-in-aid" program, adopted in response to the great floods of February 1938, provided relief only to families in which "one member had worked at agriculture in the year prior to migration," and even then, it supplied this relief for only one year (Stein 85).⁶³ Significantly complicating the question of relief for Dust Bowl migrants was the fact that they had forfeited their right to receive federal unemployment when they gave up their residency status in their home state (Stein 141).⁶⁴ As interstate migrants, the Joads and their fellow laborers were denied aid based on the premise that neither the federal government nor the State of California was responsible for their welfare (Stein 143-44). As Steinbeck details in Chapter 29 of *The Grapes of Wrath*, the result of this cooperative denial of hospitality was that migrants were forced to "beg" at the homes and businesses of California's citizens: "They splashed out through the water, to the towns, to the country stores . . . to beg for food, to cringe and beg for food, to beg for relief . . ." (433). However, this begging was met with "anger" and "fear," emotions that reflected a shared cultural belief that it was the government's job and not the individual's to provide hospitality to the masses of desperate migrants (434). This was, above all, what Steinbeck realized during the flood: a culture invested so fervently in a romantic image of federal hospitality effectively discouraged private citizens from carrying out individual acts of hospitality.

No scene in *The Grapes of Wrath* is more indicative of Steinbeck's changed attitude toward federal hospitality than the revised scene from "Breakfast," which takes place during the Joads' first morning at Weedpatch. In Steinbeck's updated version, the core elements of the encounter remain the same: a man comes upon a young woman nursing her baby while cooking over a stove; the man begins to warm his hands over a fire; two men emerge from a tent and invite their unexpected guest to join them for breakfast; the hosts do not ask for anything in return for what they provide; and the man thanks his hosts for their hospitality. Reframed within the context of *The Grapes of Wrath*, however, Steinbeck's unexpected guest's encounter with his generous hosts takes on an entirely different meaning. Whereas the narrator's migrant hosts in "Breakfast" boast of their bountiful success as cotton pickers and leave for work attired in brand new dungaree jeans and coats (62), their counterparts in *The Grapes of Wrath* admit with "shame" that they "near starve" to death" struggling to find steady employment in California (293). During their ten months in California, Timothy and Wilkie Wallace—in the novel, we learn Tom's hosts' names—have been so desperate for food that they have had to sell their car for "ten dollars": "We sol' our car. Had to. Run outa food, run outa everything. Couldn' get no job" (293).⁶⁵ Hence, although the Wallaces, like the unnamed hosts in "Breakfast," are currently benefiting from twelve days of consecutive work, they offer hospitality to Tom *despite* the acknowledged and very real possibility that they could be starving again in a few days. Rather than save what they have for themselves and for the future, they affirm the present needs of the arriving other who stands before them. In other words, they treat Tom's arrival as an event to be affirmed, as a lived experience that occurs in a specific time and place. Moreover, it is this same sense of

responsibility to the other—what Derrida would call a “*spirit*” of affirmation (*OS* 94) — that brings the Wallaces to invite Tom to join them in their work laying pipe for a nearby landowner, *despite* the obvious threat that he poses to their already tenuous job security. Tom himself makes their sacrifice explicit when he bluntly asks, “What you cuttin’ your own throat for?” (293). In the end, unlike his precursor in “Breakfast,” Tom enthusiastically accepts his hosts’ offer of work: “Ya goddamn right I want” (291). In contrast to the narrator of Steinbeck’s short story, who has the luxury of declining his hosts’ invitation, Tom simply cannot afford to turn down a chance to make money for his family. Indeed, as we later learn, this is one of the very few opportunities for work that the Joad men have during their month at Weedpatch (350).

It is by viewing Steinbeck’s revised scene alongside its original that we can understand the full import of Tom’s encounter with the Wallaces at Weedpatch. As Derrida notes, it is the very “idea” of unconditional hospitality—the very “thought” of a hospitality entirely liberated from the constraints of contingency—that allows us to recognize the positive value in acts of conditional hospitality (“A” 129). It is Steinbeck’s original vision of a practically impossible scene of hospitality—a scene that takes place in an unspecified location at an indeterminate time and imagines an unreserved act of welcoming offered to an anonymous and unexpected other—that allows us to more readily recognize the conditional nature of the scene at Weedpatch *and* to more fully appreciate the affirmative quality of the Wallace’s hospitality. Viewed alongside “Breakfast,” the scene at Weedpatch becomes legible as a symbolic moment of affirmation. The Wallaces do not offer hospitality simply as a matter of course; rather, they do so with deliberate intention and in the messianic spirit of Derrida’s “*yes*” (“TL”

180). By responding in the affirmative to Tom's call for hospitality, the Wallaces choose to welcome the arriving other *despite* their knowledge that their act of hospitality could very well be self-defeating. In the process, they say "yes" to the unknown future; they welcome the future "to come" ("H" 14).

It is not simply Tom's encounter with the Wallaces that draws our attention to the inherent limitations of the federal hospitality at Weedpatch. The FSA facility offers the Joads temporary relief, but it cannot shelter them permanently from the harsh realities of migrant life outside the camp. After only one month at Weedpatch, the Joads are forced to leave because they are unable to earn enough money to feed themselves (350). Subsisting on a diet consisting only of fried dough, the young Winfield and the pregnant Rose of Sharon are starving by the time the family leaves Weedpatch (350). During their month at the camp, Tom manages to procure only "five days' work," and the rest of the men in the family find "no work" at all (350). Not surprisingly, Steinbeck portrays the Joads' experiences of being denied work as scenes of withheld hospitality: "Been goin' in ever' gate, walkin' up to ever' house, even when we knowed they wasn't gonna be nothin'. Puts a weight on ya. Goin' out lookin' for somepin' you know you ain't gonna find" (350). Recounting these scenes of withheld hospitality from the safe confines of Weedpatch, Pa Joad unwittingly pinpoints the fundamental problem with the FSA model of federal hospitality: functioning merely as palliatives, the relief camps do nothing to address the systemic causes of migrant labor exploitation in the American capitalist economy.⁶⁶ Though admirable and certainly appreciated, the federal hospitality offered at Weedpatch cannot prevent hosts at farms and ranches all throughout California from continuing to withhold hospitality from migrants.

Unlike in his “Harvest Gypsies” series, Steinbeck acknowledges the conditional nature of New Deal welfarism from the outset in *The Grapes of Wrath*. When we first hear about Weedpatch from a starving girl at the Hooverville camp in Chapter 20, we are told that the FSA facility is “full up” (254). Thus, Steinbeck introduces the FSA camp to us as an exclusive space of limited welcome. As the young girl’s account of Weedpatch suggests, the FSA camps were places where many Depression-era migrants “wisht” to live but from which they were regularly denied entrance (254). The Arvin Federal Camp, for example, could accommodate only 450 residents at one time (Campbell 403). By sheer necessity, then, federal officials at the camp were forced to turn away starving migrants every day. Only by consistently upholding a policy of selective hospitality could FSA officials ensure that they were able to provide ample accommodations for those residents who were fortunate enough to arrive when the camp had open spaces.

However, receiving hospitality at FSA camps was not simply a matter of showing up at the right time. As Tom Joad’s lengthy interview with the watchman at Weedpatch suggests (286-87), being offering federal hospitality was contingent on meeting several requirements.⁶⁷ Although the Joads meet the prerequisites for admission, Steinbeck’s account of the screening process at Weedpatch hints at more egregious practices of discrimination at federal camps.⁶⁸ Indeed, not all prospective guests were treated equally at the gates to FSA relief facilities. Despite the popular narrative of Roosevelt’s “comprehensive” welfarism (Savage 125), foreign-born laborers were systematically excluded from receiving federal hospitality during the 1930s and 1940s, especially at federal camps. For example, more than 94% of the migrants who received aid through the federal government’s Transient Program during the mid-1930s were “native-born

persons” (*US Department* 562). Populated principally by Dust Bowl refugees, the FSA camps extended government relief to white families, like the Joads, but regularly denied entry to racialized foreign migrants, such as Mexicans and Filipinos. African-American migrants were also customarily refused admission to FSA camps, having to congregate in “isolated enclaves” that were not endorsed or subsidized by the federal government (Gregory 166).⁶⁹ On the whole, therefore, non-white laborers “remained virtually untouched by the FSA camp experiment” (Ngai 136).⁷⁰

Ultimately, Steinbeck uses the example of Weedpatch to suggest that federal hospitality would be more effective if combined with and cultivated by a culture of affirmative hospitality. In his depiction of Weedpatch, Steinbeck demonstrates how a deprecation of “charity” was a defining feature of the FSA’s culture of welfarism. We can see this most clearly in Steinbeck’s parody of the Weedpatch Ladies’ Committee.⁷¹ Reiterating anxieties voiced by the Joads earlier in the novel about being perceived as receiving “charity,” the women of the Ladies’ Committee vehemently claim that “charity” does not exist at Weedpatch: “They ain’t no charity in this here camp. We won’t have no charity” (316).⁷² Through the example of Mrs. Joyce, who is encouraged to take on “credit” at the Weedpatch store in order to pay for her family’s groceries, we learn that the camp culture insists on a clear distinction between the private “charity” of individuals and the public “Aid” of the federal government (315). The former, we are told, is a demeaning form of assistance, while the latter is a perfectly acceptable form of government hospitality. As one Ladies’ Committee member explains, “Mis’ Joad, we don’t allow nobody in this camp to build theirselves up that-a-way. We don’t allow nobody to give nothing to another person. They can give it to the camp, an’ the camp can pass it

out. We won't have no charity" (316). Villifying any form of hospitality that is not administered by and through the federal government, the Ladies' Committee describes private acts of hospitality (i.e. exchanges of hospitality between residents of the camp) as irredeemably demoralizing for the recipient: "If a body's ever took charity, it makes a burn that don't come out. . . . if you ever took it, you don't forget it" (316). Like the Joads, the Ladies' Committee associates "charity" with "begging": recalling a time when she was weak and had to accept charity, one Ladies' Committee member laments, "We was hungry—they made us crawl for our dinner. They took our dignity" (316). According to the Ladies' Committee, "charity" deprives the recipient of his or her dignity by making humiliation a prerequisite of reception, thereby treating humiliation as an acceptable form of reciprocation. Federal "Aid," on the other hand, is described as an entitlement, a privilege of residency at Weedpatch that allows for the possibility of financial reciprocation but does not require it. "You'll pay if you can," Mrs. Joyce is told. "If you can't, that ain't none of our business, an' it ain't your business" (316).⁷³

In their obsessive veneration of public "Aid" and their corresponding condemnation of private "charity," the Weedpatch Ladies' Committee performs an unwitting reification of the traditional public/private binary. In the process, they reveal how camps like Weedpatch are implicitly invested in reinforcing existing models of hospitality.⁷⁴ Rather than provide migrants with a new model of hospitality that would encourage them to rethink their assumptions and imagine alternative ethical horizons of possibility, the FSA's aggressive culture of welfarism simply reinscribes the same artificial binary that informs and authorizes capitalist exploitation in the first place. Dispossessed of their homes and forced to abandon most of their possessions, many Dust

Bowl migrants understandably found the prospect of subsidized and cooperative living appealing. However, the obvious limitations of Weedpatch lay bare the inadequacies of the FSA model of hospitality.

III

Departing Weedpatch early in the morning, the Joads drive west and then north toward Bakersfield. On the outskirts of the city, they are approached by a man who invites them to work at Hooper Ranch, a peach farm located about fifty miles north of Bakersfield. “You’ll find plenty of work there,” the Hooper recruiter assures them (364). A physical embodiment of the advertising handbills that lure the Joads to California in the first place, the recruiter in this scene represents a reiteration of the many false invitations of hospitality that Steinbeck’s migrants receive throughout *The Grapes of Wrath*. As written forms of false invitation, the handbills mislead migrants into formulating romantic visions of an Edenic California capable of providing unlimited welcome.⁷⁵ On a number of occasions, the Joads indicate that the advertisements appear legitimate to them precisely because of their textuality. For example, before the family leaves for Oklahoma, Ma quickly dismisses an oral account of California as false, reasoning, “Your father got a han’bill on yella paper, tellin’ how they need folks to work. They wouldn’ go to that trouble if they wasn’t plenty work. Costs ‘em good money to get them han’bills out” (92). Later, during the Joads’ drive across New Mexico, Pa Joad reiterates his wife’s rationale: “I got a han’bill says they need men. Don’t make no sense if they don’t need men. Cost money for them bills. They wouldn’ put ‘em out if they didn’ need men” (189).⁷⁶

The Joads begin to question the handbills only once they realize that other migrants have seen the same advertisements that they have seen: “Why, that’s the one I seen. The very same one” (147). As printed texts, the handbills can be reproduced endlessly. What’s more, after they have been produced and reproduced, they can also be circulated endlessly: “This fella wants eight hundred men. So he prints up five thousand of them things an’ maybe twenty thousan’ people sees ‘em” (189). Refuting the Joads’ logic that the handbills must be genuine because they are costly, a fellow migrant explains that California’s agricultural corporations, farmers’ associations, and large landowners benefit more from printing thousands of written invitations than they do from withholding them: “You can print a hell of a lot of han’bills with what ya save payin’ fifteen cents an hour for fiel’ work” (245).

One could very easily interpret Steinbeck’s emphasis on the textuality of the handbills as an attempt to reinscribe a metaphysics of presence.⁷⁷ Without the real-time exchange of the lived experience of hospitality, the advertising handbills lack the eventness of the face-to-face invitation. Yet, the sudden appearance of the Hooper Ranch recruiter in the novel requires us to abandon this simplistic interpretation and to rethink the symbolism of the handbills. As it turns out, Steinbeck’s focus on the handbills does not represent an attempt to argue that hospitality is losing its aura in an age of mechanical reproduction. On the contrary, the handbills in *The Grapes of Wrath* are an invention of Steinbeck’s imagination designed to draw attention to the textuality inherent in all exchanges of hospitality. Despite their ubiquity in the novel and their formative role in generating a romantic image of California for Steinbeck’s migrants, the handbills did not exist outside the fiction of *The Grapes of Wrath*. In fact, not only were California’s

agricultural companies prevented by law from distributing advertisements in Dust Bowl states, but many of these companies actually took out ads in local newspapers discouraging migrants from coming to California.⁷⁸ Consequently, in the seventy-five-plus years since the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath*, not one single handbill has been produced that bears a resemblance to the advertisements described in the novel (Starr 259-60).

However, it would be a mistake to begrudge Steinbeck this fiction. As symbols of false hospitality, the advertising handbills are essential to Steinbeck's investment in the discursive dynamics of hospitality in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Through the handbills, we come to recognize that hospitality is always already about reading texts. The example of the Hooper Ranch recruiter reminds us that spoken invitations are no more or less authentic than written ones. By reiterating the written message of the handbills, the recruiter simply assumes a role previously performed by printed text. Yet, the spirit of the message remains the same: both the written and spoken invitations are issued as infelicitous speech acts, invitations designed not as affirmative offerings of welcome but as disingenuous acts of exploitation.⁷⁹ Both create the illusion of future hospitality but fail to follow through with their promise. In the end, it is through the Joads' continuing inability to read these invitations critically, to interrogate them with suspicion, that Steinbeck teaches us to think more critically about how we read texts, which includes how we read one another as texts.⁸⁰

Steinbeck's emphasis on the textuality of hospitality is central to his vision of affirmative hospitality in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Through his account of the Joads' migrant experience, Steinbeck suggests that the Dust Bowl migration requires

Californians—indeed, all Americans—to engage in a radical rethinking of existing models of hospitality. Jim Casy, more than anyone else in the novel, seems to understand the grand scale of the migration and the fundamental changes that it will bring: “They’s stuff goin’ on that the folks doin’ it don’t know nothin’ about—yet. They’s gonna come somepin outa all these folks goin’ wes’—outa all their farms lef’ lonely. They’s comin’ a thing that’s gonna change the whole country” (173-74). By way of the novel’s intercalary narrator, Steinbeck urges his readers to convert this “change” into a new “concept” and to use that “concept” to achieve substantive “action”: “The Western States are nervous under the beginning change. Need is the stimulus to concept, concept to action” (152). For the Joads and their fellow migrants, the “concept” of affirmative hospitality grows out of a shared experience of migration. Interacting in undefined spaces with unclear thresholds, Steinbeck’s migrants are unable to rely on normative principles and laws of hospitality. Out of necessity, they collectively adopt an ethics of hospitality that can accommodate the erratic demands of migrant life. Experiential in nature, this ethics provides us with a practical model for achieving the “action” that Steinbeck urges us to pursue. At the center of this migrant model of hospitality is a concerted focus on affirming the irreducible and nonappropriable singularity of the other—that is to say, on affirming the textuality of otherness.

Although the affirmative hospitality that Steinbeck’s Dust Bowl migrants ultimately embrace in *The Grapes of Wrath* is generated out of their nomadic experience, Steinbeck sets the stage for imagining acts of affirmative hospitality in his novel even before the Joads leave Oklahoma. In fact, as early as the novel’s opening narrative scene, Steinbeck presents us with an unmistakable moment of undecidability:

The hitch-hiker stood up and looked across through the windows. “Could ya give me a lift, mister?”

The driver looked quickly back at the restaurant for a second. “Didn’ you see the *No Riders* sticker on the win’shield?”

“Sure—I seen it. But sometimes a guy’ll be a good guy even if some rich bastard makes him carry a sticker.”

The driver, getting slowly into the truck, considered the parts of this answer. If he refused now, not only was he not a good guy, but he was forced to carry a sticker, was not allowed to have company. If he took in the hitch-hiker he was automatically a good guy and also he was not one whom any rich bastard could kick around. He knew he was being trapped, but he couldn’t see a way out. And he wanted to be a good guy. He glanced again at the restaurant. “Scrunch down on the running board till we get around the bend,” he said. (7)

This scene—the very first scene of hospitality in the novel—establishes conditionality as a fundamental reality in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Conditionality, that which is so scrupulously disavowed in “Breakfast,” is immediately acknowledged as undeniable in Steinbeck’s novel. The truck driver’s experience of undecidability is what makes a *decision* of hospitality possible in this scene, especially when we consider that the driver’s decision is conditioned by concern for his own self-interest. In other words, it is the driver’s willingness to give Tom a ride despite the risks involved that lends his act of hospitality its affirmative character. As we learn later in the scene, the driver is aware from the start that Tom has just been released from McAlester prison (11-12). One can only imagine that a recently released convict would not be a truck driver’s first choice for

a cabin guest, particularly when that driver is under corporate obligation to abide by a categorical policy of refusing rides to hitch-hikers. By disregarding the “*No Riders*” policy, then, the driver treats Tom as a singular individual and their encounter as a singular event. He receives Tom neither as a thematized “rider” nor as a thematized “convict” but, instead, as one man requesting a ride in a certain place at a certain time. To be sure, Tom manipulates the driver’s decision by appealing to his self-image and by alluding to a shared class-consciousness. But Tom’s manipulation does not change the fact that the driver chooses to welcome Tom into his cabin and that he himself, as host, benefits from the company that his guest provides for a short time.⁸¹

Perhaps no scene in *The Grapes of Wrath* offers a more sustained focus on the importance of affirming singularity than an encounter that takes place in Chapter 15 between a migrant family and a hamburger-stand server named Mae. The most fully formed narrative scene in an intercalary chapter in the novel, the encounter presents us with a replication of the kind of xenophobia that we see on display in the narrative chapters *and* a profound moment of undecidability that leads to an act of affirmative hospitality. As the hamburger stand’s primary “contact” for interaction with customers, Mae has seen Dust Bowl migrants come and go. To her, they all fit one type. She can predict what they will say and do:

Mae knows. They’ll drink a five-cent soda and crab that it ain’t cold enough. The woman will use six paper napkins and drop them on the floor. The man will choke and try to put the blame on Mae. The woman will sniff as though she smelled rotting meat and they will go out again and tell forever afterward that the people in the West are sullen. (156)

Thematizing all Dust Bowl migrants as shiftless and ungrateful “shitheels,” Mae has given up on treating them as singular individuals (156). Because she “knows” in advance how all of them will behave, she cannot imagine a scenario in which one of them will surprise her and act differently. Adding to Mae’s frustration is the fact that, unlike the truck drivers who visit the hamburger stand regularly, Mae knows that the poor migrants will never become return customers. In short, Mae believes that there is nothing that the migrants can give her that she needs.⁸²

After establishing Mae as a character who is especially resistant to treating Dust Bowl migrants as singular individuals, Steinbeck uses her as an example of how hostile hosts can overcome their xenophobia and recognize the value in performing acts of affirmative hospitality. The turning point for Mae comes when a migrant family arrives and the “man” of the family asks if she would be willing to sell them “ten cents’ worth” of bread (159-60). At first, Mae refuses, explaining, “‘F we sell bread we gonna run out” (159). More concerned about being able to provide for and profit from future customers—particularly customers who are able to pay full price for what they purchase—Mae does not at first prioritize the present needs of the man and his family. Eventually, however, with the encouragement of Al, the cook, Mae recognizes that perhaps there could be worse things than running out of bread at some point in the future. Perhaps it is the “curious humility” of the man or the “half-naked” bodies of the man’s two boys, but Mae seems to understand suddenly that her anxiety about the future is inconsequential when compared to the present poverty of the migrant family (159-60). Emphasizing the affirmative nature of Mae’s hospitality is Steinbeck’s description of the moment of welcoming: “She held the screen door open and the man came in, bringing a

smell of sweat with him. The boys edged in behind him . . .” (160). Like the truck driver, Mae comes to represent a spirit of affirmation precisely because she exhibits initial reluctance.

The moments of affirmation that we witness in the hitchhiker scene and at the hamburger stand and later at the Weedpatch Camp all play a part in communicating Steinbeck’s vision of affirmative hospitality in *The Grapes of Wrath*. But it is the scenes in which Steinbeck’s migrants engage with one another in provisional and unregulated spaces that we get our clearest sense of what this vision would look like in practice. One such scene takes place in Chapter 13 when the Joads first encounter the Wilsons alongside the highway in western Oklahoma:

Tom leaned out the window. “Any law ‘gainst folks stoppin’ here for the night?”

The man had seen only the truck. His eyes focused down on Tom. “I dunno,” he said. “We on’y stopped here ‘cause we couldn’ git no further.”

“Any water here?”

The man pointed to a service-station shack about a quarter of a mile ahead. “They’s water there they’ll let ya take a bucket of.”

Tom hesitated. “Well, ya ‘spose we could camp down ‘longside?”

The lean man looked puzzled. “We don’t own it,” he said. “We on’y stopped here ‘cause this goddamn ol’ trap wouldn’ go no further.”

Tom insisted. “Anyways you’re here an’ we ain’t. You got a right to say if you wan’ neighbors or not.”

The appeal to hospitality had an instant effect. The lean face broke into a smile. “Why, sure, come on off the road. Proud to have ya.” And he called, “Sairy, there’s some folks goin’ ta stay with us. Come on out an’ say how d’ya do” (134-35)

Even though he knows that the Wilsons do not own the land alongside the highway and cannot legally claim the sovereign status of host, Tom assumes the role of guest when he offers Ivy Wilson the right of refusal. The “appeal” of Tom’s deference, I argue, lies in the fact that he offers to enter into a pact of hospitality that operates irrespective of the law. It is in order to emphasize this point that Steinbeck clearly establishes the extralegal nature of the exchange from the outset. Moreover, unlike in his earlier encounters with the truck driver and Muley Graves, Tom does not manipulate his way into receiving hospitality from the Wilsons through veiled provocations or threats. Instead, all indications suggest that Ivy Wilson welcomes the Joads out of respect for Tom’s frank and deferential request for hospitality.⁸³

This initial exchange between the Joads and the Wilsons is essential to understanding the ethos of migrant hospitality in *The Grapes of Wrath*. In the absence of prescribed and regulated codes of behavior, Steinbeck’s migrants affirm the *lived* experience of hospitality. Accordingly, the ethics they adopt evolves not out of a sense of obligation to existing law but out of a desire to respond in a spirit of affirmation to what Derrida describes as “a law come from the other” (“A” 134). Arising suddenly in the moment of the other’s arrival, this law “come from” and “of” the other arrests the host on the threshold and obliges him or her to make a “decision,” a decision that cannot be deferred indefinitely and must be made “*here*” and “*now*” (134). This law, in other

words, arises from an “undeniably real” relation to the other, a “responsibility” to the other that, in its eventfulness, supersedes all prior attempts at prescription (134). Through their affirmation of this eventfulness, Steinbeck’s migrants engage in acts of hospitality that cannot be regulated or virtualized; they are acts, therefore, that take place “in actuality” and not “potentiality,” acts that exist not in the foreseeable domain of the “should-be” but in the unforeseen “being” of the here and now (“A” 134; “H” 8).

The improvisational nature of the ethics practiced by migrants in *The Grapes of Wrath* is most clearly illustrated in the “codes” of “living” that they adopt in their makeshift camps (194, 163). These codes emerge as a result of urgent and shared material concerns, not as a consequence of any outside legal authority. Together, Steinbeck’s migrants “learn” what “rights” need to be observed in order to “insure” both their individual and collective survival (194-95). Unlike the culture at Weedpatch, then, this is a culture that establishes and embraces community not at the expense of the individual but in order to affirm the individual. Openly acknowledging the function that community plays as a kind of collective form of “insurance,” Steinbeck’s migrants do not attempt to disavow the conditionality of their exchanges (195). The Joads and the Wilsons, for example, are able to cultivate a mutually beneficial relationship precisely because they do not pretend that they offer one another hospitality without any concern for their own self-interests. When Al and Tom offer to help “fix” the Wilsons’ car so that the two families can drive to California together, Ma openly acknowledges that the help the Joads provide is not disinterested: “We’d keep together on the road an’ it’d be good for ever’body. . . . Each’ll help each, an’ we’ll all git to California” (148). Likewise, Sairy Wilson concedes that the assistance her family offers to the Joads has its own self-interested motivations:

“I ain’t felt so—safe in a long time. People needs—to help” (141). With each iteration of exchange, the two families reaffirm the value of their union. All the while, Steinbeck’s narrator informs us, the reciprocal nature of the “relationship” remains “plain” (148).

The ethics of affirmative hospitality that Steinbeck’s migrants ultimately embrace in *The Grapes of Wrath* represents a significant departure from the naïve visions of categorical hospitality that characters espouse early in the novel. No character in *The Grapes of Wrath* better exemplifies this dramatic shift in the novel’s engagements with notions of hospitality than Ma Joad. Abandoning her early idealism and gradually committing herself to a new ethos of affirmative hospitality, Ma embodies the kind of ethical transformation that Steinbeck hopes to inspire with his novel. However, failing to recognize both the importance of hospitality to Steinbeck’s novel and the central role that Ma plays in communicating that importance, critics have either undervalued or simply misunderstood Ma’s character in *The Grapes of Wrath*. The general consensus in Steinbeck criticism is that Ma is a conventional and static character. Leslie Fiedler, for example, argues that Steinbeck’s characterization of Ma Joad calls to mind the kind of “stock” image that one would find on a “Mother’s Day greeting card” (57-8). Likewise, Nellie McKay contends that Ma is introduced to us as a stereotype of female motherhood and that she never deviates from this stereotype: “. . . she never achieves an identity of her own . . . She is never an individual in her own right” (52). According to McKay, any time Ma opposes Pa or otherwise intervenes in family decisions, she immediately reverts back to her assigned woman’s “place” (63). Warren Motley, whose article on Ma Joad has achieved canonical status in Steinbeck scholarship, suggests that Ma’s static character is simply a reflection of her innate femininity: “. . . Steinbeck suggests that the ‘pain and

suffering' of childbirth and the woman's role as attendant of the sick and dying leave her with an essentially tragic view of life that, in turn, generates a sustaining stoicism. . . . Ma Joad possesses the psychological qualities to govern her family community because she has actually given birth to it and nurtured it" (407). Yet, despite the feminine "strength" Ma exhibits, Motley concludes that Ma herself "gives no particular direction to the family" (407). Her "function" is merely to nurture the family so that it can "endure" (407).

To be sure, early passages in *The Grapes of Wrath* offer a portrait of a patriarchal culture that fully endorses a separate spheres ideology. The first five chapters of the novel repeatedly figure women as child-bearers and homemakers. Women, we are told on more than one occasion, "watch" from inside the home while men do the important work of the family, such as "thinking" and "figuring" (4, 34-5).⁸⁴ Ma herself appears to indicate her acceptance and approval of this separate spheres ideology when she tells Jim Casy in Chapter 10 that he should not salt the meat because it is "women's work" (107). Later in the novel, even after the Joad men have been divested of their traditional gender roles and Ma herself has ascended to the supreme position of authority in the family, Ma still reiterates a separate spheres mentality by imparting an essentialist notion of femininity: "Woman can change better'n a man . . . Woman got all her life in her arms. Man got it all in his head. . . . Man, he lives in jerks—baby born an' a man dies, an' that's a jerk—gets a farm an' loses his farm, an' that's a jerk. Woman, it's all one flow, like a stream . . ." (423).

Yet, Steinbeck's novel undermines and ultimately rejects patriarchal and essentialist conceptions of gender, and it does so most effectively by deconstructing the

conventional trope of the authoritative male host. By the time Ma gives voice to her essentialist position in Chapter 28, the narrative of the Joads has already demonstrated that simplistic representations of gender do not provide an accurate picture of reality. By her own example, Ma refutes the essentialism she espouses, invalidating any and all assertions in the novel that attempt to treat gender or any other form of identity as reducible. Steinbeck's text begins deconstructing the trope of the male host during the squatting scene at Uncle John's house when Ma successfully challenges Pa's authority as host, leaving Pa weakened and "ashamed" (102). As Ma's "control" over the family increases, so does her power and influence as a host (169). At the Hooverville camp, for example, she decides on her own to share the family's food with the starving children and how much food to share (258). She also decides independently shortly thereafter that the family needs to be more careful when it comes to sharing with strangers (258). Later, at Weedpatch, it is Ma and not Pa who protects Rose of Sharon from the abusive Lisbeth Sandry by denying her hospitality in the Joad tent: "Git out now, 'fore I git to be a sinner a-tellin' you where to go" (320).

By the time the Joads end up in a boxcar in Chapter 28, Ma has divested Pa entirely of his traditional duties as host. When the Wainwrights approach the Joads about arranging a marriage between Al and Aggie, Ma assumes ultimate responsibility for orchestrating and authorizing the union: "'Pa'll talk to Al,' said Ma. 'Or if Pa won't, I will'" (422). By assuming authority in this scene, Ma carries out a duty traditionally performed by the male host. Dating back to classical and Biblical literature, the trope of the male host has been associated with the power to oversee and negotiate the exchange of dependents. In these negotiations, the role of the wife has been to serve merely as a

“hostess”—that is, as a delegated “intermediary” consigned with the responsibility to provide hospitality to male guests with the objective of ensuring a favorable union (Still “Hospitality” 152). In this sense, scenes of hospitality have traditionally treated the figure of the wife as the medium—indeed, the female body—through which “homosocial” pacts of hospitality are secured (Still “Hospitality” 152-53). In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck inverts this traditional tropology, offering us a vision of a female host who is more than capable of serving as the family’s ultimate authority in matters of exchange.⁸⁵

The Grapes of Wrath concludes with a scene that both reiterates this inverted tropology and provides us with a symbolic moment of affirmative hospitality. Perhaps no scene in twentieth-century American literature has received more critical condemnation than Steinbeck’s final tableaux of Rose of Sharon breastfeeding a starving man. Both proponents and detractors of *The Grapes of Wrath* have singled out Steinbeck’s concluding passage as a target of denunciation since the novel’s publication. Over the years, the scene has been variously derided as “gaudy” (Long 497), “painfully mawkish” (Visser 28), “maudlin” (O’Connell 57), “inconclusive” (Cowley 350), “a disaster” (Levant 29), “inept” (Hoffman 166), “puerile symbolism” (Marshall 578), “the tawdriest kind of fake symbolism” (Fadiman 81), and “pornography” (Kuhl 165).⁸⁶ The primary criticism directed at the scene is that it is an exemplary instance of Steinbeck’s unabashed sentimentalism (Fiedler 55; Levant 29; Pollock 224-26; Seelye 17; Szalay 167; Williamson 88-92). Reiterating and expanding on this standard claim, Michael Szalay has recently argued that Steinbeck employs the sentimentalist mode throughout *The Grapes of Wrath* and especially in the final scene in an attempt to promote a detached ethics of “national welfarism”:

Rose's almost mechanical extension of herself to a stranger for whom she has no personal feelings is the apotheosis of this process. For Rose has been taught not so much to care for strangers as if they were a part of her family, but to care for strangers in the complete absence of producing even an imaginary personal relation to them. Steinbeck's national welfarism is potent not because it extrapolates from codes of familiar care, but because it supplants them entirely, eschewing the sentimental justifications and personal identifications once required for such care. (182)

Steinbeck's final scene does not, Szalay argues, make human suffering "real and palpable" but, instead, treats that suffering as "abstract" (167-68). In this sense, Szalay claims, rather than teach us to celebrate and value "attachment and affective interpersonal identification," Roseharn's act signifies and advocates "detachment and impersonal charity" (167).⁸⁷

However, examining the final pages of *The Grapes of Wrath* through a theoretical lens of hospitality reveals that we need to radically rethink the politics and symbolism of the novel's final scene. The entire novel up to this point has taught us how to read this scene, which is to say that it has taught us how to read it as a scene of hospitality. Like the numerous scenes of hospitality that precede it, this one employs and deconstructs conventional tropes. Once again, Steinbeck stages a meeting between strangers in a space that does not meet standard criteria for a site of hospitality. When the Joads come upon the "rain-blackened barn," they stumble in through an "open end" where there is "no door" (453). The only thing that separates the interior of the barn from the exterior of the outside world is a "curtain" of rain (453). In this unhomely place, neither the Joads nor

the strangers they encounter can claim legal rights as hosts or as guests. Although the boy perceives the Joads as “newcomers” when they first enter the barn, he makes no attempt to assert or establish any kind of privileged status (453). Instead, he deferentially asks the Joads, “You own this here?” (453). In response, Ma explains that, “No,” the Joads are, like the boy and his father, merely trespassers “come in outa the wet” (453).

Despite the absence of any established distinction between host and guest in this scene, the two families proceed to engage in an exchange of hospitality with one another. In this exchange, roles and responsibilities are not dictated by recognized law or by prescribed norms of behavior; instead, they emerge organically in response to the present needs of the other. Thus, when Ma appeals to the boy for hospitality and he responds in the affirmative, the boy temporarily assumes the role of host:

“No,” Ma said. “Jus’ come in outa the wet. We got a sick girl. You got a dry blanket we could use an’ get her wet clothes off?”

The boy went back to the corner and brought a dirty comfort and held it out to Ma.

“Thank ya,” she said. (453)

Ma’s appeal for hospitality, like Tom’s appeal to Ivy Wilson alongside the highway in Chapter 13, initiates a mutually beneficial exchange between two families. In this latter exchange, Steinbeck uses the symbol of the “dirty comfort” to emphasize the reciprocal and conditional nature of the relationship. The “comfort” isn’t much, and it isn’t ideal. But it is all that the boy has to give. Receiving the boy’s hospitality, in other words, means accepting the condition in which it is “held out” (453). The same can be said of the hospitality that Rose of Sharon offers in reciprocation. Just as Roseharn needs warmth,

the boy's father desperately needs nourishment. Of course, breast milk is not what the boy has in mind when he requests hospitality from the Joads: "You folks got money to git milk?" (454). But the Joads don't have money. Nor do they have any food. Rose of Sharon's breast milk is all that they have to give. Although the starving man is clearly uncomfortable with the manner in which he is being provided sustenance—"He shook his head slowly from side to side"—Roseharn convinces him that, in order to survive, he must accept the condition in which she is able to offer him hospitality: "'You got to,' she said. She squirmed closer and pulled his head close. 'There!' she said." (455). In the end, it is the "dirty comfort" that serves as a visible and symbolic link between the boy's initial gesture of hospitality and Rose of Sharon's response. Only by pulling aside the comfort can Roseharn bare her breast and invite the starving man to receive her hospitality: "Rose of Sharon loosened one side of the blanket and bared her breast" (455).

Far from advocating a detached ethics of federal welfarism, Steinbeck's final scene exemplifies and promotes an ethics of affirmative hospitality through its emphasis on singularity, undecidability, and conditionality. Shortly after completing the manuscript for *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck wrote a letter to his editor, Pascal Covici, in which he insisted that the starving man in the barn "must be a stranger" in order for the "meaning" of his novel to be fully realized: "To build this stranger into the structure of the book would be to warp the whole meaning of the book. The fact that the Joads don't know him, don't care about him, have no ties to him—that is the emphasis" (Life 178). Szalay interprets Steinbeck's insistence on the man's strangeness as confirmation that the narrative of the Joads discourages "interpersonal identification" (167). What's more, Szalay suggests that Steinbeck "replaces Rose's child with a stranger" in the final scene

in order to conclude his novel on a note of “national” rather than “familial” affiliation (171). Yet, the starving man’s strangeness in no way contributes to an impression that Roseharn’s act is meant to be a symbolic expression of national welfarism. Nor does it in any way preclude “interpersonal identification.” On the contrary, the man’s strangeness functions as the essential means through which Rose of Sharon is able to encounter, come to terms with, and affirm otherness. Only through the conventional trope of the absolute stranger could Steinbeck accomplish his objective of making the abstract figure of the Dust Bowl migrant familiar to his American audience. In the absolutely unknown and infinitely unknowable face of the starving man, Roseharn recognizes something familiar, something worth affirming: “She moved slowly to the corner and stood looking down at the wasted face, into the wide, frightened eyes. Then slowly she lay down beside him” (455). In the face of the stranger, Rose of Sharon finds both the source and the object of her affirmation. Finally willing to expand the scope of her sympathy outward and beyond her own narcissistic concerns, Roseharn, like her mother, comes to embody the kind of ethical transformation that Steinbeck’s novel is designed to inspire. At the same time, however, Steinbeck makes clear that Roseharn’s act is by no means an unconditional one. She herself gets pleasure out of the act she performs: “She looked up and across the barn, and her lips came together and smiled mysteriously” (455).⁸⁸

Pascal Covici worried that Steinbeck’s introduction of the starving man into the narrative of *The Grapes of Wrath* at the very end was “too abrupt”:

Your idea is to end the book on a great symbolic note, that life must go on and will go on with a greater love and sympathy and understanding for our fellowmen. Nobody could fail to be moved by the incident of Rose of Sharon giving her

breast to the starving man, yet, taken as the finale of such a book with all its vastness and surge, it struck us on reflection as being all too abrupt. It seems to us that the last few pages need building up. The incident needs leading up to, so that the meeting with the starving man is not so much an accident or chance encounter, but more an integral part of the saga. (qtd. in Life 177)

However, it is the suddenness of the encounter in the barn that helps convey the severity of the man's predicament and, therefore, the gravity of Rose of Sharon's decision. For Steinbeck, as for Derrida, the question of hospitality is an urgent one. It comes upon us unexpectedly and demands our attention here and now. If Steinbeck was going to convince his readers to embrace a new culture of affirmative hospitality, he knew that he needed to communicate the urgency of the crisis in California. But he also understood that any ethical decision undertaken on behalf of a suffering Dust Bowl migrant would necessarily require and proceed from a moment of undecidability. In the barn, this moment of undecidability is unmistakable:

Suddenly the boy cried, "He's dyin', I tell you! He's starvin' to death, I tell you."

"Hush," said Ma. She looked at Pa and Uncle John standing helplessly gazing at the sick man. She looked at Rose of Sharon huddled in the comfort. Ma's eyes passed Rose of Sharon's eyes, and then came back to them. And the two women looked deep into each other. The girl's breath came short and gasping.

She said "Yes." (454)

If this moment is "melodramatic" (Long 497; "Oakies" 87) and "theatrical" (Cowley 350), it is because Steinbeck recognized that an ethical decision made in the face of

“death” is not a trivial decision. The scene is designed to emphasize the fact that the moment of undecidability can lead to mortal consequences for those who are in dire need of our hospitality. Standing “helplessly gazing” at the starving man, Pa and Uncle John—the men in this scene—embody the kind of “aporetic paralysis” that Derrida warns us against (“HJR” 66).⁸⁹ They do not have the strength and/or the imagination to come up with an answer in response to the seemingly impossible question of the boy’s desperate plea for hospitality. Ma and Roseharn, on the other hand, share a silent moment of undecidability—a moment that concludes with an undeniably affirmative response: “Yes.” The fact that Pa and Uncle John are physically incapable of performing the act of hospitality that Rose of Sharon undertakes could indicate that Steinbeck is making a statement about the essential power that women have as providers of hospitality. Indeed, numerous scholars have interpreted this scene as symbolic of a uniquely maternal capacity to nurture.⁹⁰ Yet, I would argue that Rose of Sharon’s act is more representative of a capacity to respond imaginatively and decisively to the unexpected call of the other. Through the examples of Ma and Roseharn, Steinbeck urges all Americans to break free from existing models of hospitality and begin to take it upon themselves to find new and innovative ways of providing for those who are in desperate need of their help.

PART II:
THE SOUTH

Whereas Part One of *American Hospitality* considers Steinbeck's engagement with questions of hospitality at a national level, Part Two shifts attention to the Jim Crow South and argues that southern writers during the middle decades of the twentieth century employ scenes and figures of hospitality to interrogate the racial, gender, and class politics of the South. Chapter Two calls for a reconsideration of three major southern novels: Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With The Wind*, William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, and Margaret Walker's *Jubilee*. I contend that all three of these novels are centrally invested in examining the ideological functions and implications of southern hospitality. Taken together, the readings in this chapter highlight the central role that stories about southern hospitality played in informing the South's regional identity and in narrativizing this identity in terms of a romanticized antebellum past.

Chapter Two

Southern Disavowal:

Strangers, Fetishes, and Redemptions in Mitchell, Faulkner, and Walker

I

Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With The Wind* has contributed more to our conception of southern hospitality than any other literary text. The novel was greeted with unprecedented popular success in the summer of 1936, selling almost one million copies within six months of its publication (Pierpont 87). As of 2003, *Gone With The Wind* had sold nearly thirty million copies, making it the best-selling historical novel in U.S. history (McPherson 47). Despite the passage of time, Mitchell's novel has not lost its prestige: in a 2008 nationwide Harris Poll that asked American readers, "What is your favorite book?" *Gone With The Wind* placed second only to *The Bible* ("The Bible"). In 2011, Pat Conroy called Mitchell's novel "the most successful novel ever published in our republic" (12).

Considering *Gone With The Wind*'s sustained popularity, it is no surprise that the novel has experienced a resurgence in critical attention in recent years. Initial reviews of the novel were mixed. On one hand, the novel received effusive praise. Critics celebrated Mitchell's work for its "imagination," "whole-heartedness," "richness of texture," "narrative vigor," "sweep and abundance," and "generosity of incident and of drama" (qtd. in Pyron 203-24). Many complimented Mitchell on her ability to create a narrative that could provide contemporaries suffering from the Great Depression with an imaginative window into a parallel era of devastation in American history (Pyron 203-

24). On the other hand, critics of *Gone With The Wind* faulted the novel for what they saw as its “triteness and sentimentality” and its “empty-headed” assessment of Southern culture (Cowley 20). Then, between 1938 and 1970, *Gone With The Wind* all but disappeared from literary criticism. If anything, it existed as “little more than a negative reference point” for discussions about the failures of the plantation romance (Pyron 208).

However, with the rise of regional studies of the South, African-American studies, and women’s studies, literary critics since the 1970s have begun paying more attention to *Gone With The Wind*. During the past fifty years, readers have offered new and important analyses of Mitchell’s account of race and gender relations in the South, as well as analyses of how her novel both perpetuated and revised myths about the antebellum planter aristocracy (O’Brien; Young). But it has been in the twenty-first century that critics have begun to appreciate *Gone With The Wind* as a document of regional and national significance. Amanda Adams has recently situated *Gone With The Wind* in its proper “southern, modernist context” by demonstrating how the novel participated in and contributed to the literary and regional politics of the 1930s (60). Martyn Bone has shown how Mitchell’s novel both eulogizes the plantation South and champions the rise of the New South (142-44). Tara McPherson has detailed the role that *Gone With The Wind* played in “reifying” the plantation household as a “site of southern history and femininity” (44). Similarly, Scott Romine shows how Mitchell manipulates elements of “memory” and “desire” to produce a simulacrum of the antebellum South that serves not as an accurate representation of a lost home but instead as an imagined site of nostalgia (28-9).

Yet, despite *Gone With The Wind*'s considerable critical history, no one has yet examined the relationship between the novel's politics and its conflicted attitude toward southern hospitality. One cannot understand the politics of *Gone With The Wind* without understanding how and why the novel reflects the South's vexed position on the subject of hospitality during the first decades of the twentieth century.⁹¹ On one hand, Mitchell's novel romanticizes southern hospitality by treating unconditional southern hospitality as a real but lapsed regional practice. During the antebellum period, Mitchell's narrator tells us, the "old custom of hospitality" would not allow "any traveler, great or humble, to go on his journey without a night's lodging, food for himself, and his horse and the utmost courtesy the house could give" (478). Guests were never turned away, regardless of "sex" or "age"; even "convalescents" were "always welcome" (160). And hosts never placed limits on the duration of a guest's stay: "When a southerner took the trouble to pack a trunk and travel twenty miles for a visit, the visit was seldom of shorter duration than a month, usually much longer. . . . Often when newly married couples went on the usual round of honeymoon visits, they lingered in some pleasant home until the birth of their second child. Frequently elderly aunts and uncles came to Sunday dinner and remained until they were buried years later" (160). In passages like these, *Gone With The Wind* contributes to the myth of unconditional southern hospitality by treating the antebellum southern host as a figure capable of and willing to offer hospitality unconditionally: "Visitors presented no problem, for houses were large, servants numerous and the feeding of several extra mouths a minor matter in that land of plenty" (160).⁹²

At the same time, however, characters and events in *Gone With The Wind* contradict the narrator's romantic descriptions of southern hospitality by revealing the

various ways in which hospitality in the South, both before and after the Civil War, was conditioned by questions of race, gender, and class. First, Rhett Butler demonstrates how the ideology of southern hospitality perpetuated a self-interested politics that both required and conditioned the reception of strangers in southern households. Through Rhett's outsider perspective, Mitchell lays bare the lived contradictions of southern hospitality and reveals the privileged role that strangers, particularly white male strangers, can play in recognizing and exploiting these lived contradictions. Second, Ashley Wilkes and Frank Kennedy betray the ideological pretenses that allowed white male hosts to disavow their violence toward and exploitation of women, blacks, and poor whites in the antebellum South. Wilkes and Kennedy reveal the extent to which the role of the southern host consisted of a series of performances motivated by anxieties about maintaining sovereignty in private and public spaces. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, three of Mitchell's female characters—Ellen O'Hara, Scarlett O'Hara, and Melanie Wilkes—undermine the paternal logic of traditional southern hospitality by assuming roles as female hosts in *Gone With The Wind*. Capable of possessing sovereignty and bestowing hospitality, Mitchell's female hosts offer readers an alternative model of southern hospitality that is based not on any essentialized notion of femininity but instead a collective dissatisfaction with the discriminating ideology of southern male hosts.

Margaret Mitchell understood that the myth of unconditional southern hospitality is predicated on stories about southern hosts offering hospitality to strangers. She understood that these stories depend on the figure of the stranger—that it would be impossible to tell stories about unconditional southern hospitality without the idea of an

absolutely unknown other capable of receiving unconditional welcome.⁹³ But Mitchell also recognized that the reception of strangers in the South depends on strategic disavowals designed to deny the conditions under which strangers are received as guests. In *Gone With The Wind*, Mitchell uses the outside perspective of Rhett Butler to expose these strategic disavowals and the conditions they deny. As a stranger, Rhett affords us a look into southern society from the perspective of one who has been “cast . . . out” (238).⁹⁴ He allows us to “see” from without what southerners cannot see from within (238). In the process, he highlights the role that anxieties about race, gender, and class played in defining and conditioning the figure of the stranger in mid-nineteenth-century southern society.

Mitchell is strategic in figuring Rhett as a stranger in *Gone With The Wind*. At the Wilkes barbecue, Rhett is introduced to us as a “stranger” when Scarlett first catches sight of him in the crowd: “. . . her eyes fell on a stranger . . .” (110). The label of “stranger” follows Rhett through the novel. He is later described to us as a “perfect stranger” (188), as a “strong stranger” (364), as “a careless stranger” (862), as “a mad stranger” (871), as “a savage stranger” (872), as “an impersonal stranger” (902), and as “a swarthy sodden stranger” (929). Yet, despite all the novel’s references to Rhett as a stranger, Mitchell is clear that Rhett is no conventional stranger. He is by no means an absolute other who wanders into town with no history and no connections. He is a known quantity before he even arrives in Georgia, and his disreputable past has, we are told on numerous occasions, earned him a reputation as someone who is “not received” (112-13, 196, 202, 224, 228, 231). However, Rhett *is* received by aristocratic southern society, despite his disreputable past and his purported strangeness. In showing us how and why

Rhett receives hospitality in the homes of the southern aristocracy, Mitchell reveals how the ideology of southern hospitality perpetuated a self-interested politics that both required and conditioned the reception of strangers.

As an unwelcome but still received guest, Butler draws attention to the disingenuous quality of southern customs of hospitality and gift exchange by exploiting the self-interests of southern hosts and hostesses. We first learn that Rhett “isn’t received” in Chapter 6 (112). Yet, we learn this during a scene when he *is* being received at the Wilkes plantation. As a kind of second-order guest, Rhett is invited to the barbecue at Twelve Oaks because he is visiting Frank Kennedy at Jonesboro on business. Despite his reputation, Rhett is accepted at the plantation because it would be improper to prevent a guest (Kennedy) from bringing along his own guest (Rhett). Failure to provide Rhett with hospitality would violate cultural codes of hospitality and expose the pretense of unconditional hospitality to strangers. Accordingly, even after Rhett disrupts the ball to espouse his skepticism about the approaching war, he is allowed to continue speaking because those present accord him “the politeness due an outsider” (122). What methods would be used to silence Rhett or to prevent him from attending the party altogether are not made clear in Mitchell’s novel.⁹⁵ Despite regular reminders that Rhett is not “received” in southern households, Mitchell never once confirms this fact by depicting a scene in which hospitality is denied him. Thus, the narrative of *Gone With The Wind* undermines the claims of the novel’s characters, causing us to question the accuracy of reports about Rhett and, more importantly, to wonder why Rhett is received when his reputation suggests that he should be turned away.

Numerous scenes in *Gone With The Wind* confirm that Rhett gains entry into the households of the southern elite through his wealth, his privileged status as a white male, his handsome and fashionable appearance, and his ability to manipulate southern customs of hospitality to his advantage. Understanding the pretentious nature of southern claims regarding unconditional hospitality, Rhett acquires admittance by appealing to the self-interests of southern hosts and hostesses. Always arriving bearing gifts, Rhett obliges those who receive his gifts to receive him into their households. For example, each time Rhett arrives at Aunt Pittypat's door, "she set her fat mouth and told the girls that she would meet him at the door and forbid him to enter. And each time he came, a little package in his hand and a compliment for her charm and beauty on his lips, she wilted" (235-36). Gaining entry through the pretense of offering unconditional gifts, Rhett allows hosts and hostesses like Aunt Pittypat to maintain the illusion that he is received not because he provides them with something valuable in return for hospitality but because he is afforded the unconditional welcome of a stranger. In other words, Rhett disavows commercial exchange in the form of an unconditional gift. In the process, he both reveals and exploits the reciprocal logic of southern hospitality. Although mythologized as unconditional, southern hospitality is, it turns out, grounded in implied reciprocal obligations. When, for instance, Rhett sends Maybelle Merriwether "yards of gleaming white satin and a lace veil" as a wedding gift, Mrs. Merriwether is unable to accept the elaborate gift without making some kind of "concession" (225). Reluctantly, she invites Rhett for dinner (226). Similarly, Rhett's first invitation to Miss Pittypat's home comes only after he returns Melanie's wedding ring, which she had spontaneously donated to the Confederate cause. His unexpected act on behalf of Melanie is received as the act of a

“gentleman” and leads to a Sunday dinner invitation, an opportunity required so that Melanie can properly “thank him” (201). In truth, Rhett’s “gallant” gesture is a calculated ruse, a backhanded strategem designed with the intention of being “asked into Pittypat’s house” so that he can spend time with Scarlett (201). Thus, by playing the part of the hospitable guest, Rhett manipulates heads of southern households into performing their socially constructed roles as welcoming hosts. Together, host and guest maintain an illusion of unconditionality, all the while engaged in reciprocal exchange.

Rhett’s status as an unwelcome guest in *Gone With The Wind* is further complicated by questions of race, gender, and regional politics. Although his gender and wealth afford him privileges denied women and poor whites, Rhett’s ambiguous racial identity underscores the role that anxieties about race played in establishing and perpetuating the ideology of southern hospitality. Through repeated instances of racial coding, Mitchell suggests the possibility that Rhett is a kind of black interloper—a black man who gains entry by passing as a white stranger.⁹⁶ Despite the public’s impression that Rhett is white, he is coded as black in many scenes. His skin is described as “dark” and “swarthy”; his lips are “full” and “red”; and his dark complexion is further accentuated by his “animal-white teeth” (110). In the novel’s infamous “rape” scene, Rhett abuses Scarlett with “large brown hands” and towers over her with his “insolent black head,” like a “savage stranger” (868-72).⁹⁷ Forced into a “black darkness” by a “mad stranger” she had imagined was her husband, Scarlett comes to “know” Rhett for the first time (871). On the other hand, of course, Scarlett’s indulgence in the rape feeds into white male anxieties about white female desire for the black male body. Despite a regional code of etiquette driven first and foremost by the conviction that white women

needed to be protected from black men, Scarlett “glorie[s]” in Rhett’s “dark” sexual violence, achieving the first orgasm of her life: “Suddenly she had a wild thrill such as she had never known . . .” (871). Coded as black in a scene where he is committing rape, Rhett symbolizes the need to police the sexual desires of black men and white women, as well as the need to maintain rigid laws preventing black men from gaining access to white women. If, in fact, Rhett is black, then the sexual violence he perpetrates occurs because white hosts and hostesses are not discriminating enough to recognize his racial difference and deny him hospitality. In other words, when properly effected, the ideology of southern hospitality functions both as a bulwark against the imagined threat of interracial sexual violence and as a justification for laws aimed at preventing that violence. Thus, although advertised as unconditional, the customs of southern hospitality operate as a means of excluding specific populations, such as blacks, based on socially constructed perceptions alleging that these demonized populations threaten the safety of southern hosts and/or hostesses.⁹⁸

No character in *Gone With The Wind* is more invested in upholding the ideology of southern hospitality than Ashley Wilkes. In contrast to Rhett Butler, Ashley possesses all the qualities of the archetypal southern host. Like his father, he exudes “hospitality” (109). Born for the “leisure” of the plantation, he can “ride” and “play poker with the best,” can “drink” abundantly, and is “courteous always” (54, 46). In short, Ashley is both a “country gentleman” and a man of “honor” (212, 279, 501, 764). It is precisely these aristocratic qualities of the southern male host that initially make Ashley so appealing to Scarlett.

However, the collapse of the planter aristocracy during and after the Civil War reveals the less honorable qualities of Ashley's character—qualities that directly contradict his public persona as a hospitable southern host. As a soldier during the war, Ashley fights to preserve his own privileges (212). These privileges, Ashley now understands, were granted to him not because of any substance in his character but because of his inherited social standing (212). Now bereft of that social standing, Ashley finds himself lost, completely ill-equipped to fend for himself and his family: "My home is gone and all the money that I so took for granted I never realized I had it. And I am fitted for nothing in this world, for the world I belonged in has gone" (496). What is most startling to Ashley during the war is not the gruesomeness of war itself or the physical deprivation of life as a soldier but, rather, his physical proximity to men of lower class: "The worst thing about the war was the people I had to live with. . . . I had sheltered myself from people all my life, I had carefully selected my few friends. But the war taught me I had created a world of my own with dream people in it. It taught me what people really are, but it didn't teach me how to live with them" (498). Unable to rely on the class etiquette and the class divisions that the ideology of southern hospitality employed to protect southern hosts from sustained physical interaction with poor whites, Ashley is forced to confront the extent to which he systematically avoided the "intrusion" of "people and situations which were too real, too vital" (498). As it turns out, the life of an antebellum southern host is not about offering unconditional welcome to strangers but about avoiding anything that threatened to undermine one's elevated sense of self. It is about convincing oneself and others that you deserve the privilege to withhold hospitality from all but a "selected" few. The life of a southern host is, therefore, in Ashley's words,

a “shadow show,” a cultural production and performance designed to perpetuate the wealth and status of a self-proclaimed aristocracy (498).

After the war, Ashley and his fellow southern hosts resort to vigilante violence in order to uphold their ideology. Although Margaret Mitchell has been widely criticized for appearing to celebrate the Ku Klux Klan in *Gone With The Wind*, close examination of the text reveals ironical undertones in the narrator’s praise for Ashley Wilkes and his fellow KKK members (Beye 367; Railton 54-5; Rubin 94; Taylor 181). For example, in Chapter 42, the narrator describes the KKK’s rationale behind the lynching of a black man who is known to have “boasted” about raping a white woman: “The Klan had acted to save the as yet unnamed victim from having to testify in open court. Rather than have her appear and advertise her shame, her father and brother would have shot her, so lynching the negro seemed a sensible solution to the townspeople, in fact, the only decent solution possible” (695). Despite the claim that the lynching is a “sensible solution,” the reaction of the white women in Mitchell’s narrative proves otherwise. Instead of making white women feel safe, the lynching causes widespread violence: blacks threaten “retaliatory house burnings,” and there are rumors of “wholesale hangings by the Yankees” (695). Fear of interracial sexual violence does not decrease because of the lynching but escalates: “Since the Ku Klux lynching, the ladies had been practically immured, not even going to town to shop unless there were half a dozen in their group” (700). In the end, the extralegal violence of the KKK only produces more fear and divisiveness. Intended as a means of reasserting the privileges of southern male hosts, the lynching is a self-destructive act that underscores the inextricable relationship between the ideology of southern hospitality and white male violence.

Through her characterizations of Ashley and Frank Kennedy, Mitchell demonstrates how the vigilante actions of the Ku Klux Klan represented a widening of the already sizeable gulf between the favorable public personas of southern male hosts and the reality that they maintained their privileges through violence.⁹⁹ In the novel's first reference to the Klan, we hear that the organization prides itself on its secrecy: "Klansmen aren't supposed to tell" (528). Scarlett's inability to recognize that Ashley and her husband are both members of the KKK emphasizes the power of the southern host's ideology. Despite numerous signs to the contrary, including unexplained late-night outings, Scarlett does not believe that Ashley and Frank are capable of such violence: "Scarlett, lying exhausted in bed, feebly and silently thanked God that Ashley had too much sense to belong to the Klan and Frank was too old and poor spirited" (695). The artifice of the southern male host is apparently so convincingly deceptive that it can fool even the host's wife. Scarlett may not be particularly fond of Frank, but she certainly never considers the possibility that he would partake in violence against blacks and other minorities. But her failure to see through Ashley's duplicity is even more troubling. Recognizing Ashley for what he really is would require Scarlett to shatter her illusion of the ideal southern host, an act that Scarlett is not prepared for at this point in the novel. Her image of Ashley as a hospitable, well-mannered, and honorable gentleman is still too attractive for her to surrender.

In the end, the most significant threat to the ideology of southern hospitality in *Gone With The Wind* is the figure of the female host.¹⁰⁰ Mitchell presents readers of her novel with three distinct examples of the female host figure: Ellen O'Hara, Scarlett

O'Hara, and Melanie Wilkes. Each of these three female characters threatens the ideology of southern hospitality in a different way.

Possessing real but not publicly acknowledged authority on the Tara plantation, Ellen O'Hara undermines the myth of the antebellum male host's unrivaled sovereignty. Perpetuating the fiction that Gerald O'Hara is the true host of Tara, Ellen and the other members of her household secretly subvert the ideology of southern hospitality while simultaneously contributing to its hold over the public imagination. Despite Gerald O'Hara's aristocratic male pretensions, he does not possess sovereign authority on the Tara plantation. As early as the second chapter of *Gone With The Wind*, we learn that "only one voice" is "obeyed" at Tara, and that voice is the "soft voice" of Ellen (49). In contrast to Gerald, whose "blustering" and "roaring" voice is often "quietly disregarded" by slaves, Ellen never needs to raise her voice in "command" or "reproof" because she is always "obeyed instantly" at Tara (58). Exhibiting a "stately gentleness" that "awe[s] the whole household," Ellen, not Gerald, is responsible for maintaining order on the plantation and for managing the slaves (59). Unafraid to give her husband direction, she commands Gerald to fire Jonas Wilkerson with no hesitation at all: "Mr. O'Hara, you must dismiss Jonas Wilkerson. . . . He must be dismissed, immediately, tomorrow morning. Big Sam is a good foreman and he can take over the duties until you can hire another overseer" (87). Forcing Gerald to discipline Jonas Wilkerson for impregnating Emmie Slattery, Ellen exhibits control over her husband in a proto-feminist act that simultaneously repudiates society's double standards regarding male and female promiscuity.

We can only assume that Ellen's self-confidence is bolstered significantly by her work outside the house. Not confined to the home like the typical hostesses of the antebellum South, Ellen comes and goes from Tara of her own free will, often leaving her home at odd hours of the night to nurse young women of the county. While her husband sleeps soundly in his bed, Ellen performs the duties of her public life, all the while providing the young Scarlett with a model of femininity that directly contradicts the model of female domesticity cultivated by the ideology of southern hospitality: "As a child, she often had crept to the door and, peeping through the tiniest crack, had seen Ellen emerge from the dark room, where Gerald's snores were rhythmic and untroubled, into the flickering light of an upheld candle, her medicine case under her arm, her hair smoothed neatly into place, and no button on her basque unlooped" (59).

Ellen O'Hara maintains her authority at Tara only because all members of the household help maintain the fiction that Gerald O'Hara is the real host of the plantation. Fully aware that she cannot single-handedly overturn the ideology of southern hospitality, Ellen performs her public role as a hostess admirably, thereby not threatening the pretense of Gerald's sovereignty. Being sure to "praise" Gerald's "cleverness" and to give him "credit" for the "management" of Tara, Ellen makes sure not to upset the perceived balance of power on the plantation (75). In other words, only by appearing not to undermine Gerald's authority can Ellen exercise her own authority. Only by appearing not to subvert the ideology of southern hospitality can Ellen exploit its pretenses. Thus, despite her regular exhibitions of authority at Tara, Gerald fails to consciously recognize her legitimate power as a female host. "It was a secret he would never learn," the narrator explains, "for everyone from Ellen down to the stupidest field hand was in a tacit and

kindly conspiracy to keep him believing that his word was law” (49). Experiencing what must be a kind of cognitive dissonance, Gerald chooses to believe in the reassuring fiction of ideology rather than accept the reality of his wife’s supremacy.

When we first meet Scarlett O’Hara in the novel’s opening chapter, she demonstrates a reluctance to perform the duties expected of her as an aristocratic hostess. Neglecting to invite Stuart and Brent Tarleton for dinner, she befuddles and offends the twins with her violation of social custom: “Don’t it look to you like she would of asked us to stay for dinner?” (32). Later, Mammy reiterates the twins’ disapproval, scolding Scarlett for her “breach of hospitality” (43). Here, the gender politics of southern hospitality dictate that Scarlett, as an eligible sixteen-year-old girl, show male suitors customary deference, regardless of her personal feelings about them or her passion for other men. Failure to perform her assigned role as a hostess reflects poorly on her father and on her household. But the young Scarlett is apathetic. Frustrated with Mammy for lecturing her about “such a trivial matter,” Scarlett explains that she sent the Tarletons home because she was simply “tired of hearing them talk” (43).

As the novel progresses, Scarlett gains social, domestic, and economic power by brazenly defying and subverting the ideology of southern hospitality. During the war, Scarlett assumes control over Tara, seizing the position of “supreme” host from her impotent father (411). In order to establish and retain her power, she undertakes duties and commits acts that violate gender and class norms. She shoots a Yankee soldier who enters Tara without being invited (417-23), refuses to cower in stereotypical feminine fear when Yankee soldiers light a fire in her kitchen (443-44), and relinquishes her white “gentility” when she resorts to laboring in the fields of the plantation (570). Moreover, as

the new host of Tara, Scarlett employs her authority to engage in economic transactions with men, including matrimonial transactions. Accordingly, when Will Benteen is ready to ask for permission to marry Suellen, he approaches Scarlett, reasoning, “I figger you’re the head of the house now” (646). By transacting the terms of Suellen’s marriage with Will, Scarlett performs one of the oldest and most essential duties of the host figure in the Judeo-Christian tradition: the disposal of female property. Granting Will “approval” to marry Suellen, Scarlett contracts the future management of Tara to the capable hands of Will, thereby securing her future wealth and the perpetuation of her aristocratic status (646). In a reversal of the gender hierarchy, Will takes on the position of Scarlett’s delegate, managing the household under the strict guidance of his female host.

Ultimately, Scarlett’s most overt challenges to the ideology of southern hospitality manifest themselves in her public actions as an independent and successful businesswoman in Atlanta. Despite Frank Kennedy’s skepticism that Scarlett’s interest in business is both misguided and “unbecoming,” his wife evinces an aptitude in the public sphere that shocks Atlanta’s social elite (577). First usurping control over Frank’s store and then purchasing her own sawmill, Scarlett reveals that she is more than capable of succeeding as an entrepreneur and of generating her own wealth. The realization of newly acquired financial independence leads Scarlett to a life-altering revolution in her worldview: “With the idea that she was as capable as a man came a sudden rush of pride and a violent longing to prove it, to make money for herself as men made money. Money which would be her own, which she would neither have to ask for nor account for to any man” (580). Therefore, when Scarlett begins to make money from the mill, she chooses not to give “any part of it” to her husband (597). Instead, she sends most of it to Will with

explicit instructions about how to use the money to improve the plantation (597).

Frustrated by his wife's actions, Frank Kennedy's musings about Scarlett's behavior underscore the central role that misogynistic notions about female domesticity played in contributing to the logic of the ideology of southern hospitality: "Go into business for herself! It was unthinkable. There were no women in business in Atlanta. In fact, Frank had never heard of a woman in business anywhere. If women were so unfortunate as to be compelled to make a little money to assist their families in these hard times, they made it in quiet womanly ways . . . These ladies made money but they kept themselves at home while they did it, as a woman should" (595-96).

By leaving the "protection" of the home and then succeeding as a businesswoman, Scarlett reveals that the South's firmly established gender divisions of labor are a patriarchal fiction designed to preserve the privileges of male hosts (596). Furthermore, by refusing to accept her socially assigned role as Frank's hostess, Scarlett undermines her husband's social status as a host. Without a female delegate at home to function as an intermediary in exchanges of hospitality, Frank finds himself both publicly emasculated and personally dumbfounded. Unable to accept that a female could naturally possess qualities that would help her succeed in the public sphere, Frank concludes that Scarlett has "unsex[ed] herself" (599). "In the brief period of the courtship, he thought he had never known a woman more attractively feminine in her reactions to life, ignorant, timid and helpless," Frank thinks to himself. "Now her reactions were all masculine. Despite her pink cheeks and dimples and pretty smiles, she talked and acted like a man. Her voice was brisk and decisive and she made up her mind instantly and with no girlish shilly-shallying" (598). Perhaps Frank's need to interpret his wife's "reactions" as

“masculine” reflects his unwillingness to admit the possibility that he himself does not possess the qualities he so despises in her. After all, if being “brisk” and “decisive” are qualities natural to men, then Frank must possess those qualities, right? Only by continuing to believe in the misogynistic logic of the ideology of southern hospitality can Frank rationalize his emasculation. Initially reluctant in her assigned role as a hostess, Scarlett O’Hara eventually seizes her position as a female host by challenging patriarchal assumptions central to the production and reproduction of the ideology of southern hospitality. Exhibiting sovereignty over her household and over the public space of the workplace, Scarlett overcomes prevailing beliefs about female domesticity.

Finally, through the character of Melanie Wilkes, Mitchell offers her readers an idealized vision of feminine hospitality, one based not on any essentialized notion of femininity but instead generated out of a dissatisfaction with the discriminating ideology of southern male hosts. Melanie offers hospitality to strangers not out of self-interest but out of a genuine desire to affirm the singularity of others. Despite the unrealistic nature of Melanie’s hospitality, her example provides readers with a much-needed alternative model of hospitality, one distinct from the model of discrimination practiced by southern male hosts.

Unlike Scarlett, who assumes the position of female host in order to achieve independence and gain wealth, Melanie Wilkes utilizes her role as a female host to offer hospitality to strangers. Initially, Melanie performs the duties of a host in order to mollify her own fears. During the war, Melanie chooses to give her “share” of food at Tara to destitute soldiers, a choice that leaves her weak and malnourished (479). Though admirable, Melanie’s generosity is not motivated by selflessness. “You don’t know how

it helps me,” she tells Scarlett. “Every time I give some poor man my share I think that maybe, somewhere on the road up north, some woman is giving my Ashley a share of her dinner and it’s helping him to get home to me!” (479). In other words, Melanie gives not because she feels empathy for the other but because, by acting as though she feels empathy for a hungry soldier, it makes her feel that it is more likely that someone else is capable of exhibiting the empathy she lacks.

However, in the act of performing hospitality, Melanie begins to see what it means to affirm the other. In the years after the war, she moves beyond mere performance to acts of hospitality that disregard the racial, gender, and class politics of the ideology of southern hospitality. In the basement rooms of her Atlanta home, “miserable and ragged transients” are “fed, bedded and sent on their way with packages of food” (697). Melanie sends no one away, providing hospitality to “illiterate” and “rough” soldiers, the homeless, those without families, widowed women, “brown and withered country women,” and even a Republican (697-98). Despite the neighborhood’s disapprobation at learning that some of Melanie’s guests are “foreign” and speak “little or no English,” she continues to accept visitors regardless of their backgrounds (697). Even Bette Watling, the town prostitute, receives an invitation from Melanie (760).

But it is Melanie’s conscious decision to invite Archie, a convicted murderer, into her home that most amazes everyone. “Melanie,” Scarlett thinks, “knew this man was a murderer and a woman murderer at that and she hadn’t rejected him from her house” (704). Willing to forgive Archie for his murder and to place his need for shelter above her fear of violence, Melanie offers him hospitality despite her knowledge of his past. In contrast to the self-serving ideology of hospitality perpetuated by southern hosts,

Melanie's hospitality is motivated not by a desire to preserve her own privilege but by a desire to make others feel welcome and affirmed. Disillusioned by the southern male preoccupation with the sins, failures, and offenses of the past, Melanie provides us with a model of hospitality that affirms the future potential of the other. Grounded in the belief that an offering of unconditional welcome is more likely to promote friendship than a guarded and anxious welcome, Melanie's hospitality focuses on trying to build a positive future without fixating on the past.

Melanie's basement rooms function as a kind of heterotopia in *Gone With The Wind*. They serve as a space where otherwise impossible acts of hospitality take place. The hospitality that Melanie provides in this heterotopic space is not intended as a realistic model of southern hospitality. It is intended, instead, as an idealized alternative to reality, a counterexample that highlights the extent to which real-life acts of southern hospitality are conditioned by various forms of difference. In this way, Melanie's hospitality reminds us that the starting point to affirming the singularity of the other is recognizing the reality of conditionality.

II

Whereas Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With The Wind* is plainly and pervasively concerned with questions of hospitality, William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* is less explicit in its engagements with hospitality. Accordingly, although a number of critics have addressed the ways in which other Faulkner novels are fundamentally concerned with hospitality, no one has yet offered a reading that focuses on Faulkner's treatment of hospitality in *Absalom, Absalom!*¹⁰¹ Yet, it is undeniable that two of the most important

scenes in *Absalom, Absalom!*—Sutpen being turned away from the front door of the big house in Chapter 7 and Clytie attempting to prevent Rosa from ascending the stairs in Chapter 5—are both scenes of inhospitality. Reconsidering these two scenes in light of their pointed engagements with hospitality allows us to see that *Absalom, Absalom!* is just as invested in interrogating the politics of southern hospitality as *Gone With The Wind* and that, in fact, Faulkner’s novel provides an even more complex and critical examination of the ideological functions and implications of southern hospitality.

The first of the two pivotal scenes noted above takes place when Thomas Sutpen is fourteen years old. Sent by his father to deliver a message to the big house of a Virginia plantation, Sutpen arrives at the front door of the plantation home only to be “barred” from entry by a “monkey-dressed nigger butler” who stands in the doorway and tells him that he should “never come to that front door again but to go around to the back” (187-92). This scene introduces Sutpen to the conditionality of southern hospitality. In particular, it makes him aware that acts of hospitality in the South are conditioned by class. Having arrived at the big house in his “patched made-over jeans clothes and no shoes,” Sutpen realizes that he is denied entry through the front door because he is too poor to merit the planter’s hospitality (188). Reimagining this scene almost a century later causes Quentin Compson to reflect on the ways in which southern codes of hospitality are predicated on strategic disavowals. In recounting Sutpen’s childhood, Quentin identifies these strategic disavowals specifically and the desires they repress. He notes, for example, that men and women in the South disavow their desire to “look down on” others by subscribing to and acting in accordance with codes of hospitality that license and promote discrimination based on race and class (179). A

culture of hospitality that defines people based on “what color their skins happened to be and what they happened to own” is a culture that excuses “down-looking” by normalizing it (179). Quentin likewise observes that slaveholders in the antebellum South disavowed their desire to “evade” physical labor by maintaining codes of hospitality that required black men and women to perform the labor of hospitality—preparing for, attending to, and cleaning up after guests (179-85).¹⁰² He also notes the “pleasure” that slaveholders received from having their neighbors and guests see them “being waited on” and how slaveholders disavowed their desire for this pleasure by claiming that they provided hospitality for the benefit of their guests.¹⁰³ In identifying and diagnosing these strategic disavowals, Quentin portrays southern hospitality as a fetishistic ideology produced and reproduced by the region’s elite for the disavowed purpose of maintaining power in the hands of the few.¹⁰⁴

Quentin’s observations about the fetishistic nature of southern hospitality are borne out in Sutpen’s response to the scene at the big house. In the aftermath of his encounter at the big house, Sutpen chooses to fetishize rather than resist the region’s dominant codes of hospitality. He formulates a “design” to acquire “money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family” (212). This design has all the hallmarks of a classical Freudian fetish. It serves as a substitutive idea around which Sutpen fixates his thinking and through which he displaces his trauma to his unconscious.¹⁰⁵ According to Sutpen, the purpose of the design is to acquire the means to be able to provide the hospitality that he himself is denied as a boy. In imagining the realization of his design, Sutpen envisions a utopian scene in which he offers unconditional hospitality to a shoeless and disheveled boy much like himself:

. . . he would take that boy in where he would never again need to stand on the outside of a white door and knock at it: and not at all for mere shelter but so that that boy, that whatever nameless stranger, could shut that door himself forever behind him on all that he had ever known, and look ahead along the still undivulged light rays in which his descendants who might not even ever hear his (the boy's) name, waited to be born without even having to know that they had once been riven forever free from brutehood just as his own (Sutpen's) children were . . . (210)

This utopian scene provides Sutpen with a positive vision of hospitality to replace the memory of his own trauma.¹⁰⁶ It provides him with a means through which to “shut” the door on his past—which is to say, to be inhospitable to it.

For Sutpen, the encounter at the Virginia big house is traumatic because it makes him aware of his class difference, what he calls his “brutehood” (210). Quentin recognizes as much when he describes Sutpen awakening to his “difference” in the aftermath of the encounter: “. . . he was learning that there was a difference between white men and white men not to be measured by lifting anvils or gouging eyes or how much whiskey you could drink . . .” (183).¹⁰⁷ By fetishizing his design, Sutpen attempts to disavow his knowledge of his difference and to erase his memory of the traumatic encounter in which he learned of this difference. His fantasy of preventing his children and the boy's descendants from ever having to know that they once descended from brutes doubles as a fantasy of erasing his own memory of brutehood. Sutpen repeats his attempt to erase the past every time he fixates on his design, which he regards with “unsleeping care” (40-1).¹⁰⁸ The plantation house at Sutpen's Hundred—which, we are

told, is “even bigger and whiter” than the big house in Virginia—becomes the physical manifestation of Sutpen’s fetish (209). Fixation on the construction and preservation of the big house provides the repeated disavowals that repression of Sutpen’s trauma requires.

Sutpen’s attempts to repress his traumatic memory reflect an inhospitable attitude toward the past. Faulkner prompts us to read Sutpen’s disavowal of the past as a form of inhospitality by repeatedly figuring the past as an unwelcome guest in *Absalom, Absalom!*¹⁰⁹ The novel is filled with scenes in which visitors from the past—living and dead—arrive uninvited and “haunt” the present as “ghosts” (4).¹¹⁰ We learn early on that these “ghosts” are a symptom of southern disavowal, a consequence of the South’s reluctance to accept its past. Southerners in the novel are haunted by “stubborn backward-looking ghosts” because they are unwilling to recognize the sins and defeats of their individual and collective pasts (7).¹¹¹ For Sutpen, the most haunting of these ghosts is Charles Bon. Sutpen makes Bon into a ghost by denying his son’s existence. Bon is a “phantom,” a “shadow” come from Sutpen’s past to haunt the present in search of recognition (82). Bon’s unexpected arrival at Sutpen’s Hundred in 1859 brings Sutpen face-to-face with his disavowed past (215). The question of whether to show hospitality to Bon doubles as a question of whether to show hospitality to the past. In choosing to welcome Bon into his home, Sutpen offers his son a kind of uncanny hospitality, a hospitality offered to one who represents one’s own repressed past. With this act of reluctant hospitality to the past, Sutpen feels his design collapse in on itself: “. . . he must have felt and heard the design—house, position, posterity and all—come down like it had been built out of smoke . . .” (215).

The collapse of Sutpen's design comes not from the act of hospitality itself but from what it betrays to Sutpen: that he is unwilling to honor the stated purpose of his design. The full irony of Sutpen's tragedy cannot be appreciated without understanding the significance of this "betrayal" (220). Bon's arrival affords Sutpen the opportunity to realize the utopian vision of hospitality about which he has fantasized: ". . . he stood there at his own door, just as he had imagined, planned, designed, and sure enough and after fifty years the forlorn nameless and homeless lost child came to knock at it . . ." (215). But Sutpen is unwilling to grant Bon the ancestral oblivion that he had previously imagined granting to the "whatever nameless" boy in his vision; he is unwilling to "rive" Bon "forever free" from his past. Sutpen's fetishism of southern hospitality is at no point more apparent than in this moment. Like the Virginia planter before him, Sutpen is unwilling to offer his guest a hospitality that is not conditioned by race and class. So thoroughly has Sutpen internalized the values and codes of southern hospitality that he cannot help but see his son as "*alien*" (254). In rejecting Bon, Sutpen denies his biological ties to Bon and reestablishes his own white subjectivity. He also reaffirms his position in southern society as a white male host determined to uphold the values of the dominant ideology.¹¹²

The lesson we learn from Sutpen's example is that inhospitality to the past cannot prevent the past from haunting us in the present. Sutpen is by no means the only character in *Absalom, Absalom!* who teaches us this lesson by example. We also learn this lesson from Rosa during her encounter with Clytie in Chapter 5.¹¹³ Summoned to Sutpen's Hundred on the day that Henry kills Bon, Rosa arrives at the big house to find Clytie standing "rocklike and firm" at the base of the stairs and "barring" her from ascending to

the second floor (109). Like the “monkey-dressed nigger butler” of Sutpen’s childhood, Clytie uses her body to “bar” a prospective guest from entering into a space she guards (209-11).¹¹⁴ Yet, what makes Clytie’s encounter with Rosa different from the butler’s encounter with Sutpen is that Clytie actually makes physical contact with Rosa: “*Then she touched me . . . that black arresting and untimorous hand on my white woman’s flesh*” (111). Appalled by Clytie’s “*touch*,” Rosa “*stop[s] dead*” before recollecting herself and declaring her sovereign privilege on behalf of the white South: “*Take your hand off me, nigger!*” (112).¹¹⁵ According to Rosa, she speaks not to Clytie here but “*through*” her to the “*negro*” she represents (112).

In retrospect, however, Rosa recognizes that something significant happened in the moment when Clytie “*touched*” her at the base of the stairs. Until the moment of physical contact, Rosa and Clytie “glare at one another” not as “two faces” but as “two abstract contradictions”—not as singular individuals who once played together as children but as disembodied strangers prejudiced by racial stereotypes (111).¹¹⁶ Yet, in the moment when Clytie’s “black” hand touches Rosa’s “white woman’s flesh,” the racist logics of southern hospitality—“the devious intricate channels of decorous ordering”—“abrogate” (111-12). With the “touch of flesh with flesh,” the South’s codes of hospitality—the “eggshell shibboleth of caste and color”—crack, freeing up Rosa and Clytie to confront one another in their unmediated nakedness (111-12).

Although Rosa treats Clytie with moral indifference during their encounter at the base of the stairs, the moment is still an ethical one. Clytie’s touch enables Rosa to reconnect with the self she disavows—the “central I-Am” that Rosa tells us is every self’s “private own” (112). Despite her failure to affirm Clytie’s alterity in the moment that she

recognizes her otherness, Rosa's narration reveals the contradictory nature of southern hospitality: the regional customs that are purportedly designed to make neighbors and strangers feel welcome actually preclude the face-to-face discourse that ethical obligation requires. It is only after the "eggshell shibboleth" is removed that affirmative hospitality can be imagined. In the end, Rosa's failure to change her behavior despite her acknowledgement of the "eggshell" quality of southern hospitality testifies to the power of the ideology's hold over race relations in the South. Rosa continues to treat Clytie as a racialized abstraction despite her recognition of Clytie's otherness and she does so because she is unable to shake off the traditions of southern hospitality that legitimize and perpetuate the region's racial hierarchies. She is unable to come to terms with the postbellum South because she is still struggling to accept the reality of the past. She continues to cling to the "dream" of the antebellum South despite her own efforts to wake: "Ay, wake up, Rosa; wake up—not from what was, what used to be, but from what had not, could never have ever, been; wake, Rosa—not to what should, what might have been, but to what cannot, what must not be; wake, Rosa, from the hoping . . ." (113).

The scenes I have thus far examined in my discussion of *Absalom, Absalom!* are just two pivotal scenes of hospitality in a novel filled with scenes of hospitality. Some of these scenes of hospitality, like Charles Bon's visits to Sutpen's Hundred, are crucial to the plot of the novel (77, 106, 215, 255).¹¹⁷ Others are less crucial yet still noteworthy. These include the novel's first scene, in which Rosa welcomes Quentin into her home after sending him a "formal" invitation of hospitality (5); Goodhue Coldfield and General Compson providing Sutpen with protection and supplies when he first arrives in Jefferson (9, 12, 23)¹¹⁸; Wash Jones not being "permitted" to "approach" Sutpen's mansion home

“from the front” entrance (20, 99, 107, 149, 226); Sutpen supplying Rosa with “food and shelter and protection” at Sutpen’s Hundred after her father’s death (47, 137); Rosa’s neighbors leaving “baskets of provisions on her front porch at night” when she returns home from Sutpen’s Hundred and becomes a “charge upon the town” (137-38); Sutpen’s father being forcibly removed from a doggerel by a black man (182); and Clytie sheltering, feeding, and clothing Charles Bon’s wife, son, and grandson at Sutpen’s Hundred over a period of decades (158-70).

What is most striking about scenes of hospitality in *Absalom, Absalom!* is the deliberate focus that Faulkner places on figuring characters as strangers in these scenes. Although it may not initially appear so, all of the major characters in the novel—from Sutpen and Ellen to Rosa and Bon to Quentin and Shreve—are figured as strangers. Like Mitchell, Faulkner understood the essential role that the stranger played in southern stories about hospitality and in helping to maintain a pretense of unconditional southern hospitality. By figuring all of the major characters in *Absalom, Absalom!* as strangers, Faulkner enables us to see how each of these characters receives hospitality on the condition that their respective differences are disavowed. In the process, he draws attention to the differing processes whereby varied categories of strangeness are welcomed in southern society. Whereas Mitchell denaturalizes the ideology of southern hospitality from Rhett’s privileged white male perspective, Faulkner estranges us from southern hospitality utilizing the perspectives of strangers from different racial, gender, and class backgrounds.

No character in *Absalom, Absalom!* is more deliberately figured as a stranger than Thomas Sutpen. Like Rhett Butler, Sutpen is identified as a “stranger” immediately upon

his arrival in the novel: “. . . and there the stranger was” (23). Everything about Sutpen makes him a stranger to the people of Jefferson. He has a name that “nobody ever heard before” (9). He has a face and a horse that “none of them had ever seen before” (24). He rides into town “out of nowhere and without warning” with no “discernible past” or “purpose” (5, 7, 24). The townspeople corner Sutpen in dining rooms and lounges and “give him the opportunity to tell them who he was and where he came from and what he was up to,” but he tells them “nothing whatever” (25). Even after settling in Jefferson, Sutpen remains a “stranger” to the people of the town, in large part because he refuses to answer any questions about his past (24). Sutpen’s unwillingness to answer any questions only feeds the town’s curiosity. They talk and wonder endlessly about him, and they begin to repeat his “strange” name over and over like some sort of incantation: “. . . the stranger’s name went back and forth among the places of business and of idleness and among the residences in steady strophe and antistrophe: *Sutpen. Sutpen. Sutpen. Sutpen*” (24). Later, we learn that, at least in part, Sutpen does not disclose his origins to the people of Jefferson because he himself is unaware of the precise date and place of his birth. Having run away from his family at the age of fourteen, Sutpen can no longer recall with any certainty the location of his family’s original home in the mountains of western Virginia or his own age (184). In a sense, then, Sutpen is a stranger even to himself: he knows “neither where he ha[s] come from nor where he was nor why” (184).¹¹⁹

Faulkner’s emphasis on Sutpen’s strangeness is no accident. It is as a stranger that Sutpen provides us with an outsider’s insights into southern hospitality. This is true even before Sutpen arrives in Mississippi. As a child in Virginia, Sutpen is able to recognize the fetishistic nature of southern hospitality precisely because he is estranged from the

dominant culture. Sutpen's childhood accounts of southern hospitality are all recounted from a place of estrangement. Faulkner emphasizes Sutpen's feeling of estrangement by focalizing these childhood scenes through Sutpen's outsider perspective. In one scene, Sutpen watches as his father is forcibly removed from a Virginia doggery (182). In another scene, Sutpen watches unseen as a plantation owner lies in a hammock and is "waited on" by his slaves (184-85).

Sutpen's unfamiliarity with the South's culture of hospitality enhances his feeling of estrangement. He knows nothing of the region's codes and customs of hospitality when he first arrives in Virginia. Sutpen's ignorance affords us the ability to see southern hospitality anew. We watch as Sutpen witnesses and experiences acts of inhospitality, and we watch as he comes to identify the many categories of difference that the South's ideology of hospitality works to exclude. From Sutpen's estranged perspective, we come to see the ways in which the lived experience of southern hospitality differs from the ideal of unconditional hospitality espoused by ideology.

When Sutpen returns to the South as an adult, he again provides us with a stranger's perspective on southern hospitality. But the stranger's perspective Sutpen provides as an adult is very different from the one he provides as a child. As an adult, Sutpen exploits his status as a stranger to his own advantage. In the process, he highlights the ways in which southern hospitality to strangers is conditioned by questions of class. Sutpen leaves Virginia for Haiti in order to recreate himself in the image of a stranger who will be welcomed in the households of southern hosts. The stranger who arrives in Jefferson is a stranger of Sutpen's own making. He is a self-made stranger. Having learned during his childhood what categories of difference are met with inhospitality in

the South, Sutpen knows that he must shed all signs of his “brutehood” if he is to be afforded the privileges of a stranger in Jefferson (210). Thus, when he arrives in Jefferson, he arrives with outward signs of wealth—an imposing horse, two pistols, and a gold Spanish coin worth enough to purchase one hundred square miles of the best land in the country (24-6). He receives hospitality at the Holston House, where he is furnished with a room and is welcome in the hotel’s dining hall and lounge (25).¹²⁰ In playing the part of a wealthy stranger, Sutpen is effective at hiding the fact that the outward signs of his wealth are all that he “possesse[s] at the time” (24). When he returns to Jefferson with a covered wagon, a French architect, and a crew of negroes, he solidifies his reputation as a stranger worthy of the town’s welcome (26-7). The result is the hospitality he receives from General Compson, who “lend[s] him seed cotton for his start” (30), and from Goodhue Coldfield, who “complete[s] the shape and substance of [Sutpen’s] respectability” by providing “the shield of a virtuous woman” (31, 9).¹²¹ Sutpen’s ability to remake himself into a respectable stranger who receives the hospitality of southern hosts speaks to the arbitrariness of southern hospitality. The difference between the boy Sutpen who is turned away from the big house in Virginia and the adult Sutpen who is afforded hospitality in Jefferson is a difference of appearances, not a difference of any inborn quality or class. Sutpen is received in Jefferson because he is effective at playing the part of the welcome stranger. Like Rhett, Sutpen highlights the advantages that white males have in appealing to discriminating southern hosts and in exploiting southern hosts to their own advantage.

Whereas Sutpen helps reveal the ways in which southern hospitality is conditioned by questions of class, other strangers in *Absalom, Absalom!* underscore the

ways in which the region's ideology of hospitality is conditioned by questions of race and gender. The most obvious of these strangers is Charles Bon. Like Sutpen, Bon is repeatedly figured as a stranger. Mr. Compson introduces Bon to us in Chapter 4 as Henry's "strange" new friend from college: ". . . this stranger . . ." (90). Later, Shreve reiterates this classification, referring to Bon as "the stranger" (255).¹²² Like his father, Bon arrives in Jefferson out of nowhere, "without background or past or childhood" (74). It is as if Bon appears "almost phoenix-like, fullspring from childhood, born of no woman and impervious to time" (58). But, as we learn, Bon does have a past, and this past makes him, to the dominant culture of Jefferson, even more strange than Sutpen. Bon is not just a stranger; he is a foreign stranger and a racially mixed one at that. Born in Haiti of a black mother and raised in the "foreign city" of New Orleans, Bon threatens Jefferson's isolated and racially demarcated community with his "French" ways and "alien blood" (58, 106, 254).¹²³ Ultimately, it is Bon's racial otherness that most clearly demarcates him as a stranger in the novel. And, like his mother before him, Bon attempts to conceal his racial otherness. In hiding their mixed racial heritage, both Bon and Eulalia represent the threat of concealed strangeness. Their example serves to explain the importance that Jeffersonians place on inquiring into the family lineages of newcomers like Sutpen.

More importantly, Bon's racial otherness affords us the ability to see southern inhospitality from the perspective of one who can pass outwardly as white but who is nevertheless ultimately rejected because of his race. Bon is desperate both to conceal his racial otherness and to have his racial otherness recognized and affirmed. This internal struggle is revealed to us in passages where Sutpen's inhospitality to Bon is focalized

through Bon's perspective. Bon fantasizes about walking into Sutpen's house and receiving "indisputable recognition" from his father: "*So at last I shall see him, whom it seems I was bred up never to expect to see, whom I had even learned to live without,* thinking maybe how he would walk into the house and see the man who made him and then he would know, there would be that flash, that instant of indisputable recognition between them and he would know for sure and forever . . ." (255). But Sutpen denies Bon the recognition he craves. He "sa[ys] nothing, d[oes] nothing" to "acknowledge" Bon as his son (255-57). Although Sutpen receives Bon into his home, the hospitality he affords his son is an impersonal hospitality, a hospitality conditioned by his unwillingness to recognize and affirm Bon's racial otherness.

The conditional nature of Sutpen's hospitality to Bon contrasts markedly with the hospitality that Henry promises Bon when he invites his half-brother to Sutpen's Hundred: "*From now on mine and my sister's house will be your house . . .*" (255). Henry's invitation to Bon is offered in the utopian spirit of unconditional southern hospitality. It reflects belief in a culture of hospitality capable of offering unconditional welcome. Shreve notes the utopian nature of Henry's invitation when he describes Henry's vision of shared sovereignty as a "fairy tale" (255). What Shreve and Bon realize but Henry is too naïve to understand is that unconditional welcome at Sutpen's Hundred would be possible only if "nothing else save them existed" (255). The ideology of southern hospitality, with its racist exclusions, is too powerful for Henry's naïve vision to withstand reality. Henry's inability to make his utopian vision a reality, to remain faithful to the spirit of his invitation, represents the failure of southern hospitality to live up to its own impossible ideal.

Further critique of southern hospitality comes from Ellen and Rosa, both of whom Faulkner figures as strangers. Though she inhabits Sutpen's Hundred and possesses the outward trappings of wealth and happiness, Ellen "live[s] and die[s] a stranger" in her own home (111).¹²⁴ Forever estranged from her husband and his disavowed past, Ellen provides us, often through Rosa's second-hand narration, with insights into the life of a woman forced to serve the needs of a husband intent on upholding an impossible ideal of the southern host. Like Ellen, Rosa offers us a stranger's perspective into the life of a southern white woman forced to accept the hospitality of a white man. Though born and raised in Jefferson, Rosa is very much a stranger in the South. Born twenty-eight years after her sister and raised by a father who is himself "irrevocably estranged" from his neighbors, Rosa feels out of time and place in Jefferson (66). As a child, Rosa watches from the sidelines, "looking out" on the world around her with a sense of alienation: "She seemed to stand, to lurk, behind the neat picket fence of a small, grimly middleclass yard or lawn, looking out upon the whatever ogreworld of that quiet village street with that air of children born too late into their parents' lives . . ." (15). Yet, as Quentin points out, Rosa's estrangement grants her a special ability to see and understand things about "human behavior" that others cannot (15). There is something "Cassandralike" about her, something "sternly prophetic" in her view of the world (15). Rosa's estranged perspective affords us the ability to see the ways in which the ideology of southern hospitality interpellates women as compulsory guests of white men. We see this in Rosa's account of the hospitality she receives at Sutpen's Hundred during the two years after her father's death:

. . . an orphan a woman and a pauper, I turned naturally not for protection but for actual food to my only kin: my dead sister's family: though I defy anyone to blame me, an orphan of twenty, a young woman without resources, who should desire not only to justify her situation but to vindicate the honor of a family the good name of whose women has never been impugned, by accepting the honorable proffer of marriage from the man whose food she was forced to subsist on. (12-3)

In emphasizing the compulsory nature of the hospitality she receives at Sutpen's Hundred, Rosa highlights the important role that the South's culture of hospitality played in enabling men like Sutpen to exploit estranged women like Rosa in the name of hospitality.

Then, there are Shreve McCannon and Quentin Compson. Having never visited the South, Shreve is a stranger to the region and its culture. Just as the story of Sutpen is a story about a stranger, it is a story that is told to a stranger—to one who, like so many of its characters, is unfamiliar with Jefferson and its people. Furthermore, though Shreve is from the North, he is not from the American North. He is Canadian, which means he is not personally implicated in the American North's opposition to the South. He is alien to the story of the South, alien to the history of American slavery, personally removed from the decades of infighting between North and South. This alienation—this strangeness—is central to the role he plays in the novel both as a listener and as a narrator.

Like Ellen and Rosa, Quentin is born and raised in Jefferson. Yet, also like Ellen and Rosa, Quentin provides us with a stranger's perspective on southern hospitality. The Compsons are native to Yoknapatawpha County and to the South. But, for much of

Absalom, Absalom!, Quentin isn't in Yoknapatawpha County or the South. He is in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a place far removed from the South where he is treated as and feels like a stranger. Harvard University and the whole of New England feel alien to Quentin. The New England snow is "strange" (41). The dorm room he shares with Shreve is "strange" (141). The lamplit table in the dorm room is also "strange" (141).¹²⁵ It is no accident that a story told about a stranger to a stranger is narrated from a place that feels strange to its narrator. Quentin's ability to tell Shreve about the South and the region's relationship to and with strangers is heightened by his own experience of estrangement in Cambridge. This estrangement allows him to see the South more clearly and to better understand what it feels like to be a stranger in the South.

More than any other character in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Quentin is hospitable to the past. We learn in the first chapter that Quentin is haunted by a constant barrage of living and dead "ghosts" who have arrived unbidden and taken up residence in his "body": "His childhood was full of them; his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. He was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts . . ." (7). Quentin's "very body" is a "hall" where the "defeated" ghosts of the South's past seek recognition from a present that is intent on disavowing any memory of them. It is as if Quentin's body is a site of hospitality and he is host to the past, a host interpellated by his culture, forced to fill the role that no one else will. Rosa invites Quentin into her home in the novel's opening scene for the specific purpose of telling him a story about the South. Rosa's hospitality is compulsory: her "summons" is one that he must "obey" (6). It does not matter that he has "already" heard the story of Sutpen before; sitting and listening to stories about the South

is an essential part of his southern education (23). Aware that Quentin is “going away” to Harvard and that he may never return, Rosa makes her guest “spend a whole afternoon sitting indoors and listening while she talk[s]” in the hope that he will someday “remember” the story she tells and “write about it” (5).

Despite the demands placed on him, Quentin is a receptive host. He understands that what the South’s “garrulous outraged baffled ghosts” seek above all is to be listened to (4). He may be reluctant to listen at times, but he does try to listen attentively. He is hospitable to Rosa and his father, to the stories they tell, and also hospitable to the voices of the ghosts in those stories, to the haunting calls of Sutpen and Bon and their progenies. Rosa imagines that Quentin might make a history out of the memories she passes on, and though it is not easy, Quentin does try. He struggles with Shreve to retell, to reanimate and make sense of, the stories of a disavowed past. He tries to receive these stories with a spirit of affirmation, to recognize and grant value to them and to the characters who inhabit them.

The form of *Absalom, Absalom!* reflects the reluctant but affirmative quality of Quentin’s hospitality to the past. The novel’s repetitions, disavowals, and deferrals all mimic the South’s fetishism of southern hospitality.¹²⁶ But these formal strategies of fetishism also mirror Quentin’s struggles to show hospitality to a past that forcibly and repeatedly imposes itself upon him. In its deployment of these strategies, the novel proffers the reader the same reluctant hospitality that Quentin proffers the past. The narration of *Absalom, Absalom!* is anything but welcoming. The novel’s opening scene plunges us headfirst into the story of Thomas Sutpen without formally introducing us to the story’s major characters and their complicated histories. We enter the scene as

strangers, unfamiliar with our surroundings and bewildered by the barrage of oblique allusions to the past. The experience is disorienting. Trying to make sense of Rosa's tortuous style of narration in the opening scene—"It (the talking, the telling) seemed (to him, to Quentin) to partake of that logic- and reason-flouting quality of a dream which the sleeper knows must have occurred, stillborn and complete . . ."—is alienating, if not off-putting (15). The effect is to keep us at a remove, on the outside looking in, detached from the events themselves, estranged from indoctrination in the culture that the narration depicts. We are never made to feel welcome in Sutpen's story, never made to feel as if our needs and desires as readers have been taken into account in the telling. Yet, there is also something alluring, something inviting, about the novel's aloofness. For all its estrangement and disorientation, *Absalom, Absalom!* draws us in. It taunts us, bit by bit, deferral by deferral. It keeps us wanting more, yearning for a more informed, less broken narrative of history. It makes us want to fill in the holes that its characters refuse to fill, to listen to the ghosts its characters deny. In this, it makes us want to be hospitable to the history Quentin struggles so desperately to tell.

III

Asked in an interview to comment on the similarities between her 1966 novel, *Jubilee*, and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With The Wind*, Margaret Walker chose instead to point out how the ideology of southern hospitality informed the different perspectives of the two works. "I am sometimes amused at the comparison," Walker explained. "In some respects I suppose we could compare superficially the two Margarets—Margaret Mitchell and Margaret Walker. But she was coming out of the front door, and I was coming out of

the back door” (Rowell 24).¹²⁷ Raised in Alabama and Louisiana, Walker was all-too-familiar with the dominant white South’s narrative of the Civil War and Reconstruction periods. “I knew that the society in which I have grown up and lived, the segregated society, didn’t want to believe that story,” Walker says about the story of *Jubilee*, which is based on her great-grandmother’s experiences in Georgia and Alabama during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. “They had another story that they were always telling, *Gone With the Wind*. And that wasn’t my story” (Bonetti 136).¹²⁸ Whereas Mitchell’s *Gone With The Wind* interrogates the ideology of southern hospitality through a focus on the lives of privileged white characters, Walker’s *Jubilee* demonstrates how blacks during and after emancipation relied on biblical and folk tropes of hospitality to maintain visions of freedom.¹²⁹ In particular, Walker’s novel shows how blacks during the second half of the nineteenth century claimed privileged status in the South through a cultural reinterpretation of the Old Testament jubilee. In the process, *Jubilee* emphasizes the role that claims to land ownership played in attempts made by freed blacks to establish sovereignty in the spaces of the South after emancipation. Finally, Walker’s novel also provides readers with a vision of interracial hospitality—the kind of vision that many other twentieth-century writers, most notably Richard Wright, were unable to imagine. Committed to what she describes as a “new humanism” that rejects racist ideologies, Walker envisions a black female protagonist in *Jubilee* who responds to the South’s white patriarchy not with bitterness and hatred but instead with a determination to achieve redemption through acts of forgiveness and generosity (“The Humanist Tradition” 128-30).¹³⁰ The redemption that Walker imagines in *Jubilee* manifests itself as a lived ethics of affirmative hospitality.

Vyry, the protagonist of *Jubilee*, is born a slave on the Dutton Plantation in Dawson, Georgia, around 1840. The son of her slave master, John Morris Dutton, Vyry has “sandy hair,” “gray-blue eyes,” and “milk-white skin.” Although she can pass as white, she identifies entirely with blacks.¹³¹ As a teenager, Vyry falls in love with Randall Ware, a free and literate black man, with whom she has two children (Jim and Minna) before a failed escape attempt from the Dutton Plantation forces the two lovers apart. Left alone with Jim and Minna after emancipation, Vyry eventually meets Innis Brown, a former field slave who takes responsibility for Vyry and her children, and who fathers Vyry’s third child, Harry, before the family settles in Greenville, Georgia.

As early as the first pages of *Jubilee*, Walker’s characters summon images of God’s hospitality for comfort. While praying at Vyry’s mother’s death bed in the novel’s opening chapter, Brother Ezekiel, the Dutton plantation preacher, recalls Matthew 7:7-8 in his description of God’s mercy as a gracious welcoming into Heaven: “Lord, God-a-mighty, you done told us in your Word to seek and we shall find; knock and the door be open . . . your humble servant is a-knockin, and askin for your lovin mercy, and your tender love” (12). For Ezekiel, God is the supreme host, capable of “[g]ather[ing]” the dying Hetta into His “bosom” and offering her a seat at his “welcome table” (13). Heaven, the ultimate space of privilege, is figured not as foreign or alien but as eminently familiar. “This here sister is tired a-sufferin, Lord, and she wants to come on home,” Brother Ezekiel beseeches. “Take her home, Lord God, take her home” (12-3). Later, the figuration of Heaven as home is reiterated when we learn that Vyry’s favorite spiritual is “The Wayfaring Stranger,” which describes the journey of a poor and helpless stranger in

search of shelter. The destination sought by the stranger is a “city called heaven” that he hopes to make his “home” (57).¹³²

Juxtaposed against the comfort and familiarity of Heaven, Brother Ezekiel describes the Big House of the Dutton plantation as unwelcoming and alien. In Ezekiel’s retelling of the story of Exodus, Pharaoh’s house is recast as “the Big House,” the black folk equivalent of the “House of Bondage” (45-6). Barred from receiving hospitality in the space of the Big House, the young Vyry seeks images of welcoming in her unconscious. In her sleep, she struggles against the ideology of southern hospitality, trying to envision a world where a black man—presumably Randall Ware—possesses the power to welcome her into a space of freedom:

Once she dreamed she saw a beautiful door and she tried to enter it, because someone told her the name of the door was Freedom, but the door was locked and although she kept trying the lock and turning the golden knob, it would not open. . . . Then she saw a black man standing by the door. He held a golden key dangling from a dazzling chain, and he was smiling at her and promising to open the door . . . (95)

Eventually, of course, it is Abraham Lincoln, the Moses figure of black folklore, who serves as the host to freedom when he opens the “golden door” for Vyry and her fellow slaves, a moment that is chronicled in *Jubilee* with the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation to freed slaves on the Dutton plantation (279).¹³³ Too old to live beyond the end of the war but alive for Lincoln’s Proclamation, Brother Ezekiel dies believing that he has seen “the year of Jubilee” and the overthrow of the pharaohs of the South (242-43).

Determined to present a realistic and detailed account of southern black life during the nineteenth century, Walker grounds *Jubilee* in the southern black folk tradition. “I always intended *Jubilee* to be a folk novel based on folk material: folk sayings, folk belief, folkways,” Walker explains (“How I Wrote” 62). For her “folk material,” Walker relied on stories told to her by her ancestors and published collections of “spirituals, work songs, popular tunes, and even minstrel songs” (60).¹³⁴ All fifty-eight chapters in *Jubilee* begin with a spiritual or secular epigraph.¹³⁵ Together, these epigraphs help establish what Nigel Thomas has called the “black ethos” of Walker’s characters (140). Through her use of folklore in *Jubilee*, Walker demonstrates how blacks constructed a cultural imaginary that helped them assume an “identity quite apart from” the identity that the dominant white South sought to impose on them (Thomas 140).

The epigraphs to the chapters in *Jubilee* reveal how heavily blacks relied on a cultural reinterpretation of the biblical jubilee as a means of envisioning freedom. The first epigraphic mention of the jubilee comes in the opening to Chapter 35:

De marster run? Ha, ha!

De darkey stay? Ho, ho!

Hit must be now de kingdom coming

And de year of jubilo! (268)

Here, in Henry Work’s well-known spiritual “Kingdom Coming,” the jubilee is figured as a time of usurpation—as a time when blacks acquire sovereignty while whites flee in fear. Although Walker’s epigraph includes only the first verse of the spiritual, the remaining verses of “Kingdom Coming” foreshadow the events that follow in the novel.

When Vry and her children move into the Dutton Big House only three chapters later, *Jubilee* enacts the third verse of “Kingdom Coming”:

De darkeys feel so lonesome libing
In de log house on de lawn,
Dey move der tings to massa’s parlor
For to keep it while he’s gone,
Dar’s wine an’ cider in de kitchen,
An’ de darkeys dey’ll hab some;
I spose dey’ll all be confiscated

When de Linkum sojers come. (*Minstrel Songs* 180-81)

In its reference to the confiscation of white property, Work’s “Kingdom Coming,” which was first published in 1862, testifies to the widespread belief, held both in the North and the South, that the federal government would follow through with the threats made in the Confiscation Acts. In addition, by analogizing emancipation to the biblical jubilee, “Kingdom Coming” participates in the cultural production of the belief that victory by the North would result in land redistribution in the South, a belief that Henry Work iterated even more explicitly in “Babylon is Fallen,” which Walker quotes in her epigraph to Chapter 40 of *Jubilee*:

We will be de marster,
He will be de sarvant,
Try him how he like it for a spell;
So we crack de Butt’nuts,
So we take de Kernel,

So de cannon carry back de shell;
Look out dar now! We's gwine to shoot,
Look out dar, don't you understand?
Babylon is fallen! Babylon is fallen!

And we's gwine to occupy de land! (Walker 303; "Babylon is Fallen!" 3-5)

Composed as a sequel to "Kingdom Coming," Work's "Babylon is Fallen," published in 1863, grants both narrative agency and land sovereignty to blacks by figuring freed slaves as the authoritative speakers of the song and as occupiers of the southern landscape. At the same time, Work's "Babylon is Fallen" describes southern white men as usurped of their status as hosts and of their property; like the hedonistic sinners of Babylon in *The Book of Revelation*, they are forced to experience the destruction of the luxuries they once took for granted.

By comparing the biblical jubilee to the emancipation of slaves in the United States, Walker's novel contributes to a cultural reinterpretation of Old and New Testament texts—a reinterpretation that relies on a claim of native status for freed blacks in the South. According to biblical texts, the Israelite jubilee does not allow for the freeing of foreign slaves. Leviticus 25, the passage in the Pentateuch that deals most extensively with the jubilee, tells of a holy "fiftieth year" during which "liberty" will be widespread throughout Israel: "It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family" (Lev. 25:10).¹³⁶ After delineating the particular requirements and allowances involved in the theological economy of the jubilee, Leviticus 25 stipulates how servants and slaves are to be treated during the holy year. The text is clear to distinguish between native servants and foreign

slaves. On one hand, we read of “dependent” kin who assume the status of “resident aliens” in the homes of familial hosts. Native to Israel, these kin are afforded certain privileges: “Do not take interest in advance or otherwise make a profit from them, but fear your God; let them live with you. You shall not lend them your money at interest in advance, or provide them food at a profit” (Lev. 25:35-37). Along with other Israelite natives who take on the status of “hired” or “bound” laborers, dependent kin are granted their freedom at the time of the jubilee: “They shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. Then they and their children with them shall be free from your authority; they shall go back to their own family and return to their ancestral property. For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves are sold” (Lev. 25:40-42). The distinction made here between the “servants” of God, on the one hand, and “slaves” unprotected by God, on the other, is further clarified in the text’s provisions regarding the enlistment of slaves:

As for the male and female slaves whom you may have, it is from the nations around you that you may acquire male and female slaves. You may also require them from among the aliens residing with you, and from their families that are with you, who have been born in your land; and they may be your property. You may keep them as a possession for your children after you, for them to inherit as property. These you may treat as slaves, but as for your fellow Israelites, no one shall rule over the other with harshness. (Lev. 25:44-46)

The “aliens” residing in Israel and their descendants are distinct from those who are native to the space of Israel, including those servants who live as “resident aliens” on the property of their hosts. In other words, no Israelite may enslave another native Israelite.

All slaves must be of foreign origin. Finally, slaves, unlike “resident aliens,” are not granted liberty at the time of the jubilee. Denied the mercy of God, the slaves of Leviticus 25 remain slaves until they die.¹³⁷

Thus, in order for the freed blacks of the U.S. South to receive the benefits of the biblical jubilee—namely, emancipation and access to land—they must be viewed as native. Accordingly, Walker’s novel claims native status for southern blacks by emphasizing their connection to the land. Whereas Walker depicts blacks working, eating, sleeping, and playing in the fields and forests of the South, she portrays whites as disassociated from the land. White characters in *Jubilee* have no connection with the land outside of the work their slaves carry out for them in the fields. On the other hand, both Innis Brown and Vyry exhibit close connections to the land. A “born farmer,” Innis’s dream is to own and operate a farm, to live off the land and cultivate it with respect (294).¹³⁸ And, in moments of need, Vyry calls on the land for comfort and support. In one of the novel’s final chapters, for example, Vyry finds that she can speak to God only through the medium of the land: “Before she realized where she was going she found herself deep in the woods. . . . She found herself a rock, and instead of sitting down she dropped to her knees. Instinctively she began to pray . . . ‘I come down here, Lord, cause I ain’t got no where else to go’” (454). Ultimately, in her characterizations of blacks as tied to the southern landscape, Walker constructs what Rashall Smith-Spears describes as “an allegory for the African American’s journey toward home in an America that was not fully committed to his/her inclusion within its boundaries” (137). Rather than describe the space of the South as foreign to blacks, *Jubilee* depicts it as familiar and comforting. Hence, the acquisition of land after emancipation is figured as a kind of reacquisition—as

a return to home. After all, the biblical jubilee brings about a reunion with one's land and property rather than a seizure of something new (Lev. 25:10).

Although the presence of the folklore tradition in Walker's novel emphasizes how blacks used the image of jubilee to maintain their faith in freedom and land acquisition, *Jubilee* also narrativizes the North's failure to provide the hospitality that it promised to blacks after emancipation. The epigraph to Chapter 51, taken from the spiritual "Great Day," points to the vast incongruity between the promises made by the North and the realities faced by blacks during Reconstruction. Although "Great Day" talks of the "day of jubilee" when God sets "His people free" and the "Righteous" march in thankfulness for their liberty, the living conditions for Vyry and her family in Chapter 51 are far from ideal (Work *American Negro Songs* 182). As we learn in the opening paragraph to the chapter,

In the spring of 1870, five years after freedom from chattel slavery, Vyry and Innis Brown were still unsettled. Vyry's longing for her children to learn to read and write and cipher on their hands was still unfulfilled. Innis Brown was preparing to settle on another farm, but Vyry had learned from bitter experience that the white world around them deeply resented Negroes settling the lands and building new farms. (413)

After the war, Vyry and Innis hear of Sherman's "Special Field Order, No. 15" from Union soldiers: "Soldiers say colored folks been had them acres in Georgy on the ocean front . . ." (343). Innis hears specifically that the "gov'mint gwine give every colored farmer forty acres and a mule" (343). Interpreting Sherman's Field Order as a kind of contract, Innis trusts that the "gov'mint" will follow through with its promises because it

has given freed blacks its “word” (343).¹³⁹ However, Innis and Vyry find instead that black life during Reconstruction is “similar” to the life they had known as slaves (344). While trying to homestead in Alabama, they encounter not hospitality but “white hostility” (344). Despite the stipulations laid out in the Southern Homestead Act, the Browns find themselves forced to sharecrop on the land of a white southerner, Mr. Pippins, who exploits them by making Innis sign a contract that he cannot read (350). Then, when the Klu Klux Klan burns down a home that the Browns finally manage to build on land near Troy, Alabama, in the spring of 1869, Innis loses his patience when a representative of the Freedmen’s Bureau insists that the federal government is willing and able to provide hospitality for him and his family:

Gov’mint? Gov’mint? Gov’mint you say? I done heard that word Gov’mint until I’m sick to my stomach. The Gov’mint gwine give you this, the Gov’mint gwine give you that. The Gov’mint gwine give every nigger forty acres and a mule. The Gov’mint got good land. The Gov’mint will help you get settled. The Gov’mint gwine have free schools for colored. Sir, does you want to know what the Gov’mint done give me? Nothing. Not nary nickel’s worth of nothing. Do you hear me? (385)

The discrepancy between Innis’s notion of hospitality and the federal government’s becomes clear when the representative from the Freedmen’s Bureau argues that blacks “got [their] freedom on account of the Government” (385). For Innis, the role of government is to protect the rights of individuals, not to grant them rights. Therefore, he feels no gratitude for having his rights announced to him.

Despite the hardships faced by the Browns, *Jubilee* both advocates and depicts exchanges of interracial hospitality in the South. Vyry insists on interracial trust and forgiveness, particularly during times of crisis. In a scene that recalls the generosity demonstrated by Ma Joad to starving children at the Hooverville camp in *The Grapes of Wrath*, Vyry extends hospitality to a haggard white family in rural postbellum Alabama. Despite the suffering that she and other blacks experienced during slavery, Vyry cannot witness the destitution of whites without acting on their behalf. “Sh-sh,” Vyry tells Innis Brown when he wonders why she has offered the family’s food to a strange and unknown white family, “can’t you see these folks is hungry?” (348). Although the Browns’ supply of food is severely limited, Vyry’s hospitality is bountiful: “. . . if you thinks your chilluns would like some you is welcome to share what we got, sitch as it is” (348). On the morning before the white family sets off on their horses, Vyry wakes early and makes sure to fill “their stomachs full of hot food” (349). What makes the scene particularly striking is that the interracial exchange takes place in a space currently occupied not by the Browns but by the white family. In the absence of a host capable of providing hospitality to guests and to family, Vyry assumes the role because she possesses the means and the character—what the narrator describes as her “generous spirit of hospitality”—to see beyond racial and familial boundaries. Perhaps most importantly, Vyry also succeeds in not making the recipients of her hospitality feel obligated to her. In fact, she somehow manages to make “the poor white woman and her husband feel they [are] doing her a favor” (348-49).

For Vyry, hospitality and friendship are unthinkable without acts of forgiveness. Her belief in the significance of forgiveness becomes clear in the final chapters of the

novel. After Innis beats Jim for failing to take responsibility while working in the field, Vyry insists on her son's need to forgive his adopted father: "You gotta forgive, like you expects God to forgive you" (457). For Vyry, forgiveness entails a willingness to look past—indeed, to forget—the wrongs committed by others. When Jim concedes that he is willing to "forgive" Innis Brown but not to "forgit" what he has done, Vyry explains that her son's commitment to his memory of the past only serves to make him less hospitable to others. "Then you is still hating, and you ain't forgiving," Vyry tells her son. "Keeping hatred inside makes you git mean and evil inside. We supposen to love everybody like God loves us. And when you forgives you feel sorry for the one what hurt you, you returns love for hate, and good for evil. And that stretches your heart and makes you bigger inside with a bigger heart so's you can love everybody when your heart is big enough" (457). Vyry's forgiveness is offered in the spirit of affirmative hospitality. It involves recognizing and accepting the other's flawed humanity over and above concern for one's own feelings. Giving "love" in response to "hate" is an affirmation of alterity, a commitment to the kind of humanism that Walker so adamantly espoused. Vyry urges her son to forgive Innis Brown because she understands that Jim cannot move forward with an open heart if that heart is filled with "hatred," if the forgiveness he offers Innis is merely a performance of conciliation rather than a selfless act of recognition.

In the novel's final chapters, the question of forgiveness takes on added significance when Randall Ware arrives and challenges Vyry's commitment to interracial forgiveness and hospitality. Ware declares that interracial friendship is not possible because whites and blacks are "natural" enemies: "Well, Vyry, you might as well face it, the white man is your natural enemy and he regards you as his natural enemy" (473).

Unwilling to accept Ware's worldview, Vyry advocates a spirit of interracial hospitality based first and foremost on forgiveness. Recalling the horrible treatment she experienced as a slave, including the beating that left her back forever scarred, Vyry nevertheless proclaims that she bears her tormentors "no ill will" (484). Employing an image that reflects the novel's preoccupation with tropes of hospitality, Vyry articulates her devotion to interracial forgiveness by asserting, "I honestly believes that if airy one of them peoples what treated me like dirt when I was a slave would come to my door in the morning hungry, I would feed em" (485). Choosing hospitality when others might be inclined to choose spite, Vyry demonstrates what Innis Brown sees as an admirable "capacity for love, redemptive and forgiving love" (486). The sins committed by John Morris Dutton, Grimes, Miss Salina, and the other whites on the Dutton plantation do not merit Vyry's forgiveness; nor have the perpetrators requested forgiveness from their victims. Vyry's forgiveness of white slave owners and masters is independent of any legal judgment or punishment; rather, it is an affirmation of a common humanity between whites and blacks: "We both needs each other. White folks needs what black folks got just as much as black folks needs what white folks got, and we's all got to stay here mongst each other and git along, that's what" (480). Nor is Vyry's commitment to interracial hospitality naïve or ignorant; she is well-aware of reality and chooses love despite her knowledge of hatred's powers: "I'm gwine leave all the evil shameless peoples in the world in the hands of the Good Lawd and I'm gwine teach my childrens to hate nobody, don't care what they does. I ain't gwine teach my childrens hate cause hate ain't nothing but rank poison. I knows they is evil peoples in the world and I knows everything don't always turn out like we think is right . . ." (482).¹⁴⁰

In a 1973 interview, Margaret Walker argued that “it is only in terms of humanism that the society can redeem itself” (Rowell 25). For Walker, a belief in humanism means an “appreciation of every human being” and an acknowledgment that “mankind is only one race—the human race” (Rowell 25). Appreciating the value of others, Walker tells us, requires regarding “the sacred nature of a brother or sister as one values [one’s] own privacy and inner sanctity” (Walker “The Humanistic Tradition” 128). The relationship between hospitality and Walker’s humanism is nowhere more clear in *Jubilee* than in the epigraph to Chapter 44:

Every nigger’s gwine to own a mule,
Jubili, Jubilo!
Every nigger’s gwine to own a mule,
And live like Adam in the golden rule,
And send his chillun to the white-folk’s school
In the year of Jubilo! (342)

In this excerpt from Stephen Vincent Benét’s epic 1928 poem *John Brown’s Body*, racial equality is framed as an ethics of reciprocity (Benét 73). By generating conditions under which whites and blacks live together in the spirit of “the golden rule,” the jubilee of *John Brown’s Body* makes acts of interracial hospitality possible. And it is only through acts of hospitality, both Walker and Vyrly make clear, that we have any chance of redemption.

PART III:
NATIVE AMERICAN HOSPITALITY

During the previous two parts of this dissertation, I have suggested at various points that Native American characters are uniquely positioned to critique dominant American models of hospitality. In Part Three, I turn my attention to the work of three seminal figures in twentieth-century Native American literary studies: Zitkala-Ša, Louise Erdrich, and Michael Dorris. Despite the absence of critical work on the subject of hospitality in Native American literary studies, hospitality is without question a central discourse in Native American literature. As we shall see, it is by deconstructing and reappropriating dominant American tropes of hospitality that Zitkala-Ša, Erdrich, and Dorris reject existing American ethical models and formulate alternative models of hospitality—models that, as we shall also see, are critically informed by and inextricably tied to indigenous ways of knowing and living.

Through their concerted focus on discourses of hospitality in twentieth-century Native American literature, the final two chapters in this dissertation both complement and critique an ongoing discussion in Native Studies about the role that a liberal pluralist “politics of recognition” has played in North America during the past few decades in reproducing the kinds of colonialist, racist, and patriarchal forms of oppression that advocates of indigenous rights have historically sought to overturn.¹⁴¹ As Richard Day has observed, formal acts of state recognition, issued by U.S. and Canadian governments over the past few decades on behalf of indigenous peoples in the name of liberalism, have failed to produce “any increase” in “equality” for Native communities (198). Rather than

formally “recognize” the inherent “value” of Native communities, Day notes, liberal acts of recognition have served merely to “recognize” the “*existence*” of these communities (198).¹⁴² Expanding on Day’s argument, Glen Sean Coulthard has recently suggested that the liberal “practices” of “conciliation” that U.S. and Canadian governments have adopted in response to calls for indigenous recognition have actually reiterated the “colonial” relationship between North American Indians and the state (6).¹⁴³ The state’s “grand gestures of recognition,” Coulthard reveals, work to reproduce a “circumscribed mode of recognition that structurally ensures continued access to Indigenous peoples’ lands and resources” (156).¹⁴⁴ By “*appearing* to address” their colonial history through “symbolic acts of redress,” U.S. and Canadian governments have used a liberal politics of recognition to justify and disavow the continued displacement and exploitation of North American Indians (155).

In order to combat the counterproductive effects of liberal pluralism’s politics of recognition, Coulthard advises the practice of an “alternative politics” aimed at achieving “affirmative” forms of recognition (3). For Coulthard, this politics “is less oriented around attaining legal and political recognition by the state, and more about Indigenous peoples empowering themselves through cultural practices of individual and collective self-fashioning that seek to *prefigure* radical alternatives to the structural and subjective dimensions of colonial power . . .” (18). Central to Coulthard’s vision of affirmative recognition is his call for a reinvestment in an indigenous land-based ethics. Arguing in favor of what he calls an ethics of “grounded normativity,” Coulthard contends that the land, as a “mode of reciprocal *relationship*,” provides us with a model for “living our lives in relation to one another and our surroundings in a respectful, nondominating and

nonexploitative way” (60). Instead of reproducing “asymmetrical” forms of recognition, Coulthard suggests, an alternative politics that is grounded in an indigenous land-based ethics can create the conditions under which face-to-face “dialog” can take place and lead to reciprocal relations (25, 36).

In the following two chapters, I argue that Native American literature has provided a space for imagining and articulating Coulthard’s vision of affirmative recognition since the beginning of the twentieth century. In Chapter Three, I show how Yankton Dakota author Zitkala-Ša (1876-1938) promotes a land-based ethics of affirmative hospitality that is informed by Sioux notions and customs of kinship, reciprocity, sexual complementarity, and land stewardship. In Chapter Four, I show how Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris use their collaborative novel, *The Crown of Columbus*, to draw attention to the formative role that settler colonial narratives of hospitality play in enabling and perpetuating a settler colonial politics of recognition.¹⁴⁵ More specifically, I show how Erdrich and Dorris expose the ways in which settler colonial regimes dating back to Columbus have used false discourses of hospitality to disguise acts of oppression as acts of recognition.

Chapter Three

Toward A Native American Critique of American Hospitality:

Zitkala-Ša's Indigenous Feminism

In 1896, as a twenty-year-old undergraduate student at Earlham College, Zitkala-Ša¹ presented a speech to her fellow undergraduates wherein she drew attention to a suppressed history of Native American hospitality to European colonists, explorers, traders, and missionaries. Speaking specifically about the hospitality that Abenaki Indians provided to the Pilgrims at Plymouth Colony, Zitkala-Ša recounted, “The invasion of his

¹ Born as Gertrude Simmons on the Yankton Sioux Reservation in South Dakota in 1876, Zitkala-Ša was a central figure in Native-American literary and political life during the first decades of the twentieth century. Born to a Dakota mother and an Anglo-French father who abandoned the family before his daughter's birth, Zitkala-Ša spent the first eight years of her life at Yankton before leaving for boarding school in 1884 (Lewandowski 18; Kunce 73; Johnson & Wilson 27; Fisher 231). She attended White's Manual Labor Institute, a boarding school for Native Americans in Wabash, Indiana, for two periods during her childhood and adolescence, from 1884 to 1887 and then again from 1891 to 1895. In the intervening years, she returned to the Yankton Reservation, where she resumed her Dakota education under the tutelage of her mother (Johnson & Wilson 28). After graduating from White's, Zitkala-Ša enrolled at Earlham College, where she excelled as a writer, violinist, and orator (Johnson & Wilson 28; Rappaport 62). Then, following a year at the Boston Conservatory of Music, she served as an instructor at the famous Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania from 1899 until 1901 (Rappaport 90). In 1900, she became one of the first Native Americans to communicate her life story to a national audience without the aid of a translator when three of her autobiographical stories—“Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” “The Schooldays of an Indian Girl,” and “An Indian Teacher Among Indians”—were published in *Atlantic Monthly* over a three-month period (Hafen xxiv; Davidson & Norris xviii). The following year, at the age of twenty-five, Zitkala-Ša received critical acclaim for *Old Indian Legends*, a collection of traditional Dakota stories translated into written English. In 1903, Zitkala-Ša and her husband, Raymond Bonnin, moved to Uintah and Ourah Reservation in Utah, where they lived for fourteen years. During this time, Zitkala-Ša established and managed a community center on the reservation that provided work, support, and provisions for members of the Ute Indian Tribe. Relocating to Washington, DC, with her family in 1916, Zitkala-Ša spent the next two decades lobbying on behalf of the rights of Native Americans. In her capacity as Secretary-Treasurer of the Society of American Indians (SAI) and chief editor of the Society's journal, *American Indian Magazine*, she took a leading role in advocating for Indian citizenship, tribal sovereignty, and women's rights. In 1926, she founded the National Council of American Indians, one of the first pan-Indian organizations in the United States. She served as President of the NCAI until her death in 1938.

broad dominions by a paler race brought no dismay to the hospitable Indian. Samoset voiced the feeling of his people as he stood among the winter-weary Pilgrims and cried ‘Welcome, Englishmen’” (223).¹⁴⁶ Twenty-five years later, in one of the last political essays that she would publish, Zitkala-Ša chose once again to focus attention on the subject of Native American hospitality to Europeans. In the first sentence of her essay, entitled “America’s Indian Problem,” she boldly suggests that it was Native American hospitality that made it possible for Europeans to survive in the New World: “The hospitality of the American aborigine . . . saved the early settlers from starvation during the first bleak winters” (155).

Zitkala-Ša’s use of a discourse of hospitality to narrate the history of New World contact is by no means unique to these two instances. In the intervening twenty-five years between delivering her speech at Earlham and composing “America’s Indian Problem,” Zitkala-Ša repeatedly utilized discourses of hospitality to interpret, narrativize, and ultimately deconstruct post-Columbian North American history. Both her fiction and non-fiction are filled with scenes and figures of hospitality. In her Dakota legends, tropes of hospitality serve as the dominant rhetorical features through which she allegorizes the contact period. Virtually every one of her twenty-four legends centers around a crucial scene in which a host must decide whether to provide or withhold hospitality. In her original short stories, these same tropes resurface but in modernized settings and with contemporary political implications. Scenes of hospitality take place in homes on reservations and at Issue Houses where tribal rations are distributed. In her autobiographical narratives, tropes of hospitality are no less present. They are practically

ubiquitous in her descriptions of her childhood on the Yankton Reservation and in her detailed accounts of her experiences as a student and teacher at Indian boarding schools.

Despite the increasing critical attention that Zitkala-Ša has received in recent years, what has remained conspicuously absent from these scholarly discussions has been any consideration for the role that hospitality plays in her writing.¹⁴⁷ In this chapter, I recover the central importance of hospitality to Zitkala-Ša's work by demonstrating that hospitality functions as the central discourse around and through which Zitkala-Ša structures and coordinates her social, cultural, and political critiques. Recognizing the centrality of hospitality to Zitkala-Ša's critical project allows us to identify linkages among these various critiques that have until now escaped scholarly attention. We can, for example, begin to see how Zitkala-Ša's critique of American sovereignty is expressed through the same tropes of hospitality as her critique of the federal government's Indian boarding school program. Likewise, we can see how her critique of the American nuclear family is communicated through the same tropes of hospitality as her critique of capitalist modes of exchange. Performing the important work of recovering these connections in Zitkala-Ša's writing helps us not only better understand her critical project but also more clearly comprehend Zitkala-Ša's significance as a pioneering figure in Native American literature. It is largely through discourses of hospitality, I maintain, that Zitkala-Ša provided future Native American authors with a foundation for carrying out their own critiques of American and Indian cultures.

Zitkala-Ša viewed hospitality as the dominant discourse of the oppressor—which is to say, she viewed hospitality as the dominant discourse through which the oppressor justifies oppression. By appropriating this discourse and resignifying the tropes that have

been used to license oppression, Zitkala-Ša achieves what Scott Richard Lyons has termed “rhetorical sovereignty”: she claims her “right” and establishes her “ability” to “determine” on her own the “modes, styles, and languages” through which she desires to express herself publicly (449-50).¹⁴⁸ At the same time, however, Zitkala-Ša chooses to center her work around and through a discourse of hospitality for another reason. Just as she shows that a discourse of hospitality can be used to justify oppression, she also shows that it can be used in very powerful ways to imagine more positive relations between Natives and non-Natives. In both her fiction and non-fiction, she vindicates Indian cultures—particularly her native Dakota culture—by revealing the many ways in which indigenous conceptions and customs of hospitality provide an ethical foundation for re-imagining U.S.-Indian relations. Thus, Zitkala-Ša uses hospitality as a double-faced discourse: it provides her with the means both to critique and to imagine otherwise.

I

Zitkala-Ša translated twenty-four traditional Dakota legends during her lifetime. The first fourteen were published as *Old Indian Legends* in 1901, and the remaining ten remained undiscovered until 2001 when they were published, along with a number of other previously unknown Zitkala-Ša manuscripts, in a collection entitled *Dreams and Thunder*.¹⁴⁹ Past scholars have often treated both sets of legends as rote translations. In doing so, they have failed to recognize the unique qualities of Zitkala-Ša’s retellings. As a translator, Zitkala-Ša adapts her source material to address her own contemporary political concerns and to address her audience’s limited familiarity with Dakota culture. In her “Preface” to *Old Indian Legends*, Zitkala-Ša herself draws explicit attention to the adapted nature of her translations when she describes the tales in her collection as

“transplant[ed]” from their “native” language, mode of communication, and cultural context (5). Incorporated into her revised legends are allusions to critical issues facing Native Americans at the turn of the century, such as land allotment, compulsory boarding school education, the distribution of tribal rations, and renewed challenges to tribal sovereignty. By incorporating these allusions, Zitkala-Ša transforms traditional Dakota legends into political allegories designed specifically for non-Native readers.¹⁵⁰ Treating figures of hospitality unambiguously as allegorical symbols, Zitkala-Ša establishes a vocabulary of hospitality in her legends that she further develops and repurposes throughout her work. Central to the tropes at issue here are recurring figures of the host, the guest, and the parasite.

In her legends, Zitkala-Ša delivers five overarching critiques of dominant Western discourses of hospitality. First, she challenges European and American claims to “original” sovereignty in North America. Through the symbolic register of allegory, Zitkala-Ša restages scenes of contact in which characters coded as Native American are clearly figured as prior sovereigns—that is, as hosts possessing sovereignty prior to the arrival of Europeans and Americans. In the process, she recovers a suppressed history of Native American hospitality to European and American colonists, explorers, traders, missionaries, and government officials.¹⁵¹ Second, she challenges American claims to natural sovereignty in North America. Refuting the racist and paternalistic logic of the discovery doctrine, she uses her legends to remind us that Americans acquired sovereignty over Indian lands not by natural right but by exploiting Native American hospitality and by committing deliberate acts of violence. Third, Zitkala-Ša charges the US federal government with using hospitality as a pretense for exterminating indigenous

peoples and cultures. Portraying American Indian policy as essentially false and insidious, she suggests that the federal government has disguised spaces of confinement as sites of hospitality in order to conceal their true functions as sites of extermination. Fourth, Zitkala-Ša rejects and reverses the American trope of the Indian parasite. Recasting non-Natives as parasites, she condemns Americans for repeatedly violating the terms of their reciprocal contracts with Indian tribes. Moreover, through the negative examples of her characters, she demonstrates that parasitism runs counter to the foundational values of Sioux cultures. Fifth, Zitkala-Ša depicts American free market capitalism as an inherently inhospitable economic system. Undermining the claims of capitalist characters who attempt to portray their system of exploitation as fair and natural, Zitkala-Ša represents capitalism as a premeditated form of trickery.

As an alternative to the dominant Western discourses of hospitality that she critiques, Zitkala-Ša uses her legends to begin envisioning a land-based ethics of reciprocal hospitality. Like Coulthard, who models his theory of “grounded normativity” on the reciprocal relationships that he sees in nature, Zitkala-Ša imagines an ethics of reciprocity modeled on the hospitality that we receive from and witness in nature (Coulthard 60). Centrally informing this model of reciprocal hospitality is her belief in a Sioux cosmology that treats Mother Earth as *the* original host of all things—of the land, of all living beings, and of all natural resources (“California Indian Trails” 250-52). By portraying Mother Earth as the original host, Zitkala-Ša not only invalidates all European and American claims to original sovereignty in North America. She also defers infinitely the question of original human sovereignty altogether. If the Earth itself is the one true original host, then we—humans, animals, and all other living beings—are always already

Her guests. Thus, Zitkala-Ša distinguishes between the prior sovereignty that she claims on behalf of Native Americans and the original sovereignty that she assigns to Mother Earth. This distinction provides the theoretical foundation for an ethics of hospitality committed to the Dakota values of kinship, reciprocity, and land stewardship.

Zitkala-Ša lays the groundwork for her critique of American sovereignty in her “Preface” to *Old Indian Legends*. In the first sentence of the “Preface,” she challenges American claims to original sovereignty by announcing that her legends are the product of an indigenous relationship with the land that predates the arrival of Europeans in North America: “These legends are relics of our country’s once virgin soil” (5). As “relics” of this pre-Columbian history, the legends testify to the antecedent “character” of Indian sovereignty in North America (5). Tied to local sites and customs, the legends also provide Dakotans with a means through which to maintain and continuously renew their connection to the land. The very act of storytelling itself, Zitkala-Ša explains, offers the Dakota people an opportunity to celebrate and nurture their ties to nature and to the local landscape: “Under an open sky, nestling close to the earth, the old Dakota story-tellers have told me these legends. In both Dakotas, North and South, I have often listened to the same story told over again by a new story-teller” (5). Declaring that the time has come to share these traditional Dakota legends with non-Natives, Zitkala-Ša proffers her translations in the spirit of an invitation. Asserting that Natives and non-Natives share a common human “kinship,” she invites her Anglo audience not only to read her legends but also to pursue “further study of Indian folklore” (5). In making this invitation, however, Zitkala-Ša reiterates her earlier assertion of prior Indian sovereignty by referring to the English language as the “second tongue” of “America”: “And now I have

tried to transplant the native spirit of these tales—root and all—into the English language, since America in the last few centuries has acquired a second tongue” (5). In making this originary claim on behalf of indigenous languages, Zitkala-Ša suggests that Native American “folklore” constitutes the original literature of America. Firmly rooted in the “once virgin soil” and in the “native spirit” of indigenous American experience, Indian legends speak in the original voice—the first tongue—of “America.”¹⁵² At the same time, however, Zitkala-Ša will later undermine this formulation when she refers to the “language” of Mother Earth as preceding all human language (“California Indian Trials” 250-51). In this way, Zitkala-Ša continually encourages us to question all human claims to originality.

Zitkala-Ša also uses her “Preface” to begin invalidating the paternalistic tropes of hospitality that Europeans and Americans have used for centuries to justify claims to original and natural sovereignty in North America. Sioux legends, or *ohunkakan*, are traditionally addressed to children and designed to instruct young members of a given tribe in culturally acceptable modes of behavior.¹⁵³ Signifying on this tradition, Zitkala-Ša assumes a paternalistic discourse when addressing her white American readers in the “Preface”: “The legends of America belong quite as much to the blue-eyed little patriot as to the black-haired aborigine. And when they are grown tall like the wise grown-ups . . .” (5). As Jeffrey Myers has pointed out, Zitkala-Ša addresses her legends to “the little blue-eyed patriot” because “in the vast, millennia-long history of the human inhabitation of North America, recently arrived Euroamericans *are* children—and children clearly in need of instruction as to how to behave in relation to other people and beings in the natural world . . .” (122).¹⁵⁴ By implying that her non-Native readers require the kind of

instruction that is customarily intended for children, Zitkala-Ša self-consciously inverts and draws rhetorical attention to the conventional American stereotype of the Indian child-savage.¹⁵⁵ In doing so, she undermines the pretense of paternalism through which Americans have repeatedly usurped and disavowed Indian sovereignty since Columbus's arrival in North America.¹⁵⁶ As we will later see, Zitkala-Ša reiterates and expands on this critique of American paternalism in her original short stories, autobiographical narratives, and political essays.

But how do these critiques of false American hospitality find initial expression in Zitkala-Ša's Dakota legends? In other words, how precisely does Zitkala-Ša use tropes of hospitality to communicate these critiques? A highly illustrative instance is her legend "The Badger and the Bear." A variation of a well-known Sioux legend, Zitkala-Ša's "The Badger and the Bear" communicates its critique through recognizable tropes of hospitality and undisguised references to the history of settler colonialism in North America. The tale opens with a scene of categorical hospitality: arriving unexpectedly at the home of a badger family, a starving bear is offered food and shelter. Clearly figured as a guest, the bear is unknown to the badgers and is welcomed warmly and treated as a "friend": "How, how, friend! Your lips and nose look feverish and hungry. Will you eat with us?" (27-8). Affording the bear the honor of a "guest," the mother badgers feeds him the family's "most tender red meat" until he is fully satiated (28). Pleased with the generous welcome that he receives, the bear returns to the home of the badgers the next day and then in the days that follow. Each day, he is treated with utmost deference. Out of respect for her guest, the mother badger places a fur rug on the ground near the doorway and leaves it there for the bear to use each day (28). "She did not wish a guest in

her dwelling to sit upon the bare hard ground,” Zitkala-Ša’s narrator informs us, thereby reemphasizing the fundamental importance of the trope of the “guest” to this retelling of the legend. No longer the “unexpected newcomer” he was when he first arrived, the bear has become the badger family’s “regular” guest (28).

In these early passages of “The Badger and the Bear,” Zitkala-Ša models an ideal form of Dakota hospitality for her readers. Receiving the bear as a “friend” despite his strangeness, the badgers exhibit an ethos of hospitality that is grounded in indigenous notions of universal kinship.¹⁵⁷ The bear is not only unknown to the badgers; he is also a member of a different species. By showing the bear hospitality, the badgers affirm their belief that ties of kinship extend beyond biological classifications of species. In this sense, the badgers anticipate Zitkala-Ša’s later calls for an interracial ethics of hospitality. This all-inclusive notion of kinship is, as we shall see, central to the model of hospitality that Zitkala-Ša envisions both in her legends and in her later work. Populated by characters representing dozens of different species, Zitkala-Ša’s legends imagine a fictional universe in which interspecies exchanges of hospitality are not only common but also often necessary for survival.

The ideal model of hospitality that Zitkala-Ša presents in the early scenes of “The Badger and the Bear” is by no means limited to the initial act of categorical hospitality carried out by the badgers. Together, the badgers *and* the bear contribute to this ideal model through reciprocal expressions of recognition. As a guest, the bear repeatedly recognizes his hosts’ sovereignty over the space of their home. During his first visit to the badgers’ home, the bear readily cedes space to the mother badger in order to allow her to perform her work as host:

Hereupon the mother badger took long strides across the room, and as she had to pass in front of the strange visitor, she said: “Ah han! Allow me to pass!”

which was an apology.

“How, how!” replied the bear, drawing himself closer to the wall and crossing his shins together. (28)

In the future, the bear further exhibits his respect for the mother badger and for the hospitality she provides by “[a]lways” sitting “with crossed shins” (28). He also signals his appreciation for the mother badger’s cooking by “smacking his lips together” when he is finished with his meal (28).¹⁵⁸ In recognition of these expressions of deference and gratitude, the mother badger places the rug inside the door that the bear sits on every day (28). Ultimately, although these expressions of respect between the badgers and the bear do not last, they reflect Zitkala-Ša’s commitment to providing her readers with a vision of hospitality rooted in acts of reciprocal hospitality—acts that self-consciously and deliberately affirm their own reciprocal nature.

Zitkala-Ša also uses these early passages in “The Badger and the Bear” to draw attention to a suppressed history in which Europeans and Americans recognized Indian sovereignty prior to disavowing it.¹⁵⁹ Figuring the badgers’ home as a metonym for “America,” she treats the bear’s recognition of the badgers’ sovereignty as a symbolic representation of this early recognition of Indian sovereignty. Although Zitkala-Ša is fully aware that Europeans and Americans often usurped Indian sovereignty without ever recognizing Indians as hosts, she is more interested in exploring instances in which non-Natives, like the bear, acknowledged Indian sovereignty in order to take advantage of Indian hospitality. References to historical examples of non-Natives exploiting Indian

hospitality by first recognizing or pretending to recognize Indian sovereignty recur throughout Zitkala-Ša's fiction and non-fiction. Zitkala-Ša often points to US treaties with Indian tribes as representative examples of this kind of exploitation. Recounting scenes in which tribal chiefs are treated as sovereigns in their treaty negotiations with US government officials, she reminds us that US-Indian treaties were, according to established international law, premised on a recognition of Indian sovereignty.¹⁶⁰ Gaining millions of acres of land by making what appeared to be "good faith" acknowledgments of Indian sovereignty, the US federal government then proceeded to justify violating the terms of their agreements—terms they themselves set and insisted on—by disavowing the truth of prior Indian sovereignty ("America's Indian Problem" 156). In his overtures of recognition to the badgers in the early scenes of "The Badger and the Bear," Zitkala-Ša's bear represents this history of deliberate exploitation. Moreover, through the bear's example, we come to see how the American inclination to disavow a history of Native American hospitality is a product of a much deeper need to disavow the truth of prior Indian sovereignty.

Eventually, the bear in Zitkala-Ša's legend grows fat "upon the badger's hospitality" (28). Having regained his strength and pride, the bear arrives one day and announces that the badger and his family must vacate the premises because he has decided to take up residence in their home. Standing upon the rug and displaying a "row of large sharp teeth," the bear roars, "I have no dwelling. I have no bags of dried meat. I have no arrows. All these I found here on this spot . . . I want them! See! I am strong!" (29). Despite the badger's efforts to remind the bear of the hospitality that he showed him—"I fed you. I called you friend, though you came here a stranger"—the bear

forcibly removes the badgers, tossing one after another out of their home (29).

Dispossessed of their home and their possessions, the badgers build a makeshift hut and “beg” for their meals (29-30). Unable to secure any food for his family, the badger is forced to return to his old home and plead for hospitality. However, his pleas are met only with more violence (30).

In his attempts to justify his usurpation of the badgers’ home, the bear employs the same rhetoric that Europeans and Americans have historically used to validate their claims to sovereignty in North America.¹⁶¹ In particular, he echoes the rhetoric of the discovery doctrine when he asserts that he has a right to claim the badgers’ home and possessions as his own simply because he “found” them in the “spot” where he now stands.¹⁶² This claim to sovereignty by way of discovery denies the formative role that the badgers’ hospitality played in providing the bear with the strength to make a claim to sovereignty in the first place. In so doing, it attempts to deny a history of agency—a history in which the badgers chose repeatedly to welcome the bear into their home. It also attempts to deny the parasitical nature of the bear’s ascension to sovereignty. Perhaps aware that his discovery claim serves as insufficient justification for his actions, the bear resorts to claiming sovereignty by right of brute strength: “I am strong!” In his explicit reference to his physical strength and in the naked violence of his act of usurpation, the bear reminds us that European and American claims to sovereignty in North America have always been informed and legitimized by acts of violence and/or threats of violence.¹⁶³

II

Through analysis of “The Badger and the Bear” and the “Preface” to *Old Indian Legends*, we have to come to see how Zitkala-Ša uses discourses of hospitality to undermine American claims to original and natural sovereignty. We now turn our attention to the three remaining critiques of American hospitality in Zitkala-Ša’s legends. In large part, Zitkala-Ša communicates these three remaining critiques through her characterization of the Sioux trickster figure Iktomi. Although Iktomi is a well-known and important character in both the Lakota and Dakota storytelling traditions, he customarily shares the stage equally with other similarly recognizable mythological characters, such as Wakan Tanka, Inyan, and Hestovatohkeo’o.¹⁶⁴ In other collections of Sioux legends composed during the first decades of the twentieth century, Iktomi appears only sporadically. For example, in Charles Eastman’s *Wigwam Evenings* (1909), Iktomi appears in only four of the collection’s twenty-seven tales. Likewise, he appears in only five of the forty tales in Marie McLaughlin’s *Myths and Legends of the Sioux* (1916) and only nine of the fifty-four stories in Ellen DeLoria’s *Dakota Texts* (1932).¹⁶⁵ Yet, in Zitkala-Ša’s translations, Iktomi emerges as far and away the dominant mythological figure. He is the central character in each of the first five tales of *Old Indian Legends* and appears in ten of the collection’s fourteen tales. In addition, he reappears in three of the remaining Zitkala-Ša legends later published in *Dreams and Thunder*. Altogether, then, Iktomi is present in thirteen of Zitkala-Ša’s twenty-four translations.¹⁶⁶

Iktomi performs three interrelated functions in Zitkala-Ša’s legends.¹⁶⁷ Each of these functions contributes directly to Zitkala-Ša’s sustained critique of American hospitality. First, Iktomi instigates scenes of hospitality. A perpetual wanderer by nature, he is constantly coming in contact with strangers during his travels. Through her accounts

of Iktomi's encounters, Zitkala-Ša explores the ethical complexities posed by the arrival of the other. Second, Iktomi provides Zitkala-Ša repeatedly with a negative example through which to critique American hospitality. Figuring Iktomi as a synecdoche for white settler colonialism, Zitkala-Ša uses the trickster's repeated pattern of behavior to teach her readers how *not* to act as hosts and guests. Third, Iktomi deconstructs dominant American discourses of hospitality by continually disregarding established customs of exchange and by exposing existing hierarchical binaries of hospitality to be exploitative and unnatural. In the process, Zitkala-Ša's trickster reveals how dominant American discourses of hospitality fundamentally inform and help maintain asymmetrical power relations.

In her third critique of American hospitality, Zitkala-Ša uses the figure of Iktomi to charge the US federal government with using hospitality as a pretense for exterminating indigenous peoples and cultures. As a trickster, Iktomi regularly offers and receives hospitality under false pretenses. He is both a shapeshifter and a shrewd actor, capable of disguising both his appearance and his motives at any given time. He is also "wily" with his "words", a master at employing "false" rhetoric to his advantage (7, 37). He is, in short, the ultimate "impostor" (41). This is evident in "Shooting of the Red Eagle" when Iktomi masquerades as the avenger in order to gain admittance into a chieftain's home and to exploit his hospitality (39-41). Likewise, Iktomi's wily ways are on display in "The Tree-Bound" when he tricks the avenger into procuring food for him by "play[ing him] false" (37). What these two scenes suggest and numerous other scenes in Zitkala-Ša's legends confirm is that Iktomi regularly utilizes his skills as a trickster specifically in order to perform recognizable hospitality tropes. It is, as we shall see, by

pretending to satisfy conventional expectations of what a deferential guest looks like or what a generous host looks like that he ultimately succeeds in exploiting his victims.

In “Iktomi and the Ducks,” the first tale in *Old Indian Legends*, Zitkala-Ša introduces a specific critique of false American hospitality that returns throughout her work, especially in her boarding school narratives. Through her figuration of Iktomi, Zitkala-Ša argues that the US federal government has disguised spaces of confinement as sites of hospitality with the deliberate purpose of using these spaces as sites of extermination. In her very first description of Iktomi in *Old Indian Legends*, Zitkala-Ša figures the trickster as a synecdoche for American settler colonialism:

Soon he came to the edge of the great level land. On the hilltop he paused for breath. With wicked smacks of his dry parched lips, as if tasting some tender meat, he looked straight into space toward the marshy river bottom. With a thin palm shading his eyes from the western sun, he peered far away into the lowlands, munching his own cheeks all the while. “Ah-ha!” grunted he, satisfied with what he saw.

A group of wild ducks were dancing and feasting in the marshes. With wings outspread, tip to tip, they moved up and down in a large circle. With the ring, around a small drum, sat the chosen singers, nodding their heads and blinking their eyes. (8)

Facing westward and greedily fixing his gaze upon the unsuspecting ducks below, Zitkala-Ša’s Iktomi calls to mind an image of the white colonialist arriving at the border of Indian country. Entirely uninterested in establishing anything resembling a reciprocal relationship with these newly encountered strangers, Iktomi is concerned only with what

they can provide him. Disguising his true motives, he ingratiates himself to the ducks when he first arrives at the river bottom by performing the role of a deferential guest. “My friends,” he tells the ducks when they begin asking him questions, “I must not spoil your dance” (8). Charmed by Iktomi’s deference, the ducks welcome him into their singing circle (8-9). In this way, Iktomi, like the bear from “The Badger and the Bear,” gains the trust of his hosts by recognizing them as hosts before exploiting their hospitality.

Yet, unlike the bear, Iktomi does not wait long before taking violent action against his hosts. In a plot detail that is unique to Zitkala-Ša’s translation of this legend, Iktomi quickly tricks the ducks into recognizing him as a prospective host by telling them that he carries a bag of songs and that he can sing these songs only indoors: “I will build first a round straw house, for I never sing my songs in the open air” (9).¹⁶⁸ Eager to enjoy Iktomi’s gift of song, the ducks hurriedly waddle into the makeshift hut as soon as it is completed. Sealing off the entrance, Iktomi informs his trapped guests that they must close their eyes and dance while he sings: “With eyes closed you must dance. He who dares to open his eyes, forever red eyes shall have” (9). Heeding Iktomi’s dictum, the ducks are unable to defend themselves from the horrific violence that befalls them—that is, until one curious duck opens his eyes and is able to warn his remaining companions about what is taking place:

At length one of the dancers could close his eyes no longer! It was a Skiska who peeped the least tiny blink at Iktomi within the center of the circle. “Oh! oh!” squawked he in awful terror! “Run! fly! Iktomi is twisting your heads and breaking your necks! Run out and fly! fly!” he cried. Hereupon the ducks opened

their eyes. There beside Iktomi's bundle of songs lay half of their crowd—flat on their backs.

Out they flew through the opening Skiska had made as he rushed forth with his alarm.

But as they soared high into the blue sky they cried to one another: "Oh! your eyes are red-red!" "And yours are red-red!" "Ah-ha!" laughed Iktomi, untying the four corners of his blanket, "I shall sit no more hungry within my dwelling."

Homeward he trudged along with nice fat ducks in his blanket. He left the little straw hut for the rains and winds to pull down. (10)

Central to the allegorical scheme of this passage is Iktomi's improvised straw house, which doubles as a stand-in for the various spaces of confinement—the Indian reservation, the boarding school, the sanitarium, the insane asylum, the prison—in which indigenous peoples have been interned by Americans under the guise of being provided with hospitality. Like the historical spaces to which Iktomi's space of confinement refers, the trickster's straw house is presented to its future inmates as a welcoming and benevolent site of hospitality. Moreover, like Indian reservations and Indian boarding schools, which, in particular, promised to produce the "general improvement" of Native Americans by providing them with the "gifts of civilization and Christianity" but which, in truth, were designed to bring about the annihilation of indigenous peoples and cultures, Iktomi's straw house uses a pretense of providing hospitality to orchestrate destruction (Lea 3-4; Murray 18).¹⁶⁹ As a symbol of false American hospitality, Zitkala-Ša's gift of song brings to mind the innumerable promises and hollow enticements that Europeans and Americans have proffered to Indians over the years in the name of hospitality. The

“gift” of alcohol, in particular, comes to mind, especially when we consider the destructive effects it has had on Native American communities for centuries.¹⁷⁰

Despite Iktomi’s terrible violence and the historical parallels that this violence evokes, Zitkala-Ša’s “Iktomi and the Ducks” does provide consolation. Through the character Skiska, Zitkala-Ša suggests there is hope so long as Native Americans maintain their skepticism in the face of American invitations of hospitality. By opening his eyes in spite of Iktomi’s warning, Skiska embodies both the curiosity and the courage that Zitkala-Ša hopes to inspire in her readers. In a figurative sense, his example testifies to the need for Native Americans to open their eyes to the conditional nature of American hospitality. More precisely, Skiska reveals that we need to keep our eyes open to the many ways in which American invitations of hospitality serve as the discursive means through which acts of oppression and exploitation are both licensed and disavowed.

III

In her fourth critique of American hospitality, Zitkala-Ša rejects and reverses the familiar American trope of the Indian parasite. Dating back to Columbus’s depictions of Indians as a “race of people” who “take what they can get” without being able to give “anything” of value in “return,” the trope of the Indian parasite has for centuries played a central role in justifying failed removal, reservation, education, and allotment policies in the US (Columbus 110-13).¹⁷¹ The persistent figuration of the Indian as parasite has from the very beginning been predicated on a concomitant figuration of the Euro-American as supreme provider. Since Columbus, settler colonial discourse in the New World has rationalized the dispossession and exploitation of indigenous peoples by treating Christianity as an “incommensurable” gift (Murray 18).¹⁷² Figured as recipients of that

which is incommensurable, North American Indians have been repeatedly portrayed as fundamentally incapable of reciprocating the hospitality they receive from their European and American benefactors. In their ignorance of Christianity, they are marked by an “absence” that can be filled only by the “abundance” of European and American hospitality (Murray 49). According to this paternalistic logic, Native Americans are powerless to prevent their own parasitism. They are, in other words, interpellated as always already parasites of their European and American hosts.

The perpetuation of the trope of the Indian parasite has also relied heavily on persistent misrepresentations of indigenous cultures of reciprocal gift exchange. These misrepresentations provide the etymological background for the pejorative “Indian giver,” a phrase that, by the middle decades of the nineteenth century, performed the ideological work of treating Indian practices of reciprocal exchange as signs of “selfishness” and “calculation” (Murray 19). However, it is important to note that settler colonial discourse in the New World did not initially associate Indian reciprocity with selfishness or calculation. Columbus, for example, condemns Indians *not* for failing to give willingly of their possessions—in fact, he praises them for the “docile” manner in which they “give what all they have got”—but, instead, for the impoverished quality of the hospitality they do provide (113).¹⁷³ Indians are, Columbus writes, a “people very poor in everything” who, though they “give what they possess in exchange for anything that may be given,” ultimately possess “so little that it counts for nothing” (127, 121). In other words, for Columbus, the problem is not that Indians are greedy or manipulative but, rather, that their relative poverty invalidates and makes essentially meaningless the hospitality they willingly give. According to Columbus’s formulation, then, Indians are

parasites not because they take and don't give back—or even, as the phrase “Indian giver” would later have us believe, because they give and then take back what they've already given—but because what they give is always believed to be incommensurate with what they receive.

Why, then, do Native American practices of reciprocal exchange begin to take on negative connotations in American discourse? And how do these reciprocal practices eventually become associated with parasitism? It is not until the Jacksonian Era that Indian practices of reciprocity become an object of persecution in American discourse. We can pinpoint this change in American attitudes toward Indian reciprocity by tracing the changing connotations of the phrase “Indian giver” in Anglo-American discourse during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁷⁴ Prior to the 1830s, the phrase is rarely used. When it is used, it appears to have a neutral, if not positive, connotation. Thus, in his 1765 account of *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay*, English scholar Thomas Hutchinson defines an “Indian gift” as a “proverbial expression, signifying a present for which an equivalent return is expected” (469 note). For Hutchinson, who associates Indian practices of reciprocal exchange with the “hospitable” welcome that Native Americans offered to Englishmen when they first arrived in the New World, the “Indian gift” represents “courtesy,” “compassion,” “gratitude,” and “friendship” (468-69). By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the figures of the “Indian gift” and the “Indian giver” have taken on entirely new meaning. What's more, the expressions have become commonplace in American discourse. This dramatic change in the meaning and relative popularity of the two phrases begins during the 1830s. An 1838 article in the weekly newspaper *The New-York Mirror* reports that “Indian giver” has come to mean

someone “who gives a present and demands it back again” (OED “Indian” S2a). Ten years later, J. R. Bartlett’s *Dictionary of Americanisms* similarly defines an “Indian giver” as a person who proffers a gift but then expects “that the same thing may be given back to him” (148).¹⁷⁵ Three years after Bartlett, US Supreme Court Justice Levi Woodbury informs us that the meaning of “Indian giver” has expanded to include those persons who expect to receive in return “much more” than they themselves have given (200).¹⁷⁶

It is, of course, no accident that Indian practices of reciprocal exchange become a target of discrimination in American discourse during the 1830s. In an attempt to justify his own unwillingness to abide by treaty promises—some of which were negotiated by his predecessors but many of which were negotiated by himself—President Andrew Jackson launched a federal campaign aimed at demonizing Indian cultures of reciprocity.¹⁷⁷ According to Jackson, US treaties with Indian tribes were a “farce” that “could only have arisen at a time when the Government was too weak to execute any law passed for the regulation of the Indian tribes” (Cave 1333; Bassett II 281; Bassett III 37; Bassett II 279; Bassett III 37). Prefiguring Zitkala-Ša’s figuration of the bear in “The Badger and the Bear,” Jackson announced as early as 1820 that the “arm of the Government” had become “sufficiently strong” that it no longer had to pretend to enter into reciprocal agreements with Indian tribes in order to secure possession over Indian lands (Bassett III 37). As “empty gesture[s]” reluctantly agreed to during a prior era of American weakness, US treaties with Indian tribes were, in Jackson’s opinion, never “really binding” at all (1332). Denying both the legal authority of the US Constitution and the precedents of international law, Jackson argued that Indian tribes never really had

a legal right to “treat” with the US because, in his view, indigenous peoples were always “Subjects” of the federal government and never “independent nation[s]” (II 279-80).¹⁷⁸ Disclaiming his own government’s prior recognition of Indian sovereignty—that is to say, *taking it back*—Jackson reasoned that Native Americans were never able to claim “the right of domain” over North American lands (II 280).¹⁷⁹

In order to substantiate his disavowal of Indian sovereignty and his violation of US-Indian treaties, Jackson misrepresented and demonized Indian expectations of American reciprocity. Vehemently insisting that he was “just” and “humane” in his own dealings with Indian tribes, Jackson just as vehemently insisted that Indian appeals to American reciprocity were signs of Indian “avarice”: “. . . for it is too true that avarice and fear are the predominant passions that govern an Indian” (II 281).¹⁸⁰ By the end of Jackson’s term in office, Native Americans had become notorious for the “avarice” they showed in seeking to achieve American reciprocity and in seeking to *take back* lands they had previously ceded to the US (after finding that the US had violated the terms of its agreements). In this way, the trope of the Indian giver functioned ideologically as an inverse projection of false American hospitality. Rather than admit their own unwillingness to reciprocate treaty promises, Americans projected their own avarice back on Native Americans.

In the decades following Jackson’s presidency, further misrepresentations of Indian expectations of reciprocity led to widespread accusations of Indian parasitism. In particular, Indian appeals to the federal government to distribute promised rations were misrepresented as indications of a concerted strategy on the part of Native Americans to parasite off the liberal hospitality of the American people. Chief Justice John Marshall’s

designation of Indians as “ward[s]” of the US federal government during Jackson’s presidency—a designation to which Zitkala-Ša refers numerous times in her political essays and speeches—helped provide the legal foundation for accusing Native Americans of parasitic dependency (*Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*).¹⁸¹ What these misrepresentations of Indian expectations of reciprocity fail to recognize is the extent to which Indian dependency on federal hospitality was a forced dependency. Even if Native Americans were intent on parasiting off federal hospitality, their parasitism was not a voluntary parasitism; it was a parasitism that was forced upon them by the United States government. The forced relocation of Indian tribes to reservations during the second half of the nineteenth century only served to reinforce this impression of dependency.¹⁸² Unlike Jackson’s politics of Indian exclusion, which aimed simply to exclude Indians from the dominant spaces of American society, the reservation system was represented by the US federal government as a measure taken in order to protect and provide for indigenous peoples. Reservations were “refuges” created in order to make it possible to provide Indians with much-needed hospitality (Perry 6). This pretense of providing Native Americans with federal hospitality was easily used as a further pretense for accusing Indians of parasitism. By 1880, the trope of the Indian parasite had become a central discursive feature of American policy concerning Native Americans. In fact, it was a major contributing factor in the federal government’s decision to adopt a policy of compulsory boarding school education for Native American children.¹⁸³ As the Board of Indian Commissioners stated in their 1880 report to the Secretary of the Interior, “As a savage we cannot tolerate [the Indian] any more than as a half-civilized parasite . . . The only alternative left is to fit him by education for civilized life” (7).

In her Dakota legends, Zitkala-Ša attacks the trope of the Indian parasite directly and repeatedly. Emphasizing the central importance of reciprocal exchange to her vision of hospitality, she demonstrates that parasitism runs counter to the foundational values of North American Indian cultures. As usual, Zitkala-Ša communicates her critique most convincingly through the figure of Iktomi. In his unwillingness to embrace an ethics of reciprocity, the trickster undermines a carefully maintained balance of exchange between the human world and the spiritual world. We see this clearly in “Iktomi’s Blanket,” the second tale in *Old Indian Legends*. Unwilling to do the work of procuring food for himself, Iktomi decides to go see Inyan, the great stone god, to beg for food (13). Falling upon Inyan with his hands outstretched, the trickster makes his desperate plea for hospitality: “Grandfather! pity me. I am hungry. I am starving. Give me food. Great-grandfather, give me meat to eat!” (13). Hearing this plea, the “all-powerful Great Spirit,” who has the power to listen to and grant prayers spoken to Inyan, smiles down at Iktomi: “The sunset poured a soft mellow light upon the huge gray stone and the solitary figure beside it. It was the smile of the Great Spirit upon the grandfather and the wayward child” (14). Understanding that his prayer has been “heard,” Iktomi gratefully presents his “half-worn blanket” to Inyan as a “thank-offering”: “Now, grandfather, accept my offering; ‘tis all I have” (14). Placing his blanket “upon Inyan’s cold shoulders,” the trickster leaves the stone god and heads home (14).

On his way home, Iktomi stumbles upon the “answer” to his prayer: a “freshly wounded deer” lies in his path (14). However, while preparing a fire to cook the deer, Iktomi grows cold and begins to regret giving his blanket to Inyan: “The old great-grandfather does not feel the cold as I do. He does not need my old blanket as I do. I wish

I had not given it to him” (14). Experiencing a moment of undecidability, Iktomi “pause[s]” to consider his options. Eventually, he decides to return to Inyan and “take back” his blanket (14). “Give my blanket back, old grandfather! You do not need it. I do!” proclaims the trickster as he seizes back his thank-offering (14-5). But when Iktomi returns to his fire, he finds that his deer meat has all been eaten. All that remains are dry rib bones (15). Rather than feel “grieved” for making the “wrong” decision to steal back his blanket, Iktomi concludes that his only mistake was not eating the meat when he had the chance: “If only I had eaten the venison before going for my blanket!” (15). Still starving, Iktomi begins to cry. This time, however, the Great Spirit does not “heed” the trickster’s appeal for hospitality (15). Knowing Iktomi’s tears to be “selfish tears,” the Great Spirit leaves “the wayward child” to fend for himself (15).

Through the negative example of Iktomi, Zitkala-Ša promotes an ethics of hospitality committed to recognizing and maintaining a reciprocal relationship with the spiritual world. A central grounding force behind this ethical model is Zitkala-Ša’s reverence for Inyan and the Great Spirit, two spirit gods whose legendary histories attest to the interconnectedness of the human world and the spiritual world. As Zitkala-Ša explains in her essay “Why I Am A Pagan,” the legends of Inyan and the Great Spirit are “[i]nterwoven” with a “knowledge” of the “kinship” that exists among “all parts of this vast universe” (115). By translating her Dakota legends into English, Zitkala-Ša imparts this “knowledge” of universal kinship to her Anglo-American readers. Moreover, by attributing human qualities to Inyan and the Great Spirit, she humanizes the hospitality they provide and treats that hospitality as part of an ongoing economy of reciprocal exchange between humans and spirit gods. When Iktomi takes back his blanket from

Inyan, he upsets this economy of exchange. The result is a temporary upheaval in the cosmic order: the moon rises on the wrong side of the sky (15). However, the Great Spirit restores balance to the universe by punishing Iktomi for his parasitic behavior.

Iktomi's parasitism often threatens to destabilize the social order as well. Nowhere is this more apparent than in "Zicha, the Squirrel, and Iktomi," a legend featured in *Dreams and Thunder*. A "real-do-nothing," Iktomi makes no effort to provide for his family (65). Instead, he and his family "live off" the "hospitality" of their neighbors (66). Each day, Iktomi and his wife and children make their "rounds of calls" in search of food (66). Refusing to do any hunting of his own, Iktomi is unable to reciprocate the hospitality that he receives from his neighbors: "Not by any chance did Iktomi ever have food in his dwelling" (66). He is not even able to perform the basic local "custom" of offering arriving guests a "hot drink of herbs" (65). Because he is unable to perform his responsibilities as a host, Iktomi is viewed as an "unreliable" member of the tribe: "No one could depend upon him . . ." (65). Yet, the tribespeople still pity Iktomi's wife and children, who are, by and large, victims of the trickster's parasitism. Zicha, Iktomi's neighbor, is particularly affected by the sight of Iktomi's children when he is in their presence: "The peaked faces of the lean and hungry Iktomi children impressed him" (66). Recognizing in the faces of Iktomi's children a need for food, Zicha invites the trickster and his family to dine at his home on several occasions (66). Unfortunately for Zicha and his wife, who show their guests generous "hospitality," Iktomi violates the one "rule" of "etiquette" that Zicha specifies in his offer of hospitality—to not "break any of the joints of the bones" when eating (67). This "breach of etiquette" constitutes one of the many instances in Zitkala-Ša's legends when Iktomi

demonstrates an inability to abide by the conditions of hospitality to which he previously agrees (67).¹⁸⁴ Repeatedly failing to reciprocate the hospitality he receives, Iktomi becomes a recurring symbol of parasitism in Zitkala-Ša's legends. Because the trickster has been previously figured as a symbol of white settler colonialism in "Iktomi and the Ducks," it is difficult to deny the allegorical implications of Zitkala-Ša's emphasis on Iktomi's parasitism.

IV

In her fifth critique of American hospitality, Zitkala-Ša argues that American free market capitalism is an inherently inhospitable economic system. Figuring Iktomi as a stand-in for the American capitalist, she portrays the inhospitality of capitalism as a premeditated form of trickery. We see this most clearly in two tales from *Old Indian Legends*: "Iktomi and the Muskrat" and "Iktomi and the Turtle." Both legends feature Iktomi disavowing his responsibilities as a host by treating scenes of hospitality as antagonistic contests. In the opening scene of "Iktomi and the Muskrat," the trickster hovers over a soup of boiled fish when a muskrat approaches. Seeing the bowl of soup, the muskrat hopes that Iktomi will follow "the custom of the plains people" and invite his guest to join him: "The muskrat stood smiling. On his lips hung a ready 'Yes, my friend,' when Iktomi would ask, 'My friend, will you sit down beside me and share my food?'" (16). However, Iktomi remains silent at first, ignoring the muskrat. In the face of such a "lack of hospitality," the muskrat cannot help but "feel awkward" (16). Eventually, Iktomi speaks, but rather than invite his guest to share in his dinner, he invites the muskrat to compete against him in a contest: "My friend, let us run a race to see who shall win this pot of fish. If I win, I shall not need to share it with you. If you win, you

shall have half of it” (17). Although Iktomi is a much faster runner than the muskrat, he assures his guest that the race is a “fair one” (17). Fully aware that he cannot possibly beat Iktomi in a race, the muskrat pretends to agree to the terms of the race and then steals the bowl of soup while Iktomi is running (17-8). Returning to find the muskrat sitting up in a tree and eating his soup, Iktomi has the temerity to beg the muskrat for hospitality: “I am hungry. Give me a bone!” (18). In response, the muskrat throws down a small sharp bone that sticks in Iktomi’s throat and almost makes him choke to death (18). Then, voicing the legend’s epigram, the muskrat advises Iktomi, “Next time, say to a visiting friend, ‘Be seated beside me, my friend. Let me share with you my food’” (18).

Events in “Iktomi and the Turtle” unfold in more or less the same way. Rather than simply offer hospitality to the turtle, Iktomi suggests that he and his guest engage in a competition: “Now let us have a little contest. Let us see who can jump over the deer without touching a hair on his hide. . . . Let the winner have the deer to eat!” (42). By “flattering” the turtle, Iktomi convinces his guest that he has the “skill” to compete in the impromptu contest (42-3). However, the turtle fails to make the jump and falls hard up against the side of the deer, while Iktomi makes the jump easily (43). Afterward, Iktomi asks the turtle to watch the deer while he goes to get his children (43). Realizing that the trickster has made him feel and look “foolish,” the turtle takes the deer and brings it home to his creek (44). Later, when Iktomi comes to the creek to take back the deer, the turtle tricks him into drowning himself while his children watch (44).

Both “Iktomi and the Muskrat” and “Iktomi and the Turtle” allegorize the historical convergence of Native American and Euro-American cultures of exchange. Accustomed to Sioux cultures of generalized exchange, in which acts of hospitality are

reciprocated either directly (by the recipient of the exchange) or indirectly (by another member of the tribe), the muskrat and the turtle expect Iktomi to offer them hospitality when they encounter him on their travels.¹⁸⁵ But Iktomi does not afford his guests the privileges they expect. Instead, he asks them to work for these privileges—to earn them through their labor. Iktomi treats his food not as gifts to be exchanged for future gifts but as commodities to be won or lost through competition. Rather than make reciprocity the condition of exchange, he makes competition the precondition. The muskrat and the turtle are not bound to reciprocate the gains they make, but they are bound to compete and to compete according to Iktomi's conditions if they want to gain anything at all. Of course, Iktomi sets the conditions of competition to his extreme advantage. As a symbol of settler colonial capitalist exploitation, he uses his wealth and power not to provide his guests with wealth and power but, instead, to secure and reinforce his own powerful standing in a market economy. However, the fact that Iktomi ends up with nothing when both legends end suggests that, despite all the trickster's scheming, market capitalism amounts to a bankrupt ethics—one motivated by affirmation of the self rather than affirmation of the other.

The depth of Zitkala-Ša's critique of American capitalism lies in her depiction of Iktomi's persistent attempts to treat capitalism as a natural and fair economic system. By insisting that his race with the muskrat is a "fair one," Iktomi attempts to disavow the ethical implications of his decision to withhold hospitality from the muskrat (17). In doing so, he suggests that offering hospitality to the muskrat would be less "fair" than giving the muskrat the opportunity to win his hospitality in a race. In other words, he describes a culture in which hospitality is earned through competition as more "fair" than

a culture in which hospitality is offered under the expectation that it will be reciprocated. Of course, it is Iktomi's "flattering tongue" that convinces the muskrat and the turtle of this backwards logic (43). But it is also Iktomi's complete and confident disregard for the possibility of providing his guests with hospitality that makes his invitations to compete for hospitality seem like reasonable proposals. It is by ignoring the very idea of reciprocal hospitality that he makes a capitalist model of hospitality seem natural.

The conclusions to "Iktomi and the Muskrat" and "Iktomi and the Turtle" feature an important recurring topos in Zitkala-Ša's legends: the topos of wish fulfillment. Virtually every one of Zitkala-Ša's Iktomi legends features a concluding scene in which the trickster is punished for his actions. Sometimes, as we have seen, these punishments are very severe. For Zitkala-Ša's Native American readers, the conclusions to these legends provide an opportunity to achieve catharsis. As a representation of white inhospitality, Iktomi epitomizes symbolically the object of emotional aggression for Native American readers who seek retribution for countless violations of hospitality. In the absence of substantive real-world retribution, the punishments of Iktomi provide a cathartic alternative. However, if the conclusions to Zitkala-Ša's Iktomi legends offer Native American readers catharsis, what do they offer Euro-American readers? After all, Zitkala-Ša does address *Old Indian Legends* to her white American readers ("Preface" 5). How might these white American readers respond to Zitkala-Ša's carefully constructed figuration of Iktomi as white and to the numerous scenes in which retribution is visited upon him? In her legends, Zitkala-Ša rarely portrays Iktomi as an object of sympathy or empathy. Although we can identify with his instinct for self-protection and his desire to satisfy his hunger, Zitkala-Ša's legends never encourage us to identify with him when he

withholds hospitality from a prospective guest or exploits the hospitality of a host. In other words, in every scene in which Iktomi behaves inhospitably—which is to say, in every scene of hospitality in which he appears—we are encouraged to identify with the victims of his inhospitality and not with him. Even in “Zicha, the Squirrel, and Iktomi,” where Iktomi’s inhospitality is largely a result of his ignorance, the trickster’s complete disregard for others makes it impossible to feel any sympathy for him or to identify in any meaningful way with his actions. The result of this careful manipulation of reader response is that Iktomi—Zitkala-Ša’s primary figurative representation of the white man—emerges as the primary object of the reader’s repudiation and disidentification.¹⁸⁶ With no choice but to disapprove of Iktomi’s actions, Zitkala-Ša’s Euro-American readers are tricked into denouncing their own historical pattern of behavior. Perhaps some are even drawn to recognize themselves as contributors to this pattern.

Ultimately, it is Zitkala-Ša’s ability to portray Iktomi’s inhospitality as a repeated pattern of behavior that makes her allegorical critique of European and American inhospitality so effective. Linking legends together through intertextual references, Zitkala-Ša creates a continuous narrative of Iktomi’s inhospitality. The Iktomi we encounter at the beginning of “Iktomi and the Blanket,” for example, is clearly the same Iktomi we leave at the end of “Iktomi and the Ducks.” The first words that Iktomi speaks in the latter tale make this immediately apparent: “Those bad, bad gray wolves! They ate up all my nice fat ducks!” (13). Likewise, the Iktomi of “Shooting the Red Eagle” is without question the same Iktomi of “The Tree-Bound” and “Iktomi and the Fawn.” Events in these stories plainly follow one another. We should not, in other words, read Zitkala-Ša’s Iktomi legends as isolated fables, each with its own separate and distinct

story to tell. Instead, Zitkala-Ša urges us to read these tales as interwoven stories that together constitute a record of Iktomi's inhospitality and, by analogy, reference an extensive and repeated pattern of European and American inhospitality. Accordingly, although each Iktomi legend can in itself be read as a discrete allegory, it is by viewing the whole of Zitkala-Ša's Iktomi legends together that we can appreciate more fully the allegorical implications of her critique of the trickster.

V

As an alternative to the false, parasitic, and capitalist culture of hospitality represented by Iktomi, Zitkala-Ša uses her legends to begin envisioning a land-based ethics of hospitality. Central to this ethical model is her belief in a Sioux cosmology that treats Mother Earth as the original host of all things—of the land, of all living beings, and of all natural resources (“California Indian Trails” 250-52). Being “appreciative” of all that Mother Earth provides should, Zitkala-Ša suggests, encourage us “not to be wasteful” with the Earth’s resources (“California Indian Trails” 252). Out of respect for Mother Earth and for all other living beings, we have a responsibility to share and preserve the land and its resources. We see this ethics of land and resource stewardship promoted in several Zitkala-Ša legends. For example, in “When the Buffalo Herd Went West,” when an Indian man and woman suddenly find themselves in possession of “meat and skins in plenty,” they do not hoard the food for themselves (18). Instead, they immediately make plans to share their bounty with the rest of the world: “I shall go forth to invite the world to feast with us” (18). Sharing and preserving resources, Zitkala-Ša would later argue in a 1922 speech, is particularly essential during times of famine: “No real man cares to save himself alone and see the rest of the folks die” (“Hear to Heart

Talk” 262). Thus, characters in Zitkala-Ša’s legends who hoard resources when others are in need are always punished. In “Iktomi and the Ducks,” the trickster is punished not just for killing “half” of the ducks (10). He is also punished for killing more ducks than he needs to eat (10-12). By returning home with so many ducks and burying some under burning ashes, Iktomi threatens to upset the balance of the ecosystem.¹⁸⁷

The land-based ethics of hospitality that Zitkala-Ša envisions in her legends is an ethics modeled on nature. Like Coulthard, who argues that we should practice an ethics of reciprocity modeled on the reciprocal relationships that we see in nature, Zitkala-Ša proposes an ethics of reciprocal hospitality that can be achieved only by first learning to “understand the language” of nature (“California Indian Trails” 250-51). Learning to “hear” and be “sensitive” to the land and to all other living beings is, for Zitkala-Ša, the foundation of all ethics (251). It is by listening attentively to the voices of the “ancient trees” that we are reminded that we are all children of the same Mother and that we are all part of one “big family circle” (“California Indian Trails” 251-52; “Heart to Heart Talk” 262). Moreover, it is by being attentive to these voices that we can also begin to appreciate the reciprocal qualities of the relationships that we see in nature and, through the example of these relationships, begin to imagine an ethics of reciprocal hospitality.

Zitkala-Ša offers her most fully considered vision of a land-based ethics in her legend “The Hawk Woman,” a tale featured in *Dreams and Thunder*. In the tale’s opening scene, Cetan, a “handsome young brave,” embarks on a hero’s quest (27). Leaving his home, he journeys downstream in a rawhide boat in search of his fate (27). Feeling that “everywhere under the sky was home to him,” Cetan does not fear the “strange” places through which he travels (27). One night, he is “visited” by five

“callers”: a field mouse, a cougar, a brown hawk, a rattle snake, and an owl (27). All of these visitors appeal to Cetan for hospitality and ask to join him on his journey until such time as they discover a “country better suited” to their individual needs (27). Cetan readily consents to their requests for hospitality and welcomes them into his boat on the following day (27). When the group arrives at a “country” that features hickory trees and wild carrots, the field mouse announces that he would like to stay and live there. In parting, the mouse promises Cetan a reciprocal gift for his hospitality: “. . . when you return this way, I shall have a present ready for you” (28). Over the next few days, each of Cetan’s guests finds a country that suits his needs, and each promises Cetan a present upon his return (28).

Eventually, Cetan himself finds a country to settle down. Drawn to a people who are starving because their buffalo have been “frightened away” by their enemies, he helps return the buffalo to their original land by performing a traditional ceremony in honor of nature and the spirit gods (28). In appreciation, the chieftain of the tribe offers Cetan his favorite daughter to wed (29). After two years, Cetan and his wife and their twin sons leave the tribe to return to Cetan’s home (29). On their journey, Cetan and his family are invited to stay and visit with the field mouse, the cougar, the hawk, the rattle snake, and the owl. At each stop, they are presented with a gift and Cetan’s sons are welcomed as “brothers” (29-30). Finally returning home, Cetan finds that his tribespeople have been almost entirely decimated by his sister, who is bewitched by an evil spirit. After feeding the remaining tribespeople with rice that he received from the field mouse, Cetan uses the remaining gifts from his journey to perform ceremonies in honor of the gods and eventually to kill his evil sister and to “restore” balance to the world (32-3).

In Zitkala-Ša's translation of "The Hawk Woman," Cetan's hero's quest is reimagined as a tutorial on the value of reciprocal hospitality. The initial acts of hospitality that Cetan offers to the mouse, the cougar, the hawk, the rattle snake, and the owl lead to reciprocal acts of hospitality that allow for the survival of Cetan, his family, and his tribespeople. Likewise, the offerings of hospitality that Cetan makes to the spirit gods first in his wife's country and later in his own country both lead to reciprocal acts that revive dying communities. Faced with the historical prospect of the "vanishing Indian" at the turn of the twentieth century, Zitkala-Ša uses the narrative of Cetan to encourage her Native readers to adopt a culture of reciprocal hospitality in order to ensure their survival. It is worth noting that Zitkala-Ša does not at any point attempt to disavow the conditionality of the acts of hospitality performed by Cetan, his animal friends, and the gods. Rather, she openly celebrates these acts as reciprocal acts. In contrast to other American writers, who offer us idealized visions of hospitality that seek to disavow conditionality, Zitkala-Ša chooses instead to celebrate conditionality and to treat reciprocal hospitality as an ideal form of hospitality. In doing so, Zitkala-Ša advocates an affirmative model of hospitality that recognizes the self-benefits inherent in all acts of hospitality and that encourages Natives and non-Natives to use reciprocity as a mutually beneficial principle of exchange.

VI

The same tropes of hospitality that we see featured in Zitkala-Ša's Dakota legends resurface in her other work. These tropes take on new meaning as Zitkala-Ša applies them to modern settings and grounds them in concrete historical contexts. In her original short stories, autobiographical narratives, political essays, and public speeches, Zitkala-

Ša repurposes these tropes in order to reiterate and expand on a specific critique of American hospitality that she introduces in her legends. Perhaps more importantly, Zitkala-Ša also uses both her fiction and non-fiction to model an ethics of affirmative hospitality that is grounded in the cultural values, life experiences, and contributions of Indian women. Outlining the core principles of this ethics is the focus of the final section of this chapter.

Above all, Zitkala-Ša's ethics of affirmative hospitality features and celebrates acts of hospitality performed by Native American women. In her political essays and speeches, Zitkala-Ša recovers a historical lineage of Native American female hospitality that predates the arrival of Europeans in North America. In her essay "The Coronation of Chief Powhatan Retold" (1919), she revises the dominant Western narrative of American democracy by identifying Pocahontas as the original host of democracy in North America: "Springing from the tribal democracies of the new world, Pocahontas was the first emissary of democratic ideas to caste-ridden Europe" (196). It was Pocahontas, Zitkala-Ša suggests, who introduced not only democracy but also democratic ideals of hospitality to Europeans during the early seventeenth century. Moreover, reminding her readers that "Mrs. Woodrow Wilson" is a lineal descendant of Pocahontas, Zitkala-Ša traces this history of indigenous female hospitality directly to the White House (196). Further elaborating on this historical lineage, she points in another essay to the hospitality of Lady Cofitachequi, who "graciously received" Hernando De Soto and his fellow conquistadors into her chiefdom during the sixteenth century ("America's Indian Problem" 155).¹⁸⁸ Elsewhere, Zitkala-Ša draws attention to contemporary Indian women who have shown hospitality to Americans, Europeans, and/or fellow Indians. She praises

Chipeta, of the Ute tribe, for the generous “audience” she shows to visitors on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation and, more specifically, for the hospitality she afforded to white neighbors during her childhood (“Chipeta” 175). In her editorials for *American Indian Magazine*, Zitkala-Ša regularly cites examples of Native American women who have made contributions on behalf of American and European soldiers fighting in the Great War. We hear of an old Indian grandmother who donated five hundred dollars to the Red Cross and was left with only thirteen dollars to her name (“America, Home” 194). And we also hear of the Indian women who made buckskin moccasins for French children orphaned by the War (“America, Home” 194). By calling attention to and praising these acts of wartime hospitality, Zitkala-Ša promotes a transnational ethics that affirms Native American notions of universal kinship.

In her fiction, Zitkala-Ša complements these historical accounts of indigenous female hospitality by composing texts that feature strong, authoritative female hosts. Some of these hosts, like the mother badger in “The Badger and the Bear,” perform acts of hospitality in partnership with men. These partnerships are informed by a long tradition of complementary sexual relations in Sioux cultures—relations that, as numerous scholars have pointed out, promote “mutual obligation and reciprocity among male and female members” (Stremlau 266).¹⁸⁹ In “The Badger and the Bear,” Zitkala-Ša makes it clear that the mother badger and the father badger both play essential roles in the production and presentation of hospitality. While the father badger hunts, the mother badger performs the equally valuable labor of drying, seasoning, and preserving the meat (27). It is the mother badger’s careful and skillful attention to the family’s limited supply of meat that affords the badgers the ability to provide visitors with hospitality.

Furthermore, Zitkala-Ša emphasizes the importance of the mother badger's role in the presentation of the family's hospitality through her detailed descriptions of the mother badger's interactions with the bear. Although the bear undoubtedly abuses the hospitality he receives from the badgers, he does indicate that the mother badger commands respect as a host when he willingly crosses his shins and moves closer to the wall in order to let her pass (28). Zitkala-Ša provides us with an analogous vision of complementary sexual relations in "Zicha, the Squirrel, and Iktomi" through her account of the squirrels' hospitality. In contrast to Iktomi, who debases his wife by "command[ing]" her to perform specified acts of hospitality—"Heat water in the kettle with the red hot stones. Have boiling water ready."—Mr. and Mrs. Zicha proffer their hospitality as equal partners (68). Together, they make Iktomi and his family "welcome" in their home and provide for them generously, despite the rudeness of their "guests" (66-7). Through both the Zichas' positive example and Iktomi's negative example, Zitkala-Ša models an ideal of hospitality for her readers that is grounded in and reflects Sioux traditions of sexual complementarity.

On the other hand, Zitkala-Ša also uses her fiction to present her readers with examples of women acting independently as hosts. Through these examples, she communicates a model of hospitality—and, by extension, of the household—in which men play no role in the production or presentation of hospitality. Both her legends and short stories regularly feature scenes in which single women welcome guests into their homes. In all of these scenes, Zitkala-Ša's female hosts exhibit sovereignty over their homes and great skill as providers of hospitality. In the opening scene of "The Buffalo Woman," the title character welcomes a starving Dakota hunter into her teepee and

affords him the hospitality of an honored guest (8). Later, even after the hunter becomes the buffalo woman's husband, he yields "humbly" to her authority (10). Eventually, the buffalo woman assumes sovereignty over the hunter's entire village, among whom she commands "great respect" and "rule[s] the people wisely" (9). Similarly, in her translation of the well-known legend "The Stone Boy and the Grizzly," Zitkala-Ša makes a point of celebrating the hospitality of the Stone Boy's single mother.¹⁹⁰ In the opening scene of her translation, she emphasizes the tenderness and generosity with which the Stone Boy's mother welcomes her "foster son" into her home (42). Later, the Stone Boy shows reciprocal appreciation for his mother's hospitality by returning to live with and take care of her during her old age (53-4).

Throughout her fiction and non-fiction, Zitkala-Ša further emphasizes the redeeming value and originary importance of indigenous female hospitality by continually reminding her readers that Mother Nature is the original and indispensable host of all things. In her descriptions of Mother Nature, Zitkala-Ša is clear to identify the supreme provider both as female and as Indian. Thus, we hear of the abundant generosity of "Indian Mother-Nature" and of all that "she" has "brought fourth" on behalf of "the people of the earth" ("Indian Gifts" 184). If Mother Nature is both female and Indian, then it follows that American hospitality is both originally female and originally Indian. It is by recognizing the essential contributions of Mother Nature and of all Native American women, Zitkala-Ša suggests, that Americans can learn to appreciate the true nature and potential of American hospitality.

Without question, the most important host in Zitkala-Ša's writing is her mother, Taté I Yóhin Win (Reaches for the Wind). Zitkala-Ša lays the groundwork for her ethics

of hospitality through her portrait of her mother in “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” (1900). Raising Zitkala-Ša as a single mother, Taté I Yóhin Win provided her daughter with a positive and sustainable model of hospitality that centered around the lives and contributions of Dakota women. Through her example, Taté I Yóhin Win promoted a culture of hospitality that recognized rather than disavowed conditionality, stressed the importance of considering and anticipating the needs and desires of others, cultivated homosocial bonding among women, valued the sentiments of hosts and guests over and above the quality of their performances, and emphasized the vital role that acts of hospitality play in promoting intercultural narrative exchange and in sustaining oral storytelling cultures. Each of these key features of Taté I Yóhin Win’s hospitality emerges as essential to the model of hospitality that Zitkala-Ša promotes in her writing and practices in her activism.

Zitkala-Ša’s recollections of her childhood on the Yankton Sioux Reservation are dominated by accounts of her mother’s hospitality. We learn early in “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” that hospitality was both a daily occurrence and a valued pastime in Taté I Yóhin Win’s home. Zitkala-Ša recalls that strangers passing by were invited to “rest” in the family’s wigwam and to “share” in the family’s meals (70-1). In addition, she recalls that neighbors from the village were regularly invited to “eat supper” with the family and encouraged to stay late into the night recounting “old legends” around the campfire (71-2). Yet, in recollecting these scenes of hospitality from her childhood, Zitkala-Ša does not feel the need to romanticize her mother’s hospitality by describing it as unconditional or categorical. Instead, she openly recognizes the practical limitations of Taté I Yóhin Win’s “welcome” (71). She acknowledges, for instance, that strangers could

be “sure” of Taté I Yóhin Win’s hospitality “if they but asked a favor” in the name of one of her relatives (71). The implication, of course, is that, despite Taté I Yóhin Win’s renowned generosity as a host, not all strangers were afforded welcome in her home. Zitkala-Ša does not specify under what conditions prospective guests would be turned away, but her candid acknowledgment of the conditional nature of her mother’s hospitality in “Impressions” anticipates her later emphasis on the importance of recognizing the inherently conditional nature of all hospitality. What’s more, by composing a positive but practical portrait of her mother as host, Zitkala-Ša provides us with a valuable counterexample to the many portraits of hosts in American literature that romanticize their subjects by attempting to disavow conditionality altogether.

In the opening scene of “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” Zitkala-Ša identifies for us the central overriding principle of her mother’s hospitality. Above all, Taté I Yóhin Win believed that it was important for a host to be accommodating. We see Taté I Yóhin Win practice this principle of hospitality in her approach to offering invitations. When proffering invitations, a host should always avoid “intruding [her]self upon others” (28). As her mother’s deputy in matters of hospitality, Zitkala-Ša was given the task of visiting nearby wigwams to invite neighbors to supper. Per her mother’s instructions, she always paused “a moment” outside before entering and issuing her mother’s invitations: “Running all the way to the wigwams, I halted shyly at the entrances. Sometimes I stood long moments without saying a word” (71). It was not “fear” of prospective guests or a desire to “withhold” her mother’s invitations that motivated these pauses (71) Rather, the reason for Zitkala-Ša’s hesitation was to make

sure that her invitations did not “hinder other plans” (71). “If other plans are being discussed,” Zitkala-Ša’s mother told her, “do not interfere, but go elsewhere” (71).

In her recounting of her childhood invitations, Zitkala-Ša presents an account of undecidability that differs markedly from the accounts of undecidability that we traditionally see in Western literary scenes of hospitality. Dating back to ancient Greek and Roman literature, moments of undecidability in Western scenes of hospitality have customarily taken place on the threshold of the host’s home. In these moments, the host “hesitates” on the threshold in order to weigh her decision before making a formal offer of hospitality (Reece 17). In his work on hospitality, Derrida argues that the moment of undecidability in an exchange of hospitality results from the host’s recognition of her own otherness in the face of the arriving other. For Derrida, it is the arrival of the other on the threshold that prompts the host to experience the “self-interruption” that makes ethical decision possible: “. . . as master and host, the self, in welcoming the other, must interrupt or divide himself or herself” (“HJR” 81). However, Zitkala-Ša requires us to rethink Derrida’s theorizations of undecidability and self-interruption by locating the moment of undecidability not on the threshold of the host’s home but on the threshold of the prospective guest’s home. In Zitkala-Ša’s narrative, the question of interruption—of provoking self-interruption in the other, of interfering with the other’s plans—is not a question of whether the arriving other will interrupt the host but of whether the host will interrupt the guest by offering hospitality. In her directives to avoid intruding on and interfering with the other, Taté I Yóhin Win taught her daughter to consider and anticipate the needs and desires of her guest before even engaging in a face-to-face encounter with the other. What’s more, she taught Zitkala-Ša that the needs and desires of

her prospective guests are just as important—if not, at times, more important—than her own needs and desires. In this way, Taté I Yóhin Win used her hospitality not to affirm her sovereignty or social standing as a host but, instead, to cultivate community and respect among her neighbors.

Zitkala-Ša's account of her childhood invitations also works to deconstruct the conventionally hierarchical relationship between the host and the guest. The image of the young Zitkala-Ša pausing outside a prospective guest's home to deliver an invitation of hospitality reveals the interchangeable relationship between host and guest. Although Zitkala-Ša went to offer hospitality to her neighbors, she first had to play the part of the guest in order to make her offer known. She had to receive the hospitality of her future guests before she could reciprocate that hospitality. Through this example, we come to see how cultures of reciprocity are predicated on a recognition of the fundamental interchangeability between host and guest. Through the act of hospitality, the host interpellates the guest as host. The guest who receives hospitality is always already a host, always already obligated to reciprocate what she receives. There is no pure host or pure guest; we are always already both.¹⁹¹

Perhaps the most significant way in which Zitkala-Ša's account of her mother's hospitality serves as a valuable counterexample to dominant American depictions of hospitality is that it portrays exchanges of hospitality as opportunities for cultivating homosocial solidarity among women. In "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," scenes of hospitality are populated almost entirely by female characters. In fact, at no point in Zitkala-Ša's narrative of her childhood on the Yankton Sioux Reservation do we witness a scene in which a male figure performs the role of host. Male characters appear

occasionally, but when they do, Zitkala-Ša never makes them the focus of her attention.¹⁹² Instead, she focuses her attention on describing the homosocial bonding that occurs between and among women while they produce, present, and receive hospitality. This is especially the case in Zitkala-Ša's descriptions of the interactions between her mother and her aunt.¹⁹³ Recounting a scene from her childhood, Zitkala-Ša recalls an autumn day when her aunt came to visit in order to help Taté I Yóhin Win preserve foods for the winter (81). While helping her sister-in-law prepare for winter meals—meals that would feed not only Zitkala-Ša and her mother but also their regular guests—Zitkala-Ša's aunt performed the equally important function of lightening Taté I Yóhin Win's mood through her humor: "It was during my aunt's visit with us that my mother forgot her accustomed quietness, often laughing heartily at some of my aunt's witty remarks" (81). Raising their daughters as single mothers, Taté I Yóhin Win and her sister-in-law relied on one another for material assistance and emotional support in carrying out their responsibilities as parents and as hosts. But they also relied heavily on the female elders of their *tiospaye*, or extended kinship family, who helped provide a "nurturing, communal atmosphere" in which Zitkala-Ša and her cousin Warca-Ziwin could grow and mature as Yankton women (Lewandowski 18). In her descriptions of these tribal elders, Zitkala-Ša once again notes the important role that scenes of hospitality played in providing Yankton women with an occasion to bond through humor. Calling to mind an evening from her childhood when her mother had invited guests to sit around the campfire and tell stories, she remembers that the "old women made funny remarks, and laughed so heartily that [she] could not help joining them" (72). We witness similar scenes of homosocial bonding in Zitkala-Ša's descriptions of her interactions with her

childhood “playmates” (75). In one passage, Zitkala-Ša recalls that she and her girlfriends often bonded by playacting as their mothers. It is worth noting that in these performances the girls impersonated their mothers as hosts engaging in exchange: “I remember well how we used to exchange our necklaces, beaded belts, and sometimes even our moccasins. We pretended to offer them as gifts to one another. We delighted in impersonating our own mothers. We talked of things we had heard them say in their conversations. We imitated their various manners, even to the inflection of their voices” (75). Through passages such as these, in which Yankton women and girls act as hosts and engage in homosocial bonding while performing as hosts, Zitkala-Ša constructs a narrative that both normalizes the figure of the indigenous female host and models the kind of womanist solidarity that she hopes to inspire among Indian and non-Indian women.

Zitkala-Ša’s accounts of homosocial female hospitality in “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” challenge dominant American and dominant Sioux cultures of hospitality. Publishing “Impressions” in *Atlantic Monthly* during the winter of 1900, Zitkala-Ša speaks to and critiques both cultures simultaneously. On one hand, she undermines traditional American cultures of hospitality by rejecting the socioeconomic model around which these cultures are structured: the American nuclear family. This rejection of the American nuclear family came at a time when Native Americans were under considerable pressure from the federal government to abandon their traditional kinship ties. The passage of the Dawes Act in 1887 required Native Americans to accept land allotment or suffer the loss of federal rations. Although the Sioux aggressively resisted allotment, the reduction of their rations by half during the late 1880s and early

1890s eventually forced many to acquiesce (Gibbon 136; Hoover 38-40). By 1896, the Yankton Sioux had agreed to sell half of their land to the federal government in exchange for individual 160-acre allotments (Hoover 38).

The effects of allotment on the Yanktons were devastating. In the past, Yankton life centered around the collective needs and contributions of the *tiospaye*. Banded together as “one large family,” the multiple households of each *tiospaye* cooperated together to ensure that all members were safe and secure (Zitkala-Ša “The Great Spirit” 116). This entailed cohesive collaboration “in carrying out the daily chores of homemaking, rearing children, celebrating, and worshiping; in caring for the aged; and in burying the dead” (Hassrick 107). However, with the forced move to allotment, the *tiospaye* model became unsustainable. In place of kinship networks, Yanktons were compelled to settle on their new allotted lands as isolated nuclear families and to rely primarily on the federal government rather than one another for hospitality.¹⁹⁴ Yet, in her autobiographical account of her childhood *tiospaye*, Zitkala-Ša makes a case for the viability of the kinship model in the face of the federal government’s continuing efforts to destroy kinship ties. In the process, Zitkala-Ša offers her readers a positive and practical alternative to the patriarchalism and heteronormativity of the nuclear family model.

At the same time, Zitkala-Ša’s positive emphasis on female homosociality in “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” undermines strongly held Sioux beliefs in the essential values of sexual complementarity. The sustainability of the Sioux kinship model—and, by extension, of Sioux cultures of hospitality—depends on the willingness of tribal members to accept and perform complementary roles within the community (Stremlau 265-68). Although the complementary roles customarily ascribed to men and

women were viewed as equally valuable, there still existed a clear differentiation between the kind of work expected of men and that of women (Wingred 13-4, 42-3; Gibbon 72-4; Albers 17-8). By presenting her readers with a positive account of a *tiospaye* that is sustained largely through the contributions and collaborations of women, Zitkala-Ša challenges the logic of sexual complementarity. Not only, Zitkala-Ša suggests, are Native American women capable of producing and presenting hospitality without the assistance of men, but they are also more than capable of performing the work necessary to sustain a community on their own.

While engaging in a critique of the socially constructed roles assigned to men and women in exchanges of hospitality, Zitkala-Ša recognizes the inherently performative nature of all exchange. We see her foreground performance in her description of the playacting that she and her girlfriends engaged in as children (75). It is by “impersonating” their mothers that the young girls learned to perform as hosts (75). But Zitkala-Ša also makes clear that she was raised to believe that the quality of a person’s performance in an exchange of hospitality is less important than the sentiment that inspires their performance. In “Impressions,” she recalls a summer afternoon from her childhood when she was left alone at home and faced with the challenge of having to welcome a guest into her mother’s wigwam on her own. When an “old grandfather” of the tribe arrives unexpectedly in search of her mother, Zitkala-Ša understands that it is her responsibility “to play the part of a generous hostess” (78). Although she has never made coffee before, she turns to her mother’s coffeepot and attempts to reproduce the actions that she has seen her mother carry out so many times before. However, despite her best efforts, the coffee she produces turns out to be no more appetizing than “muddy

warm water” (78). Ashamed by the poor quality of the coffee, the young Zitkala-Ša is surprised when the old grandfather compliments her on her “performance” (78). Rather than “embarrass” Zitkala-Ša, the old man shows “the utmost respect” for the sincerity of sentiment that motivated her act of “hospitality” (79). Through this example, Zitkala-Ša promotes an ethics that recognizes both the positive value and the limited importance of performance in exchanges of hospitality. Just as she chooses not to disavow conditionality in her accounts of her mother’s hospitality, she chooses not to disavow performativity in her accounts of her own hospitality. In this way, she provides us with a model of hospitality that is noticeably different from dominant American models that attempt to disavow both conditionality and performativity by stubbornly insisting on their own unconditionality and genuineness.

The final important feature of Zitkala-Ša’s account of her mother’s hospitality is her emphasis on the vital role that acts of hospitality play in promoting intercultural narrative exchange and in sustaining oral storytelling cultures. In “Impressions,” Zitkala-Ša describes hospitality as the precondition of narrative exchange in oral storytelling cultures. When recounting stories about the hospitality that her mother offered to strangers, Zitkala-Ša notes that she enjoyed these visits because they afforded her opportunities to hear peoples from other places and cultures “relate” stories about their lives (71). It was through these childhood encounters with strangers that Zitkala-Ša learned to appreciate the abiding value of intercultural narrative exchange. Isolated on the Yankton Reservation, the stories of strangers were her only way of learning about life away from home and developing connections with non-Dakotans. Ultimately, however, the young Zitkala-Ša “loved best” the evenings during her childhood when neighbors

from the village would gather around her mother's fire and recount "old legends" (71). Lying in her mother's lap, Zitkala-Ša absorbed herself in the voices of the storytellers, "eagerly listening to every word" (72). Focusing on the aural aspects of these scenes in her retelling, Zitkala-Ša integrates into her narrative what Gerald Vizenor has called "native presence" (Vizenor 63-66). Aware that the immediate presence of oral storytelling is unavailable to her reader, she makes the scene of oral storytelling present on the page. She conveys to the reader traces of her original experience through detailed descriptions of the sights and sounds that she recalls from childhood: "the distant howling of a pack of wolves"; "the hooting of an owl"; "the stars as they peeped down" from the night sky; "the bright flames" of fire on the "faces of the old folks" (72). Perhaps most importantly, Zitkala-Ša emphasizes how these scenes of hospitality from her childhood helped sustain Dakota culture by facilitating the continued circulation of tribal legends and cultivating community among members of the tribe.

Chapter Four

Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris's *The Crown of Columbus*: Settler Colonial Narratives of Hospitality and The Politics of Recognition

Almost one hundred years after Zitkala-Ša spoke at Earlham College as an undergraduate and drew attention to a suppressed history of Native American hospitality to early Europeans, Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris draw on this same suppressed history to highlight the formative role that settler colonial narratives of hospitality play in enabling and perpetuating a settler colonial politics of recognition. Through analysis of Erdrich and Dorris's collaborative novel *The Crown of Columbus* (1991), this chapter shows how settler colonial regimes use false discourses of hospitality to disguise acts of oppression as acts of recognition. It reads *The Crown of Columbus* as a critique of Euro-American settler colonial discourses of hospitality dating back to Columbus. In addition, it suggests that this critique doubles as a self-reflexive critique of Erdrich and Dorris's own writing collaboration. In making this claim, this chapter argues that Erdrich and Dorris use self-referential metaphors in *The Crown of Columbus* to figure their own writing partnership as a colonial relationship and to reveal the ways in which they use false discourses of hospitality to disavow the colonial nature of their collaboration. In the process, it establishes a theoretical foundation for thinking about acts of literary collaboration as acts of hospitality and colonization. Finally, this chapter reads *The Crown of Columbus* as a narrative of survivance through which Erdrich asserts her authorial presence by resisting Dorris's attempts at simulating colonial domination.

I conclude this dissertation with a reading of Erdrich and Dorris's *The Crown of Columbus* because it is a novel that invites us to think critically about the underlying

tensions that inform narratives of hospitality, especially American narratives of hospitality. *The Crown of Columbus* is a text that entertains liberal utopian narratives about American hospitality but ultimately abandons these narratives after acknowledging the inherent limitations and historical contradictions of American policies and practices. It is a text that reminds us that stories of hospitality are always in some way stories about repression and disavowal. In this sense, *The Crown of Columbus* refers us back to previous discussions in this dissertation about the appeals and hazards of utopian narratives of hospitality. Erdrich and Dorris echo Steinbeck in contemplating a utopian vision of an “America” capable of and willing to offer equal welcome to all peoples. Yet, like Steinbeck, they discard this vision as false and ultimately dangerous. At the same time, *The Crown of Columbus*, like other texts previously discussed in this dissertation, is at times complicit in perpetuating and licensing a liberal politics of recognition that relies on false discourses of hospitality to dispossess and exploit racialized, gendered, and classed others. For, as we shall see, Erdrich and Dorris do not wholly reject liberal utopian visions of recognition and hospitality in *The Crown of Columbus*. They simply fail to actually envision them.

I

Since its publication in 1991, Erdrich and Dorris’s *The Crown of Columbus* has been both celebrated and condemned for embracing a liberal multicultural politics of recognition. On one hand, a number of scholars have lauded *The Crown of Columbus* as a novel that uses a liberal multicultural paradigm of recognition to imagine utopian relations between Natives and non-Natives in the United States. Teresa Cid, for example, praises Erdrich and Dorris for achieving in *The Crown of Columbus* a “utopian vision”

that affirms the “multicultural” value of “inclusion” by depicting characters who “recognize” in racialized “other[s]” the potential of “never-ending dialogue” (347-49).¹⁹⁵ Like Cid, Susan Farrell rejoices in the novel’s “celebration” of liberal multiculturalism, contending that Erdrich and Dorris use scenes of political and cultural recognition to “show” that liberal multiculturalism is “not incompatible with traditional Indian thought” (127). Katalin Bíróné Nagy has recently echoed Farrell’s conclusions, interpreting scenes of recognition between Natives and non-Natives in the novel as interracial “healing ceremonies” and as signs that Erdrich and Dorris foresaw in the early 1990s the coming of a “new, more promising age for the race of Native Americans” (201).¹⁹⁶

On the other hand, several critics have taken issue with Erdrich and Dorris’s apparent celebration of liberal multiculturalism in *The Crown of Columbus*. These critics have denounced the novel as an endorsement of political accommodation and cultural assimilation. Deborah Madsen decries *The Crown of Columbus* as a “fictional validation of American multiculturalism” and argues that the novel promotes “assimilation and reintegration into the contemporary American multiculture” (81). Hans Bak accuses Erdrich and Dorris of attempting to “soothe and pacif[y] white Western guilt” by “romanticiz[ing]” the possibility of achieving “historical retribution” for Native Americans through acts of political recognition (113). “Insofar as *The Crown of Columbus* invites us to seriously entertain this possibility,” Bak adds, “it would seem to subvert its credibility of purpose and intent” (112). Reiterating the objections of Madsen and Bak, Helen Hoy suggests that the novel’s “utopic” vision of liberal multiculturalism “risk[s] reinscribing a Eurocentric worldview” (54).

Most critics of the novel's politics have focused their attention on the concluding scenes during which the novel's main characters, both Native and non-Native, appear to accept and overcome their differences. Whereas Bíróné Nagy and Quantic have celebrated these scenes as moments of "healing" and "radical change," others have attacked them as "overly conciliatory" and "uncomfortably formulaic" (Freccero 17; Washburn 43). Confused by what they see as Erdrich and Dorris's embrace of liberal multiculturalism in the novel's final scenes, critics have interpreted the conclusion to *The Crown of Columbus* as "paradoxical" and "contrived," as at odds with the rest of the novel and "distinctly commercial" in its "sentimental" depiction of "neat closure" (Jaimes 59; Breinig 339; Kakutani C25; Freccero 17). Some have gone as far as to suggest that Erdrich and Dorris's apparent turn to liberal multiculturalism at the novel's end amounts to a "pandering of their art" (Jaimes 59).

In a number of important ways, the mixed critical reception of *The Crown of Columbus* is a symptom of the novel's own contradictory politics. Erdrich and Dorris's novel does at times envision liberal multicultural forms of recognition as utopian solutions to the challenges that exist between Natives and non-Natives in the United States. After all, the events of the novel do center around a Native American woman's attempt to achieve political recognition for all Native peoples in North America. When Vivian Twostar, an Assistant Professor of Native American Studies at Dartmouth College, discovers a clue that points to the location of the lost logbook from Christopher Columbus's first voyage to North America, she embarks on a journey to find the logbook. This journey eventually leads to Eleuthera, a small island in the Bahamas where Columbus visited in 1492. In her search to find Columbus's *Diario*, Vivian seeks to

produce “incontrovertible evidence” that would require the U.S. government to “recognize” Native Americans as rightful sovereigns of North American lands (269, 204). When she imagines attaining official state recognition for Native Americans, Vivian envisions a utopian scene in which the U.S. Supreme Court “recognize[s]” the “full right” of “every native tribe and nation” to “govern” themselves (226, 204). It is through scenes of political recognition such as this, Vivian believes, that Native Americans will ultimately achieve the “overdue justice” they deserve (149).

Yet, despite the overriding focus of the novel’s plot on achieving official state recognition for Native Americans, *The Crown of Columbus* is generally critical of liberal forms of political recognition. Although Vivian does ultimately track down Columbus’s lost *Diario* and discovers within it a passage in which the Admiral openly acknowledges the sovereignty of a Native American king, her discovery does not result in any political recognition for Native Americans. In the novel’s final pages, we learn that the recovered *Diario* contains “material for a plethora of legal approaches under international law, issues of aboriginal claim and sovereignty, of premeditated fraud” (375). The “prospects” for legal “victories” are, we are told, “better than anyone would have expected” (375). Yet, Erdrich and Dorris do not depict these “victories” in the novel. They never actually narrate for us the scenes of political recognition that Vivian works so hard to achieve. Accordingly, political recognition for Native Americans remains just as prospective at the end of the novel as it does at the beginning. What’s more, Erdrich and Dorris spend no time in the novel identifying the actual effects that official state recognition would have on the daily lives of indigenous peoples. Any depiction of equal rights and treatment for

indigenous peoples in American society remain conspicuously absent from the pages of the novel.

Rather than embrace the liberal multicultural vision of official state recognition that Vivian seeks in the opening chapters of the novel, *The Crown of Columbus* ultimately engages in a concerted, if at times contradictory, critique of liberal multiculturalism. Rethinking the liberal multicultural paradigm of recognition through a theoretical lens of hospitality, the novel reveals how settler colonial regimes use false discourses of hospitality to disguise acts of oppression as acts of recognition *and* how indigenous peoples can and do employ discourses of hospitality to expose, critique, and resist the oppression they face.

II

The first chapters of *The Crown of Columbus* establish a direct relationship between settler colonial narratives of hospitality and the colonial politics of recognition. Erdrich and Dorris establish this relationship by showing how settler colonial narratives of hospitality employ a false politics of recognition to justify and disavow acts of displacement, dispossession, and exploitation. Reading acts of colonial recognition through a framework of hospitality, Erdrich and Dorris identify acts of recognition, misrecognition, and nonrecognition as acts of hospitality, false hospitality, and withheld hospitality. They establish these parallels in the early chapters of *The Crown of Columbus* by citing and analyzing passages from Christopher Columbus's own writing. For example, in the novel's opening chapter, Erdrich and Dorris include a lengthy epigraph from Bartholomé de las Casas's transcription of *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America*, which Las Casas claimed was a partly summarized and partly

quoted version of Columbus's original diary.¹⁹⁷ The famous passage, which recounts Columbus's arrival in "America" and the formal declarations that he makes in claiming sovereignty in the "New World" on behalf of the Spanish Crown, represents for Erdrich and Dorris the original scene of misrecognition in Euro-American settler colonial discourse:

The Admiral went ashore in the armed launch, and Martín Alonso Pinzón and his brother Vincente Anes, who was captain of the *Niña*. The Admiral brought out the royal banner and the captains two flags with the green cross, which the Admiral carried on all the ships as a standard, with an F and a Y, and over each letter a crown, one on one side of the † and the other on the other. Thus put ashore they saw very green trees and many ponds and fruits of various kinds. The Admiral called to the two captains and to the others who had jumped ashore and to Rodrigo Descobedo, the *escrivano* of the whole fleet, and to Rodrigo Sánchez de Segovia; and he said that they should be witnesses that, in the presence of all, he would take, as in fact he did take, possession of the said island for the king and for the queen his lords, making the declarations that were required, and which at more length are contained in the testimonials made there in writing. (5)¹⁹⁸

The inclusion of this passage in the opening chapter of *The Crown of Columbus* serves a number of important functions. First, it reminds us of the central importance that Columbus's written narrative of his "discovery" had for the settler colonial project in North America. Columbus's written records of his arrival in North America were largely responsible for granting legitimacy to Ferdinand and Isabella's claim to sovereignty in the New World. Fully aware of this, Columbus takes great care, both in his *Diario* and in

his widely disseminated letters announcing his discovery, to confer legitimacy on his narrative by noting that his written account is based on the meticulous records taken at the scene by the fleet's official scribe.¹⁹⁹ Likewise recognizing the importance of Columbus's written account of the discovery, Las Casas makes direct reference in this passage to the Admiral's famed letters announcing his discovery ("the testimonials made there in writing"). Columbus's letters, addressed to Luis de Santángel and Rafael Sánchez (officials of the Crown of Aragón who helped facilitate Columbus's voyage to America), were immediately translated into three languages and circulated widely throughout Europe (Zamora 1).²⁰⁰ So effective was the Spanish Crown's circulation campaign in the month's following Columbus's discovery that to this day Columbus's account of the discovery in his letters serves as the dominant narrative of his arrival in America.

Together with Las Casas's transcription of *The Diario*, the Santángel and Sánchez letters created a paradigm of Euro-American settler colonial discourse that is still employed widely today. Following this paradigm, settler colonial regimes use false narratives of hospitality to disavow acts of dispossession, displacement, and exploitation while claiming sovereignty over Indian lands, resources, and peoples. Columbus's false narrative of hospitality in *The Diario* and letters centers around two false recognition claims. First, Columbus claims that indigenous Americans recognize Spanish sovereignty by showing "no opposition" to his royal proclamation. In his letter to Santángel, Columbus writes, "I found very many islands with large populations and took possession of them all for their Highnesses; this I did by proclamation and unfurled the royal standard. *No opposition was offered*" (Cohen 115; emphasis added).²⁰¹ Second, Columbus claims, in turn, to recognize the agency of indigenous Americans by

suggesting that they are given the opportunity to oppose his proclamation and choose not to. Of course, even if Native Americans were present at the time that Columbus made his royal proclamation, they would very possibly not recognize the ceremony taking place as a formal claim to occupation, nor would they be able to voice their opposition in a language that Columbus and his crew could readily understand.²⁰² Accordingly, as Stephen Greenblatt has pointed out, the formal declarations of possession cited by Columbus in his *Diario* and in his letters announcing the discovery are “infelicitious” performatives, speech acts that formally announce the presence of the other but simultaneously deny the other the ability to contradict possession (Greenblatt 65).²⁰³ In truth, Columbus’s renowned announcement of discovery is a performative trick that relies on pretenses of recognition for its legitimacy.

Erdrich and Dorris link Columbus’s false recognition claims to his false hospitality claims by also including in the epigraph cited above the passage in the Las Casas *Diario* that immediately follows Columbus’s announcement of his discovery:

Soon many people of the island gathered there. What follows are the very words of the Admiral in his book about his first voyage to, and the discovery of these Indies.

I, he says, in order that they would be friendly to us—because I recognized that they were people who would be better freed [from error] and converted to our Holy Faith by love than by force—to some of them I gave red caps, and glass beads which they put on their chests, and many other things of small value, in which they took so much pleasure and became so much our friends that it was a marvel. Later they came swimming to the ships’ launches where we were and

brought us parrots and cotton thread in balls and javelins and many other things, and they traded them to us for other things which we gave them, such as small glass beads and bells. In sum, they took everything and gave of what they had very willingly. But it seemed to me that they were a people very poor in everything. (5)

Here, we see how Columbus uses acts of hospitality and narratives of hospitality to demonstrate power and claim superiority over indigenous peoples. In *The Crown of Columbus*, Vivian's son, Nash, observes that Columbus arrived in America with "an attitude, a power attitude," and that he "imposed it" on Native Americans (112). Later, building on Nash's observation, Vivian identifies discourses of hospitality in Columbus's writing as "the vocabulary of the colonizer" (200). It is in passages like the one above that we can most clearly see Columbus using discourses of hospitality as a colonizing vocabulary and doing so with the specific purpose of imposing power over Natives. In his account of his very first interactions with Native Americans, Columbus self-consciously figures himself as a host who gives generously and confers "pleasure" through his giving. He employs this tropology repeatedly in *The Diario*, continually figuring himself as a generous host and indigenous Americans as grateful guests. In another passage from *The Diario* quoted by Erdrich and Dorris later in *The Crown of Columbus*, Columbus recounts how Natives "received" his "gifts with a solemn courtesy" (204). Through this repeated tropology, Columbus establishes himself as a man recognized by Native Americans as a rightful host who is accorded respect and appreciation for his hospitality. In turn, he uses the host status that Natives confer on him in his own narrative to legitimize his false recognition and hospitality claims.

Notably, Columbus's narrative of his hospitality in the New World is predicated on a disavowal of prior Indian sovereignty. In order to figure himself as a host, Columbus must deny Indians their rightful claims to host status. Although, as we see above, Columbus occasionally figures Indians as hosts in *The Diario*, he always emphasizes the conditional quality of their hospitality. Natives in *The Diario* often give "very willingly" in exchange for Columbus's hospitality, but what they have to give, Columbus tells us repeatedly, is always "very poor" in comparison. To Columbus, European hosts are naturally superior to Indian hosts, who are handicapped by their own ignorance and poverty. The fact that Indians are native to the land and possess prior rights to sovereignty over the land and its resources is invalidated, in Columbus's view, by the Natives' failure to use the land and its resources to their fullest potential. But, even more importantly, Columbus believes that Indian hospitality is ultimately deficient because the Natives are unable to give and provide the one thing that the Admiral values most: Christianity. According to Columbus, nothing that the indigenous peoples can supply him and his crew in return for their hospitality is commensurate with the "*Holy Faith*" that Columbus and his fellow Christians can provide them. Next to the incommensurable gift of Christianity, everything that Native Americans can give "counts for nothing," Columbus writes in *The Diario* (127). Through this logic, Columbus depicts Indians in *The Diario* as parasites who gratefully and eagerly take the incommensurable gift of Christianity without being able to adequately reciprocate the hospitality they receive.²⁰⁴ In this way, Columbus's narrative of discovery works both to erase the truth of prior Indian sovereignty and to portray Indians as parasites feeding off the superior hospitality of Europeans. In *The Crown of Columbus*, Erdrich and Dorris continually return to

passages from *The Diario* in which Columbus employs tropes of hospitality to portray himself as a host and Natives as guests. In returning to these passages, they reiterate and expand on the forms of erasure and disavowal that Columbus's colonizing vocabulary of hospitality performs for the settler colonial project.

III

In addition to recalling how Columbus used false narratives of hospitality to justify and disavow settler colonial oppression during the late fifteenth century, *The Crown of Columbus* also reveals the ways in which contemporary settler colonial regimes utilize false discourses of hospitality for the same purposes and to the same effects. In telling Vivian's contemporary story, Erdrich and Dorris show how the paradigm of settler colonial discourse that Columbus established over five hundred years ago is still employed today to excuse and deny the displacement, dispossession, and exploitation of Native Americans. In *The Crown of Columbus*, Erdrich and Dorris focus their critique of contemporary settler colonialism on the specific context of American academia. In doing so, they treat the institutions of American higher education as a microcosm of contemporary American settler colonialism.

As a Native American academic, Vivian knows first-hand how American academic institutions use false discourses of hospitality to contain and circumscribe Native scholars. In the first chapter of *The Crown of Columbus*, we learn that Vivian has been "invited" by the Dartmouth alumni magazine to write an article on Christopher Columbus for a special issue celebrating the quincentenary of the Admiral's discovery (53). Yet, it quickly becomes clear that the magazine editor's invitation is an act of false hospitality. The offer entails a number of conditions, some explicit and others implicit, all

of which ultimately serve to reinforce the colonial character of Vivian's relationship to the College and to the academy at large. The editor of the magazine makes clear that Vivian's article should be written from "the" Native American "perspective" (12).²⁰⁵ When Vivian tries to explain that not all Native Americans have the same "perspective" on Columbus (that, for example, her Indian heritage is Navajo and "Columbus never got near" the American Southwest), the editor insists that Vivian has to write the article because no one else on the Dartmouth campus "could do the subject equal justice" (13). As the only "aboriginal" member of the Dartmouth faculty, Vivian possesses minority credentials that make her uniquely marketable to the College (14).

By inviting Vivian to write an article on Columbus for the alumni magazine, the College uses a pretense of hospitality to commodify these minority credentials. It attempts to profit off its exploitation of Vivian's marginal and contingent status. What's more, it further ghettoizes her scholarship and her position within the academy. Although Vivian has "other interests" she would like to pursue as a scholar, she agrees to write the article because she has "no choice" but to conform to an academic market that feeds off the compartmentalization of her scholarship (11-4).²⁰⁶ In the final year of her tenure review at Dartmouth, Vivian cannot afford to turn down an invitation to publish, especially one proffered by the College. As she herself reasons, "Even the house organ was a publication, and in this year of career decision, everything counted" (13).²⁰⁷ Fully aware of Vivian's contingent status, the magazine editor treats his request as an invitation proffered on her behalf (10). But, to Vivian, the request feels more like an "*order*," one that does not reflect any genuine effort on the part of the editor to recognize or affirm her individual perspective on Columbus or the Admiral's complicated legacy (10).

Erdrich and Dorris further demonstrate the role that a colonial politics of recognition plays in circumscribing Vivian's academic status by figuring the physical space of Dartmouth Library as a metaphor for the conditional hospitality offered by American academic institutions to indigenous scholars. In the first chapter of *The Crown of Columbus*, Vivian arrives at Dartmouth Library in search of scholarship on Columbus for her article in the alumni magazine. However, when she inserts her faculty ID into the library's automated entrance, she is met with the flashing words "No Admit" (14). With the help of a graduate student "sentinel," Vivian eventually manages to recertify her ID, only to then find that her nine-month-pregnant body does not fit through the now-open entryway (14-6). Unable to squeeze through the entrance, Vivian is forced to enter the library through "the exit," what she describes in her first-person narration as "a door of a more accommodating breadth" (16).

Although we have no reason to believe that Vivian's ID fails at the library entrance for any reason other than that it is simply time for it to be renewed, the symbolic implications of the moment of rejection are clear. As a Native American woman, Vivian is a marginal and contingent figure at the College and in the academy. She is a conditional guest in the halls of white male scholarship, an outsider who must continually reestablish her credentials and renew her claims to membership. The colonial politics that superintend Vivian's conditional status are systemic and institutionalized, part of the everyday operations of the College, endemic to the comings and goings of faculty, students, and staff on campus. The student "sentinel" who polices Vivian's entrance and recertifies her ID is an embodiment of these institutional operations. Moreover, Vivian's entrance through the exit of the library symbolizes the individual and collective

accommodations that racialized and gendered academics are compelled to make on a daily basis in order to be welcomed into academic spaces, both physical and metaphorical. Just as the editor of the alumni magazine creates the impression that *he* is accommodating Vivian's needs by providing her with an opportunity to publish, the graduate student guarding the library entrance treats the lengthy process of granting Vivian access to the library as a series of accommodations carried out on Vivian's behalf. And Vivian's own reference to the library's exit as a "door of a more accommodating breadth," as well as her unwillingness to admit to the library staff how long it has actually been since she last visited the library, seems to suggest that Vivian has, at least in part, internalized the colonial politics by way of which her own accommodations go unrecognized and the perceived accommodations of the College receive public acclaim.

As her entrance through the library's exit suggests, Vivian's Native female body conditions the hospitality she receives as an academic. When Vivian enters Dartmouth Library, she enters a space already claimed and dominated by white men. Not insignificantly, one of the most prominent of these white men, Roger Williams, is the estranged father of Vivian's unborn child. Roger, a Full Professor at Dartmouth and a self-described "WASP," is a celebrated narrative poet and a world-renowned expert on Columbus (16, 165). In his own work on Columbus, Roger dedicates himself to preserving the dominant white male narrative of New World discovery (263-65). Thus, Vivian's prospective article on Columbus, though published for a college alumni magazine, represents to Roger a potential threat to the dominant narrative he seeks to uphold. Moreover, for Roger, who is very proud of the fact that he possesses a "cross-hatched New England pedigree dating back to the seventeenth century," Vivian's

pregnant body represents a contamination of his pure white Anglo-Saxon Protestant bloodline (57). Her presence in the library, therefore, doubles as a threat both to his scholarship and to his pure bloodline.

Signs of the colonial circumscription of Vivian's scholarship emerge immediately upon her arrival at the stacks of Dartmouth Library. When Vivian begins searching the stacks, she finds that all of the "important books" on Columbus are missing (16). The reason for all of the missing titles, we soon learn, is that Roger has already checked them out of the library (16). Trespassing on Roger's scholarly "turf," Vivian is limited by Roger's prior claims to the territory of Columbian scholarship (16). She could, as she notes, recall the titles already checked out by Roger, but this act would, in itself, suggest that she had to infringe on Roger's scholarship in order to produce her own (21). The very fact that Vivian's predicament presents itself to her in these terms is further evidence that she has internalized the academy's colonial politics. Either way, the titles missing from the shelves clearly signify the challenges that Vivian faces as a Native American woman attempting to intervene into a scholarly conversation that has been going on between and among white men for centuries.

Yet, rather than dwell on these challenges, Erdrich and Dorris use their account of Vivian's visit to the library as an opportunity to show how colonial constraints on Native scholarship can have the positive effect of encouraging Native scholars to explore new and innovative lines of inquiry. Forced to select from among the remaining titles on the shelves, Vivian begins leafing through alternative histories of the contact period—histories that rethink familiar stories from new perspectives and present fresh arguments inspired by these new perspectives (16-25).²⁰⁸ Reading these alternative histories, Vivian

revisits and reconsiders a number of aspects of Columbus's biography, including his early career as a mariner, his motivations for crossing the Atlantic, and his ambiguous religious affiliations (16-25). Ultimately, we find that the limited number of canonical titles available to Vivian reinforces her inclination to think unconventionally about Columbus. Accordingly, although Roger's prior claims to the territory of Columbian scholarship appear at first to limit Vivian's research, these limitations help free her up to think creatively. As we will later see, it is by approaching the subject of Columbus from a number of different marginalized and underrepresented perspectives that Vivian is able to deconstruct the ways in which colonial powers use pretenses of hospitality to demonstrate power over and circumscribe the lives of Native peoples, especially Native women.

IV

Erdrich and Dorris do not limit their critique of contemporary American settler colonial discourses of hospitality to their account of the false hospitality offered by Dartmouth College to Vivian. The primary target of Erdrich and Dorris's critique of settler colonialism in *The Crown of Columbus* is a wealthy Dartmouth alumnus named Henry Cobb who lures Vivian and Roger down to his beach cottage on the Caribbean island of Eleuthera with the promise of granting them access to an original copy of Columbus's long-lost *Diario*. Like Roger, Cobb is a WASP from an old New England family who feels that his ancestry entitles him to certain privileges and courtesies. In inviting Vivian and Roger down to Eleuthera, Cobb hopes that his guests will help him use the text of *The Diario* to locate a long-lost, priceless crown that Columbus reportedly brought with him to the West Indies (192-98). Because his family has been in possession of the Columbus *Diario* for centuries, Cobb believes that he is entitled to the crown and

its riches, despite the fact that Columbus originally imagined it as a “gift” for Native Americans (187). He cares not at all about the historical significance of *The Diario* or the political implications of the document for indigenous peoples in North America. “I don’t give a fuck about Columbus. But he’s got something that belongs to me, and I need it,” he tells Vivian (191).

In the end, it is Cobb’s false hospitality that most clearly distinguishes him as a settler colonial figure in the novel. Like Columbus before him, Cobb attempts to use pretenses of hospitality to exploit Native Americans. Erdrich and Dorris deliberately figure Cobb’s encounter with Vivian in Eleuthera as a contemporary analogy to Columbus’s encounter with Native Americans five hundred years prior. From the very start, Erdrich and Dorris use tropes of hospitality to figure Cobb as a false host. Vivian’s first contact from Cobb comes in the form of a formal invitation of hospitality. From Eleuthera via Western Union, Cobb wires Vivian the following message: “I await your arrival. STOP. Advise flight number and date. STOP. Guesthouse at your disposal for duration of stay. STOP” (128).²⁰⁹ Before she leaves for Eleuthera, Vivian very clearly figures her relationship to Cobb as a relationship of hospitality between an invited guest and an inviting host. Reasoning that “a kind of reciprocal obligation for decency went into effect once hospitality or kindness was accepted,” Vivian asks Cobb what she, as a “guest,” can bring him from the mainland to thank him for his hospitality (155-56). After a brief discussion, they end up settling on a copy of *The Wall Street Journal*, which Vivian hands to Cobb as soon as she arrives on the island (156, 187).

When Vivian arrives in Eleuthera, both she and Cobb persist in characterizing and treating their relationship as a relationship of hospitality. Cobb continually reminds

Vivian that he has “invited” her to stay with him (191, 195, 293-94). For her part, Vivian reiterates this fact, addressing Cobb as her “host” and referring to herself as his “guest” (217, 253, 271). Through their repeated use of tropes of hospitality, Vivian and Cobb maintain the pretense that their encounter is civil and mutually beneficial. At first, Cobb plays his part well, performing the role of host with admirable “civility” and “politeness” (191, 233). But when he learns that Vivian is not willing to give him what he wants without receiving anything of value in return, his “vener of politeness” dissolves and his “manners” become “sloppy” (192, 233). With Cobb’s “mask” suddenly removed, it becomes clear that all of his displays of civility and politeness have been just “phony hospitality” designed to lure Vivian into a false sense of friendship and security (209).²¹⁰

Cobb’s example serves as a reminder that Columbus’s model of settler colonialism is still alive and well in North America. Like Columbus, Cobb acts as a host on lands where he is not native. Although he is relatively new to Eleuthera, Cobb acts as though the island, its people, and its resources are his to dominate and control.²¹¹ And, like Columbus, he justifies his colonization of the island by reasoning that the local population is too ignorant and inept to appreciate and utilize the island and its resources themselves. “These people don’t believe in work. They won’t even plant a few seeds,” he tells Vivian when she first arrives (187). As far as Columbus’s priceless crown is concerned, Cobb claims that he is entitled to ownership of it because Native Americans, like Vivian, are too ignorant not only to locate it but also to appreciate it once they’ve found it. Thus, he tries to convince Vivian that she is powerless to find and claim the crown in the face of his superior intelligence and wherewithal: “You have no idea how to use what you’ve got, but I do. So let’s deal” (187). Ultimately, Cobb represents a

powerful element in contemporary American society that profits off Native American lands and resources while pretending to engage in fair and mutually beneficial relations with Natives. Yet, as we shall see, Vivian's engagements with Cobb also show how Native Americans can expose and resist the false hospitality of settler colonial figures like Cobb.

V

Interviewed about *The Crown of Columbus* in 1991, Dorris explained that he and Erdrich wanted to use Columbus as a "metaphor for contact between people and cultures" (Smith 77; qtd. in Nagy 187). Erdrich and Dorris achieve this objective by figuring Columbus as an exemplar of settler colonial hospitality and then establishing Henry Cobb and Roger Williams as contemporary representatives of Columbus's brand of settler colonialism. Through the metaphor of Columbus, we come to see Cobb and Williams not merely as settler colonialists but as settler colonial hosts.

The analogies between Roger Williams and Columbus are impossible to miss. Early in *The Crown of Columbus*, Vivian establishes a link between Roger and Columbus when, in response to her mother's accusations of sexual promiscuity, she half-jokingly describes Roger's relationship to her as analogous to Columbus's relationship to his "mistress," Beatrice de Peraza y Bobadilla: "Roger as Columbus. Me as Beatriz Peraza" (112).²¹² As the novel progresses, the analogies between Roger and Columbus come regularly and are similarly transparent. When, a few chapters later, Roger requests that Vivian welcome him to the Bahamas wearing a hula skirt and a lei around her neck, she responds, with obvious reference to the historical memory of Columbus, "Wrong island . . . Wrong ocean, wrong direction" (169). When Roger eventually arrives in the Bahamas

by boat (in contrast to Vivian who arrives by plane), he is clear to point out that his “method of transportation” affords him an experience that is “parallel” to the “Admiral’s own voyage” (174). And, like Columbus before him, Roger is determined to “claim” the “honor” of being the first on his boat to “sight” land (183-86). Yet, also like Columbus, Roger is “looking the wrong way” when the island of Eleuthera first becomes visible (183).

In addition to providing these obvious parallels between Roger and Columbus, Erdrich and Dorris establish Roger as a settler colonial figure by portraying him as a white man who, in the tradition of Columbus, uses pretenses of hospitality to justify and disavow settler colonial forms of oppression. From the very beginning of his relationship with Vivian and her family, Roger imagines himself as a protective host and benevolent provider. After his first meeting with Vivian, in which he has a paternalistic fantasy about comforting her while she cries into his chest, Roger figures himself as Vivian’s mentor, “devot[ing]” himself selflessly to her “improvement” (118).²¹³ He begins by attempting to change her work and living habits, to rein them in, to make them more “predictab[le]” (118). She will never survive as a scholar, Roger reasons, unless she transforms her ways (118). In his determination to bring about Vivian’s “improvement,” Roger convinces himself that he takes self-interested actions for her benefit. Late in the novel, for example, he concludes that he should, for Vivian’s own protection, assume control over negotiations with Henry Cobb: “If he really had anything else, I should be the one to examine it. My reputation was intact. It could withstand controversy, scrutiny, if there was indeed something new to publish” (282). In this way, Roger uses a pretense of

offering Vivian what Rauna Kuokkanen has called “academic hospitality” to further his own academic career.²¹⁴

Roger’s determination to view himself as a host to Vivian and her family is informed by his stubborn unwillingness to acknowledge the prior sovereignty of Native Americans in North America. We see this stubborn unwillingness on display in Roger’s interactions with Angeline, Vivian’s Navajo grandmother. Angeline, who lives with Vivian and helps care for her kids, is a reluctant and often ungracious host to Roger when he visits Vivian’s home. As Roger notes, “Whenever I hang my coat in the closet [Angeline] takes it out and puts it on the chair by the front door. She clears my dinner plate before I’ve finished eating and then she goes to bed, announcing that she can’t sleep until the house is quiet” (57). To Angeline, Roger is a parasitic white man who uses her granddaughter for sex and fails to fulfill his responsibilities as a father to Violet. He takes more than he gives and does so with an air of superiority. In his arrogance, Roger interprets Angeline’s inhospitality not as a sign of her disapproval of him but as a symptom of her “foreignness.” “I thought perhaps she expected a certain deference due to her age and foreign status,” he posits by way of explanation (57). Unwilling to see Angeline’s Navajo heritage as a sign of native Americanness, Roger insists that his “cross-hatched New England pedigree” grants him and his ancestors the “status” of sovereigns (57). Informed by this mindset, he persists in his determination to act as a host to Vivian and her family. Like Columbus, who tried to buy the favor of Indians with unsuitable gifts (gloves, red caps, and slippers for a people who did not wear clothes), Roger tries to win over Vivian’s son, Nash, with similarly unsuitable gifts (a necktie and copies of *Persuasion* and *Bleak House* for a teenage boy who does not dress formally and

does not read nineteenth-century British fiction). Roger, like Columbus, overestimates the value of his hospitality because he is unwilling to affirm the singularity of the other enough to seriously consider what he values.

However, despite Roger's pretenses of hospitality, the novel ultimately makes clear that Angeline is correct: Roger is the parasite in his relationship with Vivian. Roger uses pretenses of hospitality to deny his own parasitic behavior. Just as Columbus disavowed his own parasitism by labeling Native Americans as parasites, Roger denies his own parasitism by convincing himself that Vivian parasites off his scholarship and mentorship. The novel's opening scene in the Dartmouth library reveals how Vivian's position in the academy and her scholarship are conditioned and circumscribed by a colonial politics of recognition. As *The Crown of Columbus* continues, we see this colonial politics at play in Roger's efforts to devalue and inhibit Vivian's scholarship by dismissing her as a parasite feeding off the prior contributions of white men. Viewing Vivian as "an annoying interloper in his scholarly domain," Roger treats Vivian's efforts to uncover the lost diary as parasitic acts of "revisionism" (125, 163). Rather than recognize that Vivian's newly discovered *Diario* predates the Las Casas text and, therefore, could not, by definition, parasite the Las Casas narrative of contact, Roger disqualifies Vivian's research as an attempt to "negotiate away established history" (263).

Roger's negative example highlights the extent to which settler colonial discourses of hospitality are informed by and rely on misogyny and racism. Although Roger refuses to acknowledge openly that his responses to Vivian's work are motivated by misogyny and racism, he admits as much to himself when, late in the novel, he reasons that Vivian should be "excluded" from negotiations with Henry Cobb on account

of her “gender” and Native heritage: “It was no surprise that Vivian was to be excluded—because of her gender and her background, she was a cipher between Cobb and me, an auxiliary chasm of subtle contention quite apart from our intellectual disagreement” (280). What Roger does not understand, of course, is that Vivian’s “gender” and “background” are embedded in the Euro-American narrative that he seeks to uphold, already present as a repressed but still essential component of New World history, already the cipher through which the myth of white male hospitality encoded its own deconstruction. It is only by resisting and exposing this myth that Vivian can free herself from her “auxiliary” status.

VI

In what is the most cited and discussed critical analysis of *The Crown of Columbus*, Deborah Madsen categorizes Erdrich and Dorris’s novel as a “trauma narrative” (62).²¹⁵ In making this categorization, Madsen argues that the novel is a trauma narrative about “survival,” not “survivance” (78). Drawing on Gerald Vizenor’s concept of “survivance”—a portmanteau of “survival” and “resistance” that Vizenor uses to describe Native stories that actively renounce “dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (*Manifest* vii)—Madsen maintains that *The Crown of Columbus* fails as a Native American novel because it offers no “opposition” to settler colonial oppression and offers, instead, a “conventional working through of loss, through patterns of recognition that lead ultimately to assimilation and reintegration into the contemporary American multicultural” (82). In offering a “conventional working through of loss,” Madsen contends, *The Crown of Columbus* embraces “liberal solutions to historical injustice” (82). Chief among the liberal solutions that Erdrich and Dorris’s novel seeks is the

political recognition of Native tribes by the U.S. government, a solution that Vivian seeks through her appeal to the “international legal bureaucracy” (82). Furthermore, in suggesting that *The Crown of Columbus* embraces liberal multiculturalism, Madsen claims that Erdrich and Dorris present us with a “happy ending” in which “all opposition is subsumed into a common humanity” (82). In particular, Madsen describes the “space” of Vivian and Roger’s “house” as a representation of the novel’s liberal multicultural politics:

Indeed, this mixing of cultures, this multiculturalism functions, in the novel, as a form of cultural orthodoxy that has supplanted the melting pot and even the salad bowl, replaces them with a house of many nations, like the one Vivian and Roger build at the novel’s end. This house, in which each family member has a space in which to be different and yet to remain defined by the encompassing space of the house, symbolizes the happy ending for these protagonists and by extension the national family of New World Americans who can rest guiltless in the knowledge that some kind of justice has been achieved. But in this house there is no mixing of cultures. Roger will eat the Navajo chili that Vivian serves him while Vivian will listen to the Bach that Roger favors, and yet her Native grandmother will live in an add-on room where Roger does not have to listen to her. There is no healing balance in this house or in the story that created it; all opposition is subsumed into a common humanity . . . (82)

Madsen’s description of Vivian and Roger’s house as a microcosm of “New World America,” where all guilt is absolved and all opposition denied in the interests of liberal multiculturalism, fails to account for a number of counternarrative forces in the

novel. Communicated both at the level of the plot and the level of the narration, these counternarrative forces ultimately undermine the novel's early emphasis on achieving liberal forms of political recognition for Native Americans. In turn, these counternarrative forces teach us to read the novel's "happy ending" with suspicion rather than optimism and to view Vivian and Roger's house not as a space where opposition is "subsumed into a common humanity" but as one where opposition is recognized as fundamental to human relations. Finally, these counternarrative forces cue us to read Vivian and Roger's relationship as a metaphor for Erdrich and Dorris's literary collaboration and to read the novel as a narrative of survivance through which Erdrich exposes and resists colonial forms of oppression.

For Vizenor, Native American narratives of survivance represent "an active resistance and repudiation of dominance" ("Aesthetics" 11).²¹⁶ Narratives of survivance actively resist and repudiate settler colonial dominance, first, by revealing the ways in which white narratives about Native life misrepresent indigenous peoples and cultures and, second, by replacing these false representations of Native life with stories that renounce and defy legacies of "deracination" and "victimry" ("Aesthetics" (1). Vizenor refers to false narratives about Native Americans as "simulations of dominance" ("simulations" because they are not representations of "the real") and argues that these simulations produce and reproduce dominant discourses about Natives and Nativeness that are designed to establish and maintain power over Native peoples, lands, and resources (*Manifest* 4). Vizenor calls these dominant discourses "the manifest manners of domination": "Manifest manners are the simulations of dominance; the notions and misnomers that are read as the authentic and sustained as representations of Native

American Indians” (*Manifest* 4-6). In justifying and explaining away white acts of dispossession and displacement, manifest manners function ideologically to legitimize the mission of Manifest Destiny (*Manifest* 4-5).²¹⁷ Narratives of survivance “mediate and undermine” this mission by drawing attention to “the absence of the real in the simulations of dominance” and by establishing a “sense of native presence” in place of this previous absence (*Manifest* 12, 4; “Aesthetics” 1). Just as false white narratives simulate dominance over Native Americans, Native American narratives of survivance simulate acts of survival, resistance, and presence in response to white dominance: “simulations of survivance” are “the simulations that overcome the manifest manners of dominance” (*Manifest* 5-6).

The Crown of Columbus acts as a narrative of survivance in two important ways. The novel shows how false narratives of hospitality operate as the manifest manners by way of which Euro-American settler colonial regimes simulate dominance over Native Americans. The novel also shows how Native Americans can and do use discourses of hospitality to create simulations of survivance. Like Zitkala-Ša, Erdrich and Dorris use tropes of hospitality in their fiction to contest the foundational premises of European and American claims to sovereignty in North America. They deliberately contradict Columbus’s characterizations of Indians as inhospitable parasites by presenting their readers with simulations of the contact period that figure Indians as rightful sovereigns and hospitable hosts. In recovering this suppressed history of Native American hospitality to Europeans and Americans, Erdrich and Dorris restore Native presence to narratives of the contact period. Furthermore, in their characterization of Vivian, Erdrich and Dorris provide us with a modern foil to Columbus—a Native American woman who pointedly

rejects Euro-American claims to sovereignty and practices a model of hospitality that is fundamentally informed by her indigenous heritage.

Erdrich and Dorris counter the negative simulation of the Indian as a parasite largely through the voice of Vivian. In her course on Native American history at Dartmouth, Vivian provides her students with a narrative of the contact period that differs markedly from the dominant Western narrative of which they are already familiar. Vivian's alternative narrative emphasizes the hospitality that indigenous peoples offered to Europeans when they arrived in the New World. In her lectures, she directly challenges Columbus's claim that Native Americans took willingly from Europeans and were unable to give anything of reciprocal value in return. "It was a two-way street," Vivian informs her students. "Indians gave as much as they got, though they rarely received credit" (83). For example, she points out, "A third of the medicines we use today were developed over here long before the fifteenth century. Not to mention the Iroquois concept of representative government or the Equal Rights Amendment" (83). In her own research on Columbus, Vivian chooses to focus on passages from the Admiral's writing in which he describes Native hospitality as open and generous. She notes, for instance, the following passage from the *Las Casas Diario*: "*They soon give what they have for anything that is given to them, without saying that it is too little . . .*" (203-04).²¹⁸ Through accounts of Vivian reading and focusing her attention on scenes of Native American hospitality in *The Diario*, Erdrich and Dorris reread the Las Casas text for us from a Native perspective. They deconstruct Columbus's narrative by pointing out the inconsistencies and contradictions in his descriptions of Native hospitality, and they challenge the presuppositions behind the Admiral's own claims to sovereignty in the New World.

The Crown of Columbus further recovers the suppressed history of prior Indian sovereignty that the Las Casas text disavows by reimagining the moment of contact from the perspectives of Natives. These simulated moments of contact are depicted in the novel as scenes of hospitality in which Indians are figured both as prior sovereigns and as hospitable hosts. In the novel's first chapter, Vivian announces that she is going to "indulge" in a "fantasy" in which she is going to envisage the "fateful event" of New World discovery from the "alternative perspective" of the "discoverees" (24). She goes on to describe a scene on the small island of Guanahani in which native Caribs spot the sails of three Spanish ships on the horizon and "run down to the shore to wave hello" (24-5). It is worth noting that, in summoning this scene, Vivian does not romanticize Native American hospitality by imagining that it is unconditional. Rather, she recognizes the conditional nature of indigenous hospitality by noting that "neighboring Carib rivals" confront one another with "wooden fishing spears" (25).

Erdrich and Dorris take their critique of the Las Casas *Diario* a step further in *The Crown of Columbus* by reimagining within the text of their novel passages from Columbus's original *Diario*. When Vivian arrives in Eleuthera, she discovers that Cobb does, in fact, possess an original copy of Columbus's long-lost *Diario*. This original version contains passages that Las Casas did not include in his transcription, passages that, Vivian finds, often contradict some of Columbus's most well-known accounts of his first encounters with Native Americans. In the middle chapters of their novel, Erdrich and Dorris recreate these recovered passages for us. One passage becomes the centerpiece for Vivian's efforts to achieve political recognition on behalf of all indigenous peoples in North America. In this passage, Columbus describes the king of an island in the West

Indies as “*clearly a King*” and “*a Sovereign the equal of Portugal or France, the Lord of all his dominions*” (204). As Vivian immediately realizes, the discovery of this passage has significant implications for “every Indigenous land claims and repatriation case from Long Island to Hawaii” (204). By recognizing an indigenous king’s sovereignty, the Columbus of Erdrich and Dorris’s recovered *Diario* effectively recognizes the nationhood of “every native tribe” (204). In doing so, he affirms the longstanding claim that “native peoples ha[ve] the full right to govern their own territory” (204). By his own hand, Erdrich and Dorris’s reimagined Columbus posthumously undermines hundreds of years of European and American manifest manners and settler colonial logic.

VII

In the end, despite Vivian’s emphasis on achieving political recognition for “every native tribe and nation” in North America, *The Crown of Columbus* does not attempt to rethink settler colonial narratives of hospitality from the perspective of every North American Indian. In many of its more pointed critiques of settler colonial discourses of hospitality, the novel adopts a decidedly indigenous feminist stance. It often narrates and reads scenes of hospitality and inhospitality between Natives and non-Natives specifically from the perspectives of Native American women. We see this in the novel’s revisionist accounts of the contact period, which draw conspicuous attention to the crucial roles that Native women played in facilitating scenes of hospitality between Natives and early Europeans. Moreover, we see Erdrich and Dorris emphasize the perspectives of indigenous women in the novel’s narration of contemporary scenes of hospitality, especially those that recount encounters between Vivian and Roger.²¹⁹ These

scenes, which expose and resist settler colonial simulations of dominance, constitute Native feminist simulations of survivance.

Vivian herself hints at the idea of anti-colonial counternarratives early in *The Crown of Columbus*. In the novel's first chapter, she pauses at one point to describe in detail José Clemente Orozco's mural *The Epic of American Civilization*, which hangs on the walls of Dartmouth Library. In particular, Vivian expresses admiration for the panel entitled "Gods of the Modern World" (Fig. 2), which depicts a pregnant skeleton woman "in the throes of delivery, her hair on fire, watched by an unimpressed row of emaciated, gray professors" (12).²²⁰ Vivian rejoices in the Mexican painter's bold defiance, describing "Gods of the Modern World" as a "glorious, cathartic, absurd inside joke" (12).



Fig. 2 José Clemente Orozco, "Gods of the Modern World," 1932-1934

She especially enjoys the fact that Dartmouth alumni have “protested” against the mural, claiming that Orozco “bit the academic hand that fed him” by depicting academics in a negative light (12). For Vivian, Orozco’s mural represents a satire of academia’s colonial politics. Vivian identifies with the skeleton woman for persevering despite the indifference of the “gray professors” and with Orozco for using his art to parody those who attempt to colonize his life and work by pretending to offer him the hospitality of patronage. In its use of trickery to expose colonial oppression, “Gods of the Modern World” functions as a kind of subversive anti-colonial counternarrative. For Vivian, the mural is emblematic of what she hopes to achieve as a Native scholar. She even goes as far as to suggest that “Gods of the Modern World” could be “the emblem for Native American Studies” as a “discipline” (12).

A few chapters later, Vivian returns to the subject of anti-colonial counternarratives. In returning to the subject, she focuses her attention specifically on indigenous feminist counternarratives. When discussing her “mixed” ancestral background and her “marginal” position in academia, Vivian talks about how her outsider status as a Native American woman uniquely positions her to critique dominant Euro-American ideologies, especially those ideologies espoused by academics:

I’ve read learned anthropological papers written about people like me. We’re called marginal, as if we exist anywhere but on the center of the page. Our territory is the place for asides, for explanatory notes, for editorial notation. We’re parked on the bleachers looking into the arena, never the main players, but there are bonuses to peripheral vision. Out beyond the normal bounds, you at least know where you’re not. You escape the claustrophobia of belonging, and what

you lack in security you gain by realizing—as those insiders never do—that security is an illusion. (124)

In elaborating on the sense of estrangement that she feels as a Native American woman, Vivian uses tropes of hospitality to describe her “marginal” position in American society as a product of American inhospitality. The inhospitality that Vivian feels as a Native American woman is both physical and metaphorical. She is both physically denied entrance into the dominant spaces of American society and metaphorically estranged from the comforting feeling of “belonging” that “insiders” enjoy. She is, she tells us, doubly a “stranger,” both physically unwelcomed and metaphorically made to feel unwelcome (124).

Yet, as Vivian is clear point out, there can be “bonuses” to experiencing inhospitality. One of the principal bonuses of Vivian’s “peripheral vision” is her recognition that narratives of “security” are merely illusions. This recognition allows Vivian to question and resist her own desire to believe in utopian narratives of hospitality, particularly utopian narratives of hospitality that pretend to offer Native Americans “security” in the form of political recognition. More than anyone else in *The Crown of Columbus*, Vivian comes to understand that acts of hospitality are always conditional. When she observes, in preparation for her first meeting with Cobb, that the “one universal law of culture contact” states that “a kind of reciprocal obligation for decency [goes] into effect once hospitality or kindness [i]s accepted,” she follows up this observation by adding that the “trick [is] to be the first one out of the gate in this exchange” (156). In making this disclaimer, Vivian shows that she understands that hospitality is always already in some way or another a form of conditional “exchange.”

Vivian's skepticism of utopian narratives of hospitality serves her well in the novel. Because of her wariness, she is able to read Cobb as a false host. Determined not to be tricked by Cobb's false hospitality, Vivian stands her ground, refusing to surrender her small but valuable excerpt of the Columbus *Diario* to Cobb for the meager offering that he proffers in the false spirit of a generous gift.²²¹ Vivian has, she tells us, learned from the example of her Native ancestors. Establishing clear parallels between Cobb's relationship to her and the relationship of Europeans to indigenous Americans in prior centuries, Vivian muses, "Take your twenty-four dollars' worth of beads and trinkets, white man, and stuff them. This time I'll keep Manhattan" (194). For readers, Vivian's skepticism should serve as a warning: we should be wary of narratives of security as we make our way through *The Crown of Columbus*. We would be careless readers were we to ignore Vivian's warning.

VIII

Several critics have suggested that *The Crown of Columbus* contains a veiled counternarrative that covertly undermines the novel's apparent turn to liberal multiculturalism.²²² Yet, the truth is that *The Crown of Columbus* communicates its critiques of liberal and settler colonial narratives of hospitality openly and directly. Vivian's undisguised expression of admiration for José Clemente Orozco's anti-colonial art and her equally undisguised distaste for Henry Cobb's false American hospitality are characteristic of a pattern in *The Crown of Columbus* of undisguised resistance to and critique of settler colonial discourses of hospitality. The novel employs transparent and clearly recognizable metaphors to expose and condemn the ways in which settler colonial regimes use liberal discourses of hospitality to justify and disavow colonial oppression.

In the final chapter of *The Crown of Columbus*, we learn from Roger that he and Vivian have worked together to complete Vivian's article on Columbus for the Dartmouth alumni magazine. As a result, the published article, like Erdrich and Dorris's novel, "bears both [authors'] names" (375). Some critics have suggested that Vivian and Roger's writing collaboration should be read as a model for imagining constructive forms of collaboration between Natives and non-Natives. Carla Freccero, Marianne Hirsch, Ivy Schweitzer, and Susanne Zantop, for example, celebrate Vivian and Roger's partnership as a "blueprint" for envisioning "cooperation" between figures of colonization—between, as they put it, "indigenous and invader, colonized and colonizer" (17). Moreover, they interpret the apparent success of Vivian and Roger's fictional partnership as a sign that Erdrich and Dorris achieved a mutually beneficial form of "cooperation" in their own lives as writing partners (18).²²³

However, *The Crown of Columbus* teaches us to be skeptical of precisely this kind of optimistic reading. Beginning with its very first chapters, the novel cues us to read both collaborations—Vivian and Roger's *and* Erdrich and Dorris's—not as inspiring examples of cooperation between figures of colonization but as representative instances of Native survivance in the face of colonial simulations of dominance. As I demonstrate in the remaining sections of this chapter, *The Crown of Columbus* ultimately figures 1) Roger and Dorris as settler colonial hosts who use false discourses of hospitality to disavow their own colonial behavior and 2) Vivian and Erdrich as authors of survivance who counter white simulations of dominance with Native simulations of survivance.

Erdrich and Dorris include the following standard disclaimer at the outset of *The Crown of Columbus*: "All major nonhistorical characters in this book are products of our

imagination. Any resemblance they bear to persons living or dead is pure coincidence.” Yet, the resemblances between the novel’s main characters and its authors are impossible to deny. Vivian and Roger meet at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, where Erdrich and Dorris first met in 1972 and where the couple was living in 1989 when they began work on *The Crown of Columbus*.²²⁴ Vivian is an Assistant Professor in the Native American Studies program at Dartmouth, a program that Dorris founded in 1972 and for which he served as the inaugural Chair (Rawson par. 1). Erdrich and Dorris draw attention to this important connection between Vivian and Dorris by producing within the text of their novel visual reproductions of handwritten notes printed on the official letterhead of the Dartmouth College Native American Studies program (144-45). The reproduction of the Native American Studies letterhead within the text—complete with the Dartmouth insignia and the College’s official address—directs our attention outward beyond the confines of the physical book to the lives of the novel’s creators.

In their characterizations of Vivian and Roger, Erdrich and Dorris invite us to read their novel’s main characters as fictional reproductions of themselves. As Frances Washburn observes, “Any reader who knows anything at all of the personal lives of Erdrich and Dorris would recognize the personalization of the characters. The authors chose to insert themselves directly into the narrative instead of creating entirely different characters that might have unrecognizable touches of their own personalities” (43). M. Annette Jaimes echoes Washburn’s observation, remarking, “It is difficult to read this book and not wonder if the two main characters, Vivian and Roger, as antagonistic lovers, were not created from the actual lives of their creators, at least in part” (59). Despite their novel’s disclaimer, both Erdrich and Dorris freely admitted that they

modeled Vivian and Roger on themselves. In an interview with Allen and Nancy Feyl Chavkin shortly after the publication of *The Crown of Columbus*, Erdrich acknowledged that Vivian is modeled in large part on her. She confessed that many of Vivian's habits, character traits, and personal experiences come directly from her real life. Commenting on Vivian's trip to the Dartmouth library in the novel's first chapter and Vivian's obsession with researching the life of Christopher Columbus, Erdrich confessed, "I did barge around the library fully pregnant, that's true too, and in fact I became almost obsessed with Columbus for several months" (236).²²⁵ Moreover, the resemblances between nonhistorical characters in *The Crown of Columbus* and "real persons living or dead" are not limited to the novel's two main characters. In a joint interview with Vince Passaro in 1991, both Erdrich and Dorris acknowledged that Vivian's son in the novel, Nash, and the couple's daughter, Violet, were imagined as symbolic reconstructions of their own real-life children (165-66).²²⁶

But, of course, Vivian, Roger, Nash, and Violet are not identical reproductions of Erdrich and Dorris and their children. As Washburn points out, Vivian and Roger, in particular, are not only "obvious reproductions" of Erdrich and Dorris; they are also clear "distortions" of the two authors (43). This is especially true in the case of Erdrich and Dorris's creation of Roger as a fictional stand-in for Dorris. On one hand, there are undeniable resemblances between the author and the character. Both are extremely preoccupied with maintaining impeccable public reputations and with achieving mainstream recognition for their academic achievements. So preoccupied is Roger with living up to his own romantic image of himself as a "Byronic media star" that he is driven to perform in every arena of his life (16). In everything he does, Roger asks

himself the same question: “What would they think?” (49). Young and naïve, Vivian is initially taken in by Roger’s pretensions. She is, as she puts it, “fooled” by Roger’s “plumage” (34). But Vivian soon learns that, although Roger is very good at appearing to satisfy her “fantasy” of a man, he is very bad at living that fantasy (34). Ultimately, Roger is less interested in satisfying Vivian’s private fantasy than he is in feeding his own public self-image. In particular, he is determined to achieve mainstream fame for his work on Columbus. And he seems to be well on his way to achieving the fame he so desperately seeks. As Vivian informs us, Roger was “recently featured in *People* magazine brooding on a plaster bust of his subject, Columbus, and poising a Mont Blanc pen against his handsome chin” (16).²²⁷ But Roger’s appearance in *People* seems to have only heightened his fixation with receiving mainstream recognition. Upon learning that an NPR “Morning Edition” special on Columbus does not “mention” his narrative poem about Columbus, Roger grows sullen and irate (148). “Would Roger never get over his mention in the *People* forecasts?” Vivian wonders to herself (148). After thinking about it for a second, Vivian concludes that Roger’s “competitive myopia” will ultimately doom him to a life of extreme emotions: “No matter what the category, no matter how obscure the contest, Roger had to be the superlative, had to win or lose the most” (148).

It is worth commenting on Roger’s preoccupations with maintaining an impeccable reputation and achieving mainstream fame because all accounts suggest that these preoccupation are intended as a critique of Dorris’s own similar preoccupations. Friends and colleagues alike report that Dorris was inordinately concerned with living up to an impracticable public image that he had fabricated for himself. After Dorris’s death in 1997, Mark Anthony Rolo, editor of the Minneapolis-based Native American

newspaper *The Circle* and a friend of the family, explained, “One crucial thing to understand about Michael is that image was, if not everything, then of utmost importance. He carried a great deal of anxiety with him always – that he be seen as a nearly sainted father, that his literary reputation be above tarnish” (Rawson par. 18).²²⁸ Rolo continued, “[Dorris] spent an inordinate amount of energy – you could see it as an obsession – on keeping up what some have called his façade. Near the end, as he was going down his dark road, he may not have had the strength or the will to do it anymore. Michael started falling apart, I believe, when the chasm between his public persona – which was in a sense fictional –and his self in private life couldn’t be reconciled” (par. 19). Like Roger, Dorris also desperately desired and sought out mainstream fame. He achieved the beginnings of this fame in 1989, the year that Erdrich and Dorris began writing *The Crown of Columbus*, when his memoir about raising a child with fetal alcohol syndrome, *The Broken Chord*, received the National Book Critics Circle Award for General Nonfiction. Shortly after the release of *The Broken Chord*, Dorris struck a deal to have the book made into a TV movie with actor Jimmy Smits starring in the lead role. The film was released in September of 1991, only a few months after the release of *The Crown of Columbus*. During the time that Erdrich and Dorris were writing *The Crown of Columbus*, Dorris was heavily involved in the production and promotion of the TV movie. In the months leading up to and following the release of the film, Dorris was apparently so “relentless” in his own “self-promot[ion]” that, according to Métis historian David McNab, he “crossed the line of no return”: “. . . Dorris went way too far, and compounded his own and his family’s troubles by using and publicizing them. He crossed the line of no return when he sold the rights for a made-for-TV movie to Hollywood

immediately after the book was well received, and thereby exposed himself and his family to disastrous public scrutiny” (109).²²⁹

Yet, in addition to creating very clear parallels between Roger and Dorris, Erdrich and Dorris deliberately distinguish Roger from Dorris in important ways. The most obvious of which is that Roger is not Native American. Roger is white, as he reminds us on numerous occasions when recalling with great pride his “WASP” lineage (57, 165). What’s more, Roger is a passionate admirer of Christopher Columbus and fully dedicated to preserving the dominant white narrative of Columbus’s discovery of the New World. In this, he embodies the colonial politics in American academia that Vivian seeks to undermine. Erdrich and Dorris’s decision to give Dorris’s fictional counterpart the name “Roger Williams” complicates the symbolic meaning of his character even further. Roger’s reference to his “cross-hatched New England pedigree dating back to the seventeenth century” is a clear indication that we are supposed to associate him not only with Michael Dorris but also with the historical Roger Williams, the seventeenth-century political and religious leader (57). In addition to founding Rhode Island, establishing The First Baptist Church in America, and arguing fervently on behalf of religious liberty, the historical Williams developed strong and lasting relationships with Native tribes in New England, studied and learned several Native languages, and advocated vehemently against the confiscation of Indian lands.²³⁰

In choosing Roger Williams as Dorris’s historical counterpart, Erdrich and Dorris liken Dorris to a well-known white man who was a friend and supporter of Native Americans and Native American causes. This choice to characterize Dorris indirectly as non-Native could very well have resulted from the fact that Dorris learned at some point

during the late 1980s or early 1990s that he was not, in fact, Native American. Raised in Kentucky by his non-Native mother and two aunts, Dorris had been led to believe since childhood that he descended, on his father's side, from the Modoc tribe and, specifically from the famed Modoc Captain Jack (McNab 110-13). There is no reason to believe that Dorris did not genuinely believe in his Modoc heritage, and it is unclear how or when he discovered the truth about his family history. But we do know that it was during the early 1990s, around the time that *The Crown of Columbus* was published, that he stopped self-identifying publicly as Native American (McNab 110-13). Accordingly, Erdrich and Dorris's decision to identify Dorris with the historical Roger Williams in *The Crown of Columbus* might have been the couple's way of indirectly disclosing Dorris's non-Native heritage while at the same time attempting to reassure friends, colleagues, and the reading public that Dorris was, nevertheless, just as committed to fighting on behalf of Native Americans as he had previously been.

Yet, regardless of whether Erdrich and Dorris were trying to use *The Crown of Columbus* to "out" Dorris as non-Native, one thing is clear: the analogies they establish between Roger and Dorris in the novel associate Dorris with settler colonial behavior. In establishing Roger as an analogy for Dorris and then portraying Roger as representative of a pattern of settler colonial behavior dating back to Columbus, Erdrich and Dorris figure Dorris as a settler colonial figure and reframe the couple's writing relationship as a colonial relationship.

IX

Through the explicit use of self-referential metaphors in *The Crown of Columbus*, Erdrich and Dorris invite us to reexamine the public narrative of their literary

collaboration and to do so through a theoretical lens of hospitality. Revisiting Erdrich and Dorris's public statements about their collaboration, we find that, during the time of their marriage (1981-1997), the couple promoted a utopian narrative about their literary partnership in which they claimed to have achieved a truly collaborative writing exchange. We also find that, in advancing this utopian narrative, Erdrich and Dorris relied heavily on liberal discourses of hospitality. In interviews, book dedications, and other public statements, Erdrich and Dorris drew on liberal ideals of hospitality to describe their writing partnership as a utopian model of liberal hospitality between collaborating authors. Central to this utopian model were Erdrich and Dorris's claims that their collaboration was based on consensus, reciprocal exchange, and mutual recognition.

As early as their first interviews together, Erdrich and Dorris insisted that their writing partnership was based on consensus. Speaking to Laura Coltelli in 1985, Dorris maintained that he and his wife reached "consensus" on "every word" they published: "We go over every word and achieve consensus on every word" (28). This claim of categorical consensus is a refrain that runs throughout the couple's interviews. In almost every one of the more than one hundred joint interviews that Erdrich and Dorris gave during their writing partnership, Dorris volunteered a description of the couple's writing process in which he asserted that he and his wife "planned," "wrote," "revised," "edited," and "reedited" their books "together" on a "word-by-word basis" before sending the final versions to press.²³¹ Erdrich always consented to this characterization of the couple's partnership, often expressing gratitude to her husband for insisting that she place her "trust" in the "collaboration" (Schumacher 178).²³²

Erdrich and Dorris created the “impression” that they were capable of achieving complete consensus in their writing by appearing in interviews to speak in one “single, shared” voice (Passaro 161; Stokes 56). As Michael Schumacher observed after interviewing the couple in 1991, “[T]heir levels of interaction are almost uncanny. They will finish each other’s thoughts, embellish or clarify ideas, banter back and forth—all in a way that makes their answers to a question seem to come from one person” (173-74). To Vince Passaro, who also interviewed the couple in 1991, it appeared that Erdrich and Dorris had, “by mutual consent,” embraced “one voice” and “one vision” (161). Accounts such as these, which romanticized the couple’s interactions in interviews, helped corroborate Dorris’s claim that the writing partnership was completely consensual.

Erdrich and Dorris freely admitted that achieving consensus in their writing did not happen naturally. The secret to their consensual collaboration, Dorris maintained, was their shared willingness to engage in reciprocal exchange during the editing process. In a 1986 interview with Hertha Wong, Dorris described his and his wife’s editing process as a deliberative form of “trading” (“Interview” 36). “We have done things like trade,” he told Wong, “Louise will say, ‘I will get rid of this line, if you will get rid of this line’” (“Interview” 36). By accommodating one another’s editorial preferences, the two authors could, Dorris reported, always find ways to reach consensus (Coltelli 28; Wong “Interview” 36). Linda Karell, whose book on literary collaboration, *Writing Together, Writing Apart*, features a chapter on Erdrich and Dorris, interprets the couple’s professed practice of reciprocal exchange as an indication that the two authors “consciously disperse[d] power and authority” evenly between themselves (36). Dorris encouraged this

impression by regularly contending that there was so much “give and take” and so much “back and forth” between him and Erdrich during the writing and editing stages that it had become impossible to differentiate his “contributions” from hers when reading the final versions of their writing (Burnside & White 107; Stokes 56; Schumacher 177).²³³ In effect, Dorris alleged that the distinction between writer and editor—between the one who *gave* and the one who *gave back*—ceased to exist in his writing partnership with Erdrich. “I guess the point to make is that ours isn’t just an editing relationship,” Dorris told Michael Schumacher in 1991 (177).

Erdrich and Dorris maintained the impression that their collaboration was consensual and reciprocal through public statements of mutual recognition. The two authors demonstrated their commitment to a practice of mutual recognition on the dedication pages to their books, where they repeatedly recognized one another publicly as equal collaborators. In *Love Medicine* (1984), the couple’s first book-length collaboration, Erdrich used the dedication page to recognize her husband as an indispensable collaborator: “I could not have written it this way without Michael Dorris, who gave his own ideas, experiences, and devoted attention to the writing. This book is dedicated to him because he is so much a part of it.”²³⁴ Two years later, Erdrich reiterated her sentiment on the dedication page of *The Beet Queen*: “To Michael / Complice in every word, essential / as air.” Dorris was equally effusive in praising Erdrich publicly. In his first novel, *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* (1987), he wrote, “FOR LOUISE / Companion through every page / through every day / Compeer.” And in *Paper Trail* (1994), a collection of essays, Dorris wrote, “For Louise: Absent by name / from most of these pages / only because / you are so everywhere / within them.”²³⁵

Previous scholars have read these dedications as signs that Erdrich and Dorris were intent on challenging conventional Western notions of authorship. Linda Karell, for example, suggests that Erdrich and Dorris insisted so publicly on the collaborative nature of their writing in order to undermine longstanding practices of authorial “recognition” in the Western tradition (46). Indeed, both Erdrich and Dorris claimed on numerous occasions that they were uninterested in receiving official recognition as individual authors. “Our emphasis is on the books, rather than the attribution,” Dorris maintained, “and as the book develops, we get so involved in the characters and the story that the last thing we think of is whose name is going to be on it” (Schumacher 177). Erdrich echoed her husband’s sentiments, declaring that the couple’s public statements of mutual recognition signified their shared willingness to sacrifice their individual “egos” for the good of the “work” (Schumacher 178). In a 1992 interview, Erdrich explained that she was initially “very wary” of writing collaboratively with Dorris and that consenting to her husband’s wishes required “humbling” herself for the sake of the collaboration (178). In the end, she explained, it was a “sacrifice” she was willing to make: “In a lot of ways, I’d have to sacrifice the ego for the work, because it worked better to go back and forth and not resist changes. It’s not easy—sometimes I want to hang onto something because it makes sense to me, and it seems as though it would be impossible to relinquish that control over it—but I know in my heart that Michael is right. It’s been a humbling experience” (178).²³⁶

Engaging in a public practice of mutual recognition allowed Erdrich and Dorris to market their fiction as authentically “Native American.” Indeed, their repeated claims that the collaboration was based on complete consensus and reciprocal exchange served

the same purpose. By publicly insisting on the collaborative nature of their partnership, Erdrich and Dorris actively encouraged the general impression that their writing practices were inspired by Native oral storytelling traditions. In interviews, Erdrich and Dorris identified as the principal inspiration for their collaboration the oral storytelling practices that they witnessed during their childhoods. “Sitting around listening to our family tell stories has been a more important influence on our work than literary influences,” Erdrich told Hertha Wong in 1986 (“Interview” 38). In a 1991 interview, Erdrich drew explicit connections between her collaborative storytelling practices with Dorris and the oral storytelling traditions of her Native ancestors: “Michael and I form a story between ourselves when talking. That’s our connection to the oral history. When we make up a story, we’re talking,” she added in a 1991 interview (176). In drawing these connections to Native oral storytelling traditions, Erdrich and Dorris succeeded in convincing literary critics that their collaboration and the fiction produced by it were representative of “Native American” values and traditions (Wong “Interview” 36; Coltelli 21-2).²³⁷

Furthermore, in claiming that their collaboration drew on Native oral storytelling traditions, Erdrich and Dorris also benefited from associating their writing partnership with narrative practices that are regarded by many as “democratic” in principle and practice (Curteis; Weaver 38-40; Roots 17-9; Nabokov 47-48).²³⁸ The couple’s insistence that their writing partnership was completely consensual, entirely reciprocal, and mutually rewarding fed into and fed off romanticized notions of Native oral storytelling as a collective, inclusive, and egalitarian process. In particular, Dorris’s claim that there was equal “give” and “take” in the collaboration echoed liberal democratic and Native ideals of shared sovereignty.²³⁹ If both authors did, in fact, “give” and “take” in equal

measure, then neither author was more or less sovereign than the other. If neither author was more or less sovereign, then the collaboration was devoid of antagonism. It is this denial of antagonism altogether that constitutes the liberal democratic character of Erdrich and Dorris's utopian model of authorial collaboration.

Erdrich and Dorris's utopian model of authorial collaboration offers an opportunity to rethink literary forms of hospitality. Traditional formulations of literary hospitality figure the author as host and the reader as guest, or vice versa. Theorists who figure the author as host privilege the author as sovereign in the hospitality relationship and imagine the text as a site of hospitality from and into which the author "invites" the reader (Still *Derrida* 84).²⁴⁰ These theorists envision the relationship between author and reader as one in which the author "begins as host" (Haswell & Haswell 13). In this sense, they view the interaction between author and reader as a temporal relationship that privileges the author's prior sovereignty. On the other hand, theorists who figure the reader as host view the relationship between author and reader as one in which the reader proffers hospitality to or withholds hospitality from the author or the text, or both (Attridge; Hillis Miller; Eco; Haswell & Haswell; Still *Derrida*). Here, the reader is a host who welcomes and affirms the originality, singularity, and potentiality of the author and/or text (Attridge 80; Haswell & Haswell 4-9).

Erdrich and Dorris's utopian model of literary collaboration envisions a reciprocal relationship in which co-authors offer and receive hospitality to and from one another *before* extending hospitality to the reader. On one hand, this model of collaborative authorial hospitality serves to remind us of the interchangeable nature of the host-guest relationship. Erdrich and Dorris's comments about their collaboration suggested that they

believed both authoring and editing involved giving and receiving. Sharing equally in the “give” and “take” of authoring and editing, the co-authors of Erdrich and Dorris’s utopian model serve equally as host and guest. The author gives his or her writing to the editor and then receives feedback in return. Likewise, the editor gives feedback in exchange for receiving the author’s writing. By describing both authoring and editing as processes that include giving and taking, Erdrich and Dorris claimed to privilege authoring and editing as equally valuable to their collaboration. In a collaboration in which both authors give and take hospitality in an ongoing reciprocal exchange, neither author is privileged as sovereign, and both authors willingly perform and recognize their equal values as hosts and guests.

Yet, Erdrich and Dorris’s model of reciprocal authorial collaboration also serves to remind us of the dangers of utopian models of hospitality that attempt to deny the inherently antagonistic nature of the host-guest relationship. In insisting that their writing partnership was completely devoid of antagonism, Erdrich and Dorris claimed to have achieved a non-hierarchical form of authorial hospitality. By imagining themselves as equal sovereigns, Erdrich and Dorris denied the existence of any distinction between host and guest in their writing relationship. This was especially the case when it came to Dorris’s claim that there was so much “give and take” and so much “back and forth” during the writing and editing processes that it had become impossible to differentiate between his and Erdrich’s contributions (Burnside & White 107; Stokes 56; Schumacher 177). In making this claim, Dorris attempted to deny the temporal nature of the host-guest relationship. He tried to deny Erdrich any claim to prior sovereignty by publicly rejecting the possibility that she had herself written the original drafts of her fiction. He tried to

erase Erdrich's host status by pretending that she did not have any prior claim to the products of their collaboration.

X

New details have emerged in the past few years about the Erdrich-Dorris collaboration that directly undermine the couple's utopian narrative about their partnership. These new details suggest that Erdrich and Dorris's collaboration was defined not by consensus, reciprocal exchange, or mutual recognition but, instead, by repression and disavowal. Revisiting Erdrich and Dorris's public statements about the partnership with these new details in mind, we find that the couple's public narrative about their collaboration functioned as a simulation of colonial dominance through which Dorris parasited off his wife's talents and labor by grossly misrepresenting his contributions as an editor. Understanding how and why Dorris portrayed his collaboration with Erdrich as a liberal democratic model of hospitality helps us better understand the colonial politics of *The Crown of Columbus* and the important role that liberal narratives of hospitality play in justifying and disavowing various forms of colonial oppression.

Erdrich has only recently opened up about her complicated relationship with Dorris. After more than twenty years of relative silence on the collaboration, Erdrich admitted in a 2010 interview with *The Paris Review* that the utopian "narrative" of her collaboration with Dorris was a fabrication that her husband "controlled" while he was living and that she helped perpetuate in a futile attempt to make him "happy" (158). "I would have loved for Michael to have had his own life as a writer and not covet my life as a writer. But he couldn't help himself," Erdrich explained in *The Paris Review* interview. "I wanted to make him happy, you know. He was the kind of person whom

people want to make happy. People did this all the time, they tried to make him happy, but there was a deep impossibility within him and he couldn't really be happy" (158). In enabling Dorris's covetousness, Erdrich became the reluctant host to her husband's parasitism. Unable to be "happy alone," Dorris clung to and fed off his wife's successes, gaining public recognition by falsely claiming to play an integral role in the production of her fiction (158).²⁴¹ In 2012, Erdrich acknowledged the truth that Dorris was so desperate to deny while he was living—that the couple's writing partnership was, despite all of Dorris's claims to the contrary, very much like a traditional editing relationship. Asked by Terry Tazioli to explain how writing "on her own" is different from writing with Dorris, Erdrich answered simply, "It's not any different. I wrote it all. . . . So, collaborating wasn't like . . . he would write a page and I would write a page. It was more that I had someone who gave me very, very wonderful editorial advice" (qtd. in Kurup 5).²⁴²

The first signs of Dorris's covetousness came in 1985 when he took over as the literary agent for *Love Medicine*. As Erdrich recalled in *The Paris Review* interview, "After [*Love Medicine*] won an award and *The Beet Queen* was published, we went to New York for an interview with *The New York Times*. I was walking out the door to meet the interviewer, and I noticed that he was dressed up, too. So I asked him where he was going. He said, 'I'm going to be in the interview.'" And I said, "No, they asked me." And he said, "What do you mean—I can't come?" So it was both of us from then on. As long as he was content with being in on the interview and saying what he needed to say, I wasn't that unhappy. (159-60)

Why did Erdrich allow Dorris to intrude so aggressively into her public life and to claim so much influence over her work? Was it simply her desire to make her husband “happy”? Or were there other pressures at play? In what specific ways did Dorris “control” the narrative of the collaboration? What narrative strategies did the couple use when talking about the collaboration to disguise and disavow Dorris’s parasitism? And, finally, what role did Erdrich play in contributing to Dorris’s false narrative?

Erdrich and Dorris’s claim that they reached complete consensus in their writing was a pretense designed to disguise the extent to which the couple’s working relationship was fundamentally informed by a power imbalance. As Linda Karell observes in *Writing Together, Writing Apart*, despite Erdrich and Dorris’s insistence that neither author possessed more “power” in the collaboration, the truth was that the partnership was defined by imbalances of “power” at “every level” (47). Dorris compensated for the fact that Erdrich was a more productive and successful writer of fiction by assuming control over the narrative of their collaboration. Looking back over Erdrich and Dorris’s joint interviews, it is clear that Dorris was the dominant speaker in the couple’s interactions with the public. As early as 1986, Dan Cryer found Dorris’s domineering presence in the relationship strange and off-putting: “Sit down for an interview with novelist Louise Erdrich, and you will find another writer by her side, her husband, Michael Dorris. Ask her a question, and he is as likely to answer as she is. Since Erdrich has written the current best-selling novel *The Beet Queen* and the award-winning *Love Medicine* of two years ago, she’s been getting lots of requests for interviews. And they are giving them” (80). Five years later, Vince Passaro made similar observations, noting the obsessive control that Dorris maintained over the couple’s public statements: “Dorris is the talker,

the spokesman for the collaboration. . . . he speaks energetically, in long, articulate sentences, and is not above jumping in when Erdrich is talking, to clarify or expand. It is not unusual for a magazine editor working on one of Erdrich's pieces to speak primarily to Dorris" (163). Through his charismatic but forceful personality and his careful manipulation of Erdrich's public comments, Dorris was able to suppress his wife's objections and silence her dissenting voice.

Both Erdrich and Dorris downplayed Dorris's control over the couple's narrative by regularly employing first-person-plural point of view when talking about the collaboration. The couple's use of first-person-plural point of view, or "we" narration, was the primary narrative strategy through which they portrayed their partnership as a utopian form of collaborative authorial hospitality. When answering questions in joint interviews, Erdrich and Dorris almost always spoke about their collaboration in collective terms and rarely spoke specifically about their own individual experiences with or feelings about the partnership. Geoffrey Stokes wondered about the couple's use of "we" narration early in the collaboration, shortly after the publication of *The Beet Queen*. After interviewing Erdrich and Dorris for *The Village Voice Literary Supplement*, Stokes observed:

What's odd about Erdrich and Dorris is the ease of agreement they described, and a couple of disquieting possibilities need to be considered. First, one wonders, without quite asking, whether Dorris, nine years older, is a sort of Svengali; if they are Erdrich's drafts, after all, it is always she who has to yield. When I'd called her publisher to set up the interview, I was told, "You'll have to talk to Michael Dorris. He's her manager." The role, even the word, is unusual in the

context of literary writing. But as I discovered when I replayed the tape, whenever he left the room—as he did a couple of times for phone calls—she shifted . . . from “we” to “I.” Could there be some *Star Is Born* trip playing out, as the young overnight sensation at once protects and inflates her older spouse? (57)

Stokes ultimately dismissed his suspicions, reasoning that Erdrich’s female characters “radiate too much power for their creator to be involved in Judy Gardlandish self-immolation” (57). But, it turns out, Stokes’s observation that Erdrich appeared to use “we” narration reluctantly and for the benefit of Dorris was entirely accurate.

In employing first-person-plural point of view to talk about their collaboration, Erdrich and Dorris utilized a narrative strategy that literary scholars traditionally associate with subversive expressions of collective solidarity.²⁴³ Narratologist Brian Richardson argues that the “vast majority” of “we” texts “valorize collective identity” and do so with the intention of establishing an “egalitarian” sense of community in opposition to repressive regimes (Unnatural 50-6). In accordance with Richardson’s thinking, studies of “we” narration in recent years have focused attention on examples in which authors from marginalized groups have used first-person-plural point of view to expose and resist various forms of oppression. In particular, scholars have concentrated on examples from postcolonial, feminist, and indigenous literatures. In theorizing the use of “we” narration in postcolonial fiction, Richardson and others have pointed to Indian, Caribbean, and African literatures, arguing that authors from these colonized lands have repeatedly utilized first-person-plural narration as a way of “forging a post-colonial narrative voice” (Richardson *Analyzing World 4*).²⁴⁴ Other scholars have noted the frequency of “we” narration in gynocentric fiction, suggesting that feminist authors have

used the narrative strategy to advocate and model “collective action” in response to patriarchal regimes (Richardson *Unnatural* 50).²⁴⁵

A number of recent scholars have also emphasized the use of “we” narration in indigenous literatures, especially Native American literatures. For example, Hertha Wong has celebrated first-person-plural narration in Native American women’s autobiographies, showing how Indian women use “we” narration to “(re)-construct” Native female subjectivities (“First Person” 176-77). In several studies of “we” narration in Native American fiction, Erdrich has been cited as a representative example of a Native writer who employs the first-person-plural point of view to communicate the importance of belonging to a tribal community. Fabienne Quennet has suggested that Erdrich’s use of “we” narration in *Tracks* “functions as a reminder that belonging to a family and to the community of the tribe is of paramount importance for Native American people” (61). Richardson echoes Quennet’s reading of *Tracks*, arguing that “we” narration in Erdrich’s novel establishes a “traditional, collective sensibility” that resists “the encroaching world of the white people” (*Unnatural* 51-2).²⁴⁶

However, despite the widespread critical focus on authors who use “we” narration to establish communal voices in opposition to colonial and/or patriarchal regimes, the “we” narration that we see on display in Erdrich and Dorris’s public statements about their writing collaboration reveals how first-person-plural narration can also be used as a strategy for simulating colonial dominance by disguising oppression and containing opposition.²⁴⁷ Edward Said hinted at the oppressive force of “we” narration years ago when he noted in *Orientalism* that colonial discourse is centrally informed by its repeated insistence on distinguishing between the familiar “we” of the Occident and the foreign

“them” of the Orient (3, 43-4).²⁴⁸ As Said demonstrates through his readings of colonial discourse, the ideological power of “we” narration results from the fact that so many Western and Eastern writers “accept” the “basic distinction” between “we” and “them” and use this distinction as a “starting point” for describing colonial encounters (2).²⁴⁹ In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said again points to the oppressive power of “we” narration in colonial discourse when he talks about narratives of “collaboration” between “natives” and “representatives of imperialism” (263-64). These narratives of collaboration, which describe scenes of cooperation between West and East, still maintain a fundamental distinction between “we” and “them.” Propagated not only by Western writers but also by Eastern “intellectuals,” “artists,” and “journalists,” narratives of collaboration function, Said tells us, as “passive” forms of colonial accommodation that ultimately help “preserve” the “divide between native and Westerner” (263-64).²⁵⁰

The pretense of collaboration that Said sees at play in colonial examples of “we” narration is the driving force behind Erdrich and Dorris’s use of first-person-plural point of view in their public accounts of their writing partnership. For Erdrich and Dorris, “we” narration functioned as a strategy of dominance and containment through which Dorris silenced Erdrich’s reservations about the collaboration and disavowed important differences between the two writers. By repeatedly insisting that they represented one collaborative unit, Erdrich and Dorris effectively denied the significant ways in which their writing was informed by their own individual experiences and perspectives. The most important differences that the couple disavowed in their public comments about their collaboration were their differences in sex and gender. In *Writing Together, Writing Apart*, Linda Karell concludes that the intensely collaborative nature of Erdrich and

Dorris's writing partnership made it virtually impossible to determine if the couple's working relationship was "gendered in any simple or biographical way" (44). Not surprisingly, Dorris asserted on numerous occasions that sex and gender played no role in determining how he and his wife composed their books or later talked about them. "As it turns out," Dorris reported to Daniel Bourne in 1996, "[Louise] writes often in male voices and I in female voices, and neither of us have exerted our sort of 'insider gender knowledge' to date. We make lots of other very critical remarks about what works and what doesn't work, but somehow writing across gender isn't our big problem" (par. 9). Identifying himself as a "feminist," Dorris explained that his unique upbringing, raised by and around women, allowed him to understand, empathize with, and narrate the lives of women: "I was raised by women, by strong women—a mother, three aunts, two grandmothers. I heard their versions of the world much more clearly and consistently than I heard anybody else's version. So if I have a point of view to draw on other than myself, it's a woman's point of view" (Chavkin & Chavkin "An Interview With Michael Dorris" 206; Wong 42).

However, Erdrich's recent revelations about the collaboration suggest that issues of sex and gender were always a determining factor in Erdrich and Dorris's writing and in how the couple talked about their partnership. In her 2010 interview with *The Paris Review*, Erdrich explained why she let Dorris accompany her to the *Love Medicine* interview with *The New York Times* twenty-five years earlier: "I was tired. *Love Medicine* and *Jacklight* were published in 1984, and I had a baby. *The Beet Queen* was published in 1985, and I bore my second daughter in that year. What kind of woman can do that? A tired woman who lets her husband do the talking because she has the two best things—

the babies and the writing” (160). Indications that Dorris used “we” narration as a strategy for both disavowing and exploiting his and Erdrich’s sexual and gender differences can be observed as far back as the couple’s earliest interviews together. Reading over a transcript of the couple’s interview with Laura Coltelli in 1985, one finds that Dorris spends the first part of the interview describing uninterruptedly his and Erdrich’s collaborative “storytelling technique” (20). Employing first-person-plural point of view while recounting the composition of Erdrich’s award-winning short story “The World’s Greatest Fisherman” and the composition of her first novel, *Love Medicine*, Dorris claims equal responsibility for the creation of his wife’s work:

. . . there was a contest for the Nelson Algren Award for which they solicited stories of some five thousand or so words. We got the announcement that it was due by the fifteenth of January, and this was the first of January, and we just got back from vacation, and so we started talking about it and out of that grew “The World’s Greatest Fisherman,” the opening story of the novel *Love Medicine*, and we sent it off and thought of all the things that were wrong with it and what we would revise when it came back, and lo and behold, it won that contest. There were thousands of entries. We said, if it’s that good maybe we ought to think about expanding this and telling that same story because there are many stories in that story, from other points of view. And that expanded to developing the characters of Nector and Marie and Lulu and on and on. At first it was, I think, a series of stories, many of which were published independently, and then in the last several drafts we went back and tied them together. (20-1)

Following this account, Dorris goes on to describe—once again, employing “we” narration—the composition of Erdrich’s second and third novels, *The Beet Queen* and *Tracks*. Unwilling to grant Erdrich singular ownership over these novels, Dorris refers to them instead as “the next book” and “the third book” in their collaboration: “. . . the next book, which is titled *The Beet Queen* . . . And then *Tracks*, which is the third book . . .” (21). Finally, after having firmly established himself as an equal partner in his wife’s creations, Dorris turns to Erdrich, who, it turns out, has been absent from the interview up to this point because she has been (the transcript now tells us in square brackets) “feeding the baby,” and says, “Now you can speak for yourself” (22). Tired, burdened with the responsibility of being the primary caretaker for her children, and clearly overwhelmed by what Frances Washburn would later characterize as Dorris’s “smothering influence,” Erdrich did not then take advantage of what we can only assume was Dorris’s less-than-genuine prompting for self-expression (Washburn 51). Years later, however, Erdrich would clarify that Dorris served strictly as an “editor” on these early projects and did not participate in the production of the writing.²⁵¹ She would, for example, later recall that she wrote “The World’s Greatest Fisherman” by herself one day after secluding herself in a room in the couple’s New Hampshire home (Grantham 13).²⁵²

At other times, Dorris used “we” narration to claim legitimacy as a “feminist” writer. In a 1986 interview with Hertha Wong, he used first-person-plural point of view as a cover for making radical claims about his ability to write from the first-person perspective of a woman. Speaking about the composition of his first novel, *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*, Dorris made the following argument for why the novel should be viewed as a “feminist” text: “We do a risky thing in this book. I describe giving birth from a first-

person perspective. Those who have read it so far like it, but somebody said, ‘I don’t know whether they’ll ever sell it at a feminist bookstore in San Francisco.’ [Laughter.] I hope they do because I participated closely in the birth of two of my daughters as a *helper*, and then I delivered a baby when I was doing field work. And I’ve talked to a lot of women about their experience of delivery” (42). Here, Dorris uses the first-person-plural “We” at the outset of his comments as a cover for making first-person-singular claims about his intimate familiarity with the experience of giving birth. Just as he did in the Coltelli interview a year earlier, Dorris uses “we” narration here at a time when Erdrich is not present to contradict him. At the point in the interview when Dorris makes these claims, Erdrich has, we are told, stepped away to “pick up the kids” (40). In the Coltelli interview, Dorris used “we” narration (and the occasion of Erdrich’s absence) to misrepresent his role in producing her fiction. In the Wong interview, he used “we” narration (and the occasion of Erdrich’s absence) to misrepresent his own fiction as feminist. In both cases, it is worth mentioning, Erdrich is absent because she is busy being a mother to the couple’s children.

In controlling the couple’s narrative about their collaboration and misrepresenting his role in producing Erdrich’s fiction, Dorris acted as a colonial figure. He colonized both the couple’s narrative about their collaboration and the fiction that Erdrich produced. In their book *Hospitality and Authoring*, Richard and Janis Haswell draw on J. Hillis Miller’s notion of the “host critic” to put forward a theory of “colonial criticism.”²⁵³ Reframing Hillis Miller’s well-known criticism of deconstruction (1977) as a criticism of colonial discourse, Haswell and Haswell refigure the deconstructive reader as a “colonial critic” who “invades the text and takes control of it as host” (67). Rather

than receive the text with reciprocal hospitality, the colonial critic “betrays” the hospitality shown by the author by “deconstructing,” “transforming,” and “rewriting” the text (9). In “den[ying] the author’s presence” and “totaliz[ing] the author’s singular vision,” the colonial critic “repeats the gestures of first world domination of third world resources” (68). By “colonizing” the text and assuming the sovereign role of host, the colonial critic upsets the balance of relations that makes reciprocal hospitality between author and reader possible: “The guest-reader wrests control of the text from the author and assumes the role of host-critic. Initially foreign and guest, the critic cannibalizes the writer, once native and host. No reciprocal exchange ensues” (8-9).

Dorris acted as a colonial critic with respect to Erdrich by publicly declaring equal sovereignty over her work. He betrayed her hospitality by misrepresenting the role he played in producing the fiction she shared with him. He denied Erdrich’s claim to singular host status by attempting to disavow the truth of her prior sovereignty over her own work. Rather than accept and acknowledge his secondary role as a guest of Erdrich’s hospitality, Dorris exercised control over Erdrich by colonizing the products of her labor. In using “we” narration to disavow the differential nature of their partnership, Erdrich and Dorris employed first-person-plural point of view to very different effect than we commonly see in colonial discourse. Whereas traditional colonial “we” narratives establish a familiar “we” in opposition to a foreign “them,” Erdrich and Dorris created a collaborative “we” with no oppositional “them.” By imagining themselves as equal sovereigns, Erdrich and Dorris imagined a model of collaborative authorial hospitality in which there was no distinction between host and guest.²⁵⁴

For Erdrich, *The Crown of Columbus* provided an opportunity to separate herself creatively from Dorris. In *The Paris Review* interview, she explained, “So in agreeing to write *The Crown of Columbus* I really made a deal, at least in my thoughts, that if we wrote this one book together, then we could openly work separately—as we always did in truth, of course” (158). Erdrich came up with the “idea” for the novel, conducted the necessary historical research, and wrote the first twenty pages herself. Then, she told Dorris that they could divide up the novel into parts and each contribute their own original writing to create their first “truly” collaborative work, one that would feature both of their names on the cover (158; Trueheart 118).²⁵⁵ Erdrich “hoped” this would appease her husband and make him feel that she had now given him “enough,” that it would no longer be necessary for him to continue coveting what she had (158).

Instead, *The Crown of Columbus* became the ideal model of collaboration for Dorris. Rather than satiate or defuse Dorris’s need to parasite off his wife’s work, the new kind of partnership only intensified this need: “. . . it became the beginning of what he wanted for every book. When he told me he wanted both of our names on every book now, something in me—the writer, I guess—couldn’t bear it any longer and that was the beginning of the long ending” (158-59). Eventually, Erdrich found that Dorris had so “infected” both her writing and her life that she could no longer identify her own face in the mirror: “I looked into the mirror and I saw Michael” (160). Desperate to reclaim something of her own, something that Dorris could not contaminate, Erdrich began writing “in secret,” composing a novel that she “didn’t show him” (160). No longer willing to be host to her husband’s parasitic needs, Erdrich managed to separate herself from Dorris both creatively and romantically in 1995 (Washburn 51).²⁵⁶ But not before

collaborating with Dorris to write *The Crown of Columbus*, a novel that, in its self-referential critique of the couple's collaboration, directly undermines Erdrich and Dorris's utopian narrative of the partnership.

The Crown of Columbus does not merely reframe the Erdrich-Dorris collaboration as a colonial relationship. It also restores Erdrich's privileged status as the host-author in the relationship through its deliberate characterization of Vivian as a provider of hospitality and its use of a dialogic narrative structure that privileges Vivian's indigenous female voice. In the process, the novel exposes the couple's public narrative about their collaboration as a simulation of dominance designed to repress the real truth about the partnership and replaces this false narrative with a new simulation of survivance in the form of Vivian's story.

Although Vivian willingly accepts the role of guest in her interactions with Henry Cobb, Erdrich and Dorris more often than not figure her as a host in scenes of hospitality. In Chapter 5, for example, Vivian plays "host" when she invites her students to her home for an end-of-the-semester dinner (79). In fact, it is while hosting her students at her home that she delivers her lecture on the history of Native American hospitality to Europeans and Americans since Columbus (81-4). In this scene of hospitality, Vivian performs for her students the Native hospitality that her revisionist account of the contact period attempts to recover. In performing the role of host for her students, Vivian models a cultural practice of hospitality that is cooperative and participatory. The end-of-the-semester dinner she hosts is a modern-day "potluck," a give-and-take-style feast to which each of her students "contributes" a dish (79-81). In hosting a potluck, Vivian maintains her sovereign status while distributing the responsibilities for providing and receiving

hospitality among her students. In the tradition of the Northwestern American Indian *potlatch*, Vivian uses the potluck to affirm communal ties by reminding her students of their social obligations to one another.²⁵⁷

In figuring Vivian as a host, Erdrich and Dorris are deliberate in figuring her as a female host. In no way is this more apparent than in their descriptions of Vivian as a provider of hospitality to Violet. Erdrich and Dorris are sure to remind us on numerous occasions that Vivian can provide hospitality to her daughter in ways that only a woman can. It is no accident that Erdrich and Dorris focus so much attention early in the novel on Vivian's pregnant body or that, after Vivian gives birth to Violet, they include so many scenes in which she breastfeeds her daughter. In emphasizing the "nourishment" that Vivian provides Violet both before and after birth, Erdrich and Dorris figure the female body as the original home and source of hospitality (225).²⁵⁸ As Vivian herself observes, her body, unlike Roger's, is capable of both "incubating" Violet and providing her with "sustenance" (225). Whereas Roger is limited in his ability to provide hospitality by his "maleness," Vivian is "extended" by her femaleness (225). The hospitality that Vivian provides her daughter makes her feel like "more than just" herself; it makes possible an intimacy between her and Violet that Roger cannot know (225). Even Roger acknowledges as much when he grudgingly admits that Vivian is more "biologically equipped" than he to care for their daughter (225).

Erdrich and Dorris are just as deliberate in figuring Vivian as a Native American host. Like Zitkala-Ša, Vivian embraces a model of hospitality that is largely informed by the life experiences and cultural values of Native women. Centrally involved in forming Vivian's viewpoints on and practices of hospitality is her Navajo grandmother Angeline,

who lives with her and helps her raise Nash. More than any other character in *The Crown of Columbus*, Angeline plays a role in helping Vivian maintain her cultural ties to her Native ancestors. One of the many ways in which Angeline does this is by serving as a link between traditional Navajo cultural practices of hospitality and Vivian's own modern-day practices. In her role as a foil to Roger, Angeline counters Roger's white male model of hospitality with a matriarchal model informed by her Navajo heritage. Roger criticizes Angeline for not being "hospitable" to him when he comes to visit, but Roger's expectations of how he should be treated in Vivian's home are, as we have seen, informed by his belief that his maleness and "cross-hatched New England pedigree" afford him certain privileges (180, 57). The idea that "where [Angeline] comes from, the woman is the king" is too much for Roger to accept (58). Because of his unwillingness to try to understand Angeline or the model of hospitality that she practices, Roger interprets her behavior toward him as "positively hostile" (58). Nevertheless, the example of hospitality that Angeline embodies and that Vivian emulates requires readers of *The Crown of Columbus* to question Roger's settler colonial model and the racist and gendered assumptions upon which it is based.

In celebrating the ending of *The Crown of Columbus*, a number of critics have praised Erdrich and Dorris for creating a Native female protagonist who, they argue, establishes a strong, authoritative voice in the novel's final chapters. Teresa Cid, who applauds the novel's ending as an "affirmation" of multicultural "inclusion," maintains that it is not until the final scenes of *The Crown of Columbus* that Vivian "finally conquers the right to speak" (347).²⁵⁹ According to Cid, Vivian gains the necessary self-confidence to speak in the novel's final chapters by learning to overcome cultural

“boundaries” that attempt to “circumscribe” her use of “language” (347). The corresponding result of Vivian’s newly discovered “authoritative voice” is, Cid tells us, Roger’s sudden willingness in the novel’s final scenes to “listen” to Vivian “for the first time” (347).

Yet, readings such as these, which contend that Vivian suddenly acquires an authoritative voice in the novel’s final chapters, fail to account for the fact that Vivian confidently and authoritatively claims and exercises her “right to speak” on numerous occasions before the end of *The Crown of Columbus*. In fact, if there is anything that is clear about Vivian as a character, it is that she is anything but reticent to speak. In her conversations with Roger, Cobb, and others, she speaks with unmistakable confidence and authority, expressing her opinions openly and with self-possession. One might even say that Vivian’s first encounter with Roger in the Dartmouth library, after which she is left wishing that she had said less, suggests that she could actually benefit from showing more restraint in her speech (34-43).

Cid’s reading of *The Crown of Columbus* also fails to account for the fact that, beginning with the novel’s very first chapter, Erdrich and Dorris indicate Vivian’s willingness and ability to speak confidently and authoritatively through her first-person narration. Vivian’s narration is candid and assertive. She describes events with self-assurance and shares her feelings willingly. Her first-person narrative often reads like a confession, like it is a means through which she unburdens herself of her most private thoughts, fears, and desires.

Erdrich and Dorris use dialogic narration in *The Crown of Columbus* to figure Vivian and, by extension, Erdrich as indigenous female hosts. One cannot help but note

the stark differences between the styles of narration employed by Vivian and Roger in *The Crown of Columbus* and the style of narration employed by Erdrich and Dorris in describing their writing collaboration. In the novel, Vivian and Roger each use first-person narration to speak on behalf of themselves. They recount events from their own individual perspectives and express their own individual opinions. Roger, like Vivian, is forthcoming in his narration, sharing his most intimate thoughts and feelings, regardless of how arrogant, xenophobic, or callous they sound. In contrast to Vivian and Roger, Erdrich and Dorris use first-person-plural narration to speak as one collective unit. They use the cover of “we” to deny their own individual differences and to repress their differences of opinion. Whereas the dialogic narration of the novel enables open communication, the “we” narration of Erdrich and Dorris’s public discourse enables repression. If Vivian and Roger are symbolic representations of Erdrich and Dorris, then we can read Vivian and Roger’s first-person narratives as symbolic representations of their own first-person voices. In other words, the dialogic narration of the novel enables Erdrich and Dorris to speak to one another through the first-person voices of their characters and to engage in the dialogue that “we” narration prohibits. Through the voices of their characters, Erdrich and Dorris address their own individual concerns about their collaboration and explore the ways in which a colonial politics of recognition fundamentally informs their public discourse about their collaboration.

Yet, it would be a mistake to read Vivian and Roger’s first-person narratives as a simple back-and-forth dialogue between Erdrich and Dorris. Other critics have failed to fully understand the implications of the novel’s dialogic narrative structure because they have misunderstood the text’s composition. David McNab, for example, assumes

incorrectly that Erdrich and Dorris divided up composition of the novel by narrator. He assumes that Erdrich wrote the passages narrated by Vivian and that Dorris wrote the passages narrated by Roger.²⁶⁰ Based on this presumption, McNab concludes that Dorris inhabits the voice of a “white” man in the novel and Erdrich the voice of a Native American woman (112). However, Erdrich has made clear that she and Dorris did not compose the novel in this way. Instead, the two authors wrote *The Crown of Columbus* episodically, handing the text off to one another between and sometimes in the middle of scenes. In a 1993 interview, Erdrich explained that she and Dorris did not “plan” the “plot” of *The Crown of Columbus* “completely in advance” and would often “create a difficult situation for a character” and then hand the text over to the other author to “figure out what should come next” (Chavkin 225). In taking this approach to the composition of *The Crown of Columbus*, Erdrich and Dorris shared the work of writing from the perspectives of both of the novel’s main characters. The result was that both authors gave voice not only to their own fictional counterparts but also to the fictional counterparts of one another. This approach to composing the novel enabled Erdrich and Dorris to inhabit the symbolic voices of one another and, in the process, to reflect in those voices the words and sentiments that they wished they could hear from one another. In this sense, *The Crown of Columbus* offered Erdrich and Dorris a space for working through the challenges they faced as collaborators and for imagining a more honest and constructive working relationship. Through the characters of Vivian and Roger, who ultimately achieve a more balanced partnership, Erdrich and Dorris envisioned a model for repairing their own writing collaboration.

With this in mind, one cannot help but read Vivian and Roger's writing collaboration in the final chapters of the novel as a metafictional commentary on Erdrich and Dorris's own composition of *The Crown of Columbus*. Like Erdrich, who wrote the first twenty pages of *The Crown of Columbus* before involving Dorris in the novel's composition, Vivian begins writing the Columbus article before agreeing to collaborate with Roger. Like Dorris, Roger claims co-ownership over his partner's writing and achieves public recognition for it by having his name added to the byline. Like Dorris, in other words, Roger uses a pretense of collaboration to disavow his own colonial behavior. At the same time, it is also possible to read Vivian and Roger's writing collaboration as a practical act of authorial hospitality on Vivian's part. Vivian's willingness to write collaboratively with Roger and to include his name in the author byline for the article does not necessarily mean that she surrenders her authorial sovereignty or that Roger colonizes her scholarship. Vivian's invitation to collaborate with Roger could be an act of hospitality that serves to affirm Vivian's sovereignty as an author and her authority as a scholar. In this way, extending hospitality to Roger could be Vivian's way of establishing a new model of collaboration for the couple—a model that begins with the recognition, at least privately, that Vivian is the host, the one who has the power to offer hospitality.

Recognizing Vivian as a host in her writing collaboration with Roger likewise involves recognizing Erdrich as a host in her writing collaboration with Dorris. Just as Vivian's invitation of authorial hospitality to Roger affirms her status as host, Erdrich's invitation to write *The Crown of Columbus* with Dorris affirmed her power in the couple's relationship. In agreeing to include Dorris's name on the byline, Erdrich

relegated “we” to the novel’s title page while using Vivian’s first-person narration to voice a narrative of survivance in opposition to colonial simulations of dominance. Through the text of *The Crown of Columbus*, Erdrich externalized and overcame the colonial trauma that the couple’s public narrative sought to repress and disavow.

CONCLUSION

I first started reading American literature through a theoretical lens of hospitality when I came across an interview that Jacques Derrida gave in October 2001. In the interview, Derrida interprets the events of 9/11 and the U.S.'s developing response to these events through a theoretical framework of hospitality. He notes, for example, that the 9/11 attacks were made possible by acts of hospitality—acts that granted the terrorists admittance into the United States and subsequently allowed them to stay in the country.²⁶¹ He also notes that the U.S. responded to the terrorist attacks with acts of inhospitality—acts that withheld welcome from or conditioned the welcome of “others” based on racial, religious, national, and/or ethnic differences.²⁶² With this in mind, Derrida frames 9/11 as an event that tests American hospitality, that compels Americans to reevaluate their commitment to a national ethos of hospitality.²⁶³

I found Derrida's take on 9/11 to be compelling. I was intrigued by the idea of thinking about U.S. history and U.S. politics through a theoretical framework of hospitality. It provided me with a fresh approach to thinking through questions about immigration, racial profiling, migrant labor, and racial segregation. By chance, I read Derrida's interview right before reading *The Grapes of Wrath* for the first time. When I read Steinbeck's novel, I saw tropes of hospitality on every page. It seemed like every scene in the novel was in some way or another a scene of hospitality. Yet, when I started to read criticism about *The Grapes of Wrath*, I found that almost no one had written about hospitality in the novel. I was dumbfounded. I reread the novel. Then, I read it a third time. I was now even more convinced that I wasn't imagining something that wasn't

there: *The Grapes of Wrath* really is centrally invested in exploring questions about hospitality. But the more carefully I read *The Grapes of Wrath* the more I realized that Derrida's body of theoretical work on hospitality, vast though it is, could not fully account for the critique of American hospitality that Steinbeck performs in the novel or the improvised ethics of hospitality that Steinbeck's migrants adopt in the novel or the ways in which Steinbeck makes creative use of narrative form to reflect on his own narrative's account of American hospitality. Derrida provided me with a theoretical foundation for launching my reading of *The Grapes of Wrath*, but it was the novel itself that eventually taught me how to read it. It was the Joads and not Derrida who provided me with an early sense of what an ethics of affirmative hospitality could look like in practice.

Reading, researching, and writing about *The Grapes of Wrath* gave me my first indication that I had observed something in American fiction that other scholars had not yet fully explored. I started to think back over other major American fiction I had read. The obvious place to start was southern fiction. I knew that the South was very proud of its regional culture of hospitality, so it stood to reason that southern literature featured fiction that includes scenes and descriptions of southern hospitality. It did not take long for me to call to mind the formative scene in *Absalom, Absalom!* when Sutpen is turned away from the front door of a plantation house. Rereading this scene as a scene of inhospitality made me realize not only how central this scene is to the novel but also how central discourses of hospitality are to the novel. I thought back over other twentieth-century southern fiction and came to similar conclusions about the centrality of hospitality to these texts. I thought of Katherine Anne Porter's *Noon Wine*, Flannery

O'Connor's "The Displaced Person," and Eudora Welty's "The Hitch-Hikers" and "A Visit of Charity." I thought back over other work by Faulkner, most notably *As I Lay Dying* and *Light in August*. I thought back over pretty much everything I'd ever read by Richard Wright, both his fiction and non-fiction, both his work set in the South and his work set in the North. I thought about scenes of interracial hospitality and inhospitality in *Uncle Tom's Children*, *Native Son*, *12 Million Black Voices*, *Black Boy*, *The Long Dream*, and *Eight Men*. I thought, in particular, about the deliberate attention that Wright places on describing the feelings of African-American characters during scenes of interracial hospitality and inhospitality.²⁶⁴

I became curious about the origins of the South's preoccupation with its regional customs of hospitality. I started to read historical accounts of southern hospitality dating back to before the founding of the nation. I read dozens of accounts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries written by white male Europeans praising the hospitality they received from wealthy white men in the American South. I also read dozens of accounts written by white male southerners praising their own hospitality to European visitors. Many of the most romantic descriptions of southern hospitality were reports of George Washington's hospitality at Mount Vernon. In these reports, Washington perfectly embodied the ideal of the unconditional southern host. He was praised as a man who gave without conditions or limitations. Yet, there were also clear indications that this was not true. Of course, there were conditions and limitations to Washington's hospitality. So why this need to pretend that Washington and other southern hosts gave unconditionally? I started to consider the ideological work that accounts of unconditional southern hospitality played and still play in creating and maintaining the South's regional identity.

I began by reading southern fiction that had a reputation for romanticizing southern hospitality. I read some of Thomas Dixon's fiction, most notably *The Flaming Sword*. Dixon's work helped me understand the racist logic of southern hospitality. But he didn't offer anything in the way of complexity. I resolved to read Mitchell's *Gone With The Wind*, a novel that I knew had been largely dismissed by literary critics but had nevertheless played an undeniably vital role in idealizing antebellum southern hospitality for a national audience. What I found when I read *Gone With The Wind* is that Mitchell's novel does not simply idealize southern hospitality. Mitchell's account of southern hospitality is much more complex. The novel's romantic descriptions of southern hospitality as unconditional are not designed to idealize southern hospitality. They are designed to draw attention to the very real ways in which southern hospitality has always been conditioned by questions of race, gender, and class. With this in mind, the novel's accounts of unconditional southern hospitality are also designed to allow us to better recognize the positive value of acts of conditional hospitality in the novel. Coming to this realization helped me better understand what Derrida means when he says that it is the idea of unconditional hospitality that enables us to appreciate the affirmative nature of conditional hospitality ("A" 129).

There is no character in *American Hospitality* who embodies the affirmative spirit of conditional hospitality more powerfully or convincingly than Margaret Walker's Vyry. *Jubilee* rethinks *Gone With The Wind* and southern hospitality (both antebellum and postbellum) from the perspective of a character who knows what it feels like to receive hospitality that is conditioned by her race, gender, and class. Through Vyry's story—and the parallel story of Randall Ware—Walker reveals much about southern hospitality that

Mitchell and Faulkner never even address. Walker's focus on the use of biblical tropes of hospitality by southern blacks is particularly illuminating. These biblical tropes, like Walker's story of *Vyry*, provided and provide blacks with redemptive visions of hospitality to counter the harsh realities of life lived under to the racist customs of southern hospitality.

George Washington is by no means merely a southern figure. He is a national figure, and mythical accounts of his hospitality at Mount Vernon are tied as much to nationalist narratives about American hospitality as they are to regional narratives about southern hospitality. Rethinking narratives about American hospitality through the example of George Washington prompted me to revisit some other U.S. fiction I had read. I thought, in particular, about some Native American authors (Leslie Marmon Silko, Sherman Alexie, Charles Eastman, Thomas King, and Louise Erdrich) and how they offered a uniquely privileged vantage from which to rethink the foundational assumptions of dominant American discourses of hospitality. When I revisited the work of these authors, I found that they, like Steinbeck, Mitchell, Faulkner, and Walker, regularly employ tropes of hospitality but that the tropes they employ are informed by distinct Native American histories and cultures. Researching a Sioux legend by Charles Eastman ("The Badger and the Bear") eventually led me to Zitkala-Ša, and as soon as I started reading the Dakota author's legends, I knew that I had found an author who was deliberately and repeatedly using tropes of hospitality both to challenge dominant American models of hospitality and to model an ethics that is inspired by indigenous histories and ways of knowing. Reading Zitkala-Ša's extensive body of non-fiction writings reinforced this initial impression and helped me ground the insights of her

legends in the historical context of Native/non-Native relations in North America. More than any other American writer I have read, Zitkala-Ša demonstrates a concerted investment in employing tropes of hospitality to narrativize the history of settler colonialism in North America. This concerted investment warrants future study.

Like Zitkala-Ša, Louise Erdrich is consistent in her use of discourses of hospitality to portray Native American life and to narrativize the history of settler colonialism in North America. Virtually every one of Erdrich's novels opens with a scene in which hospitality is offered, withheld, received, rejected, taken by force, and/or violated in some form or another.²⁶⁵ *Love Medicine* opens with Jack Mauser inviting June Kashpaw to enter the Rigger Bar. *The Beet Queen* opens with the Adare family arriving by train as freeloaders in Argus, Minnesota, where they are promptly welcomed by a hostile native. *Tracks* opens with Nanapush narrating the arrival of consumption, figured as an uninvited guest, from the North. *The Bingo Palace* opens with Lulu Martin visiting the post office to send a letter to her grandson inviting him to return home to the reservation. *The Antelope Wife* opens with the U.S. Army invading a peaceful Ojibwe village. *The Master Butcher's Singing Club* begins with Fidelis Waldvogel being welcomed home. *Four Souls* opens with Polly Elizabeth offering hospitality to Fleur Pillager. *The Round House* opens with Joe Coutts offering a lengthy description of the small trees that have penetrated the foundation of his parents' home, a symbolic foreshadowing of the horrific rape that his mother experiences and that leads to a complete breakdown of domestic hospitality at the Coutts household. *La Rose* does not open with a scene of hospitality, but the novel is filled with tropes of hospitality, as the titles of the novel's first chapter ("The Door") and Part I ("Two Houses") indicate. Even

Erdrich's young adult fiction novels open with scenes of hospitality. Like *Tracks*, *The Birchbark House* opens with the arrival of an "unwelcome" visitor in the form of disease (132, 153). *The Game of Silence* opens with the arrival of Ojibwe from nearby islands who announce that a white chief has issued a removal order to prove space for white settlers (21).²⁶⁶

And then there is *The Crown of Columbus*. Although the quality of writing in *The Crown of Columbus* is generally inferior to the quality of writing in Erdrich's other work, the novel's deliberate use of tropes of hospitality to interrogate both the history of New World contact and the Erdrich-Dorris writing collaboration made inclusion of the novel in *American Hospitality* practically a foregone conclusion. The principal value of *The Crown of Columbus* is what it can teach us about parasitic relationships, and the novel achieves this teaching most clearly through its use of discourses of hospitality to reflect self-consciously on the authors' own relationship. *The Crown of Columbus* gives us something that no other text in *American Hospitality* gives us: a reading of authorship as a form of hospitality. In this, it reminds us of the inherently textual nature of all relationships of hospitality.

Appendix

Southern Hospitality

The creation of the U.S. South's regional identity during the Jim Crow period relied heavily on a cultural narrative of unconditional southern hospitality. Resistant to developments in modernity, southern critics of industrialization, urbanization, unionization, desegregation, and women's rights justified their anti-progressivist politics through an ideology premised on a romanticized vision of southern hospitality. By maintaining a pretense of hospitality to strangers, southern hosts disavowed their rejection, exploitation, and demonization of otherness on a daily basis. Through the figure of the stranger, dominant white males in the South attempted to draw attention away from their inhospitable treatment of women, blacks, and lower-class whites. Moreover, through customs of etiquette codified by state laws, southern hosts constructed a pretense of civility that belied the significant role that physical violence played in preventing those not in positions of power from overstepping their prescribed roles. At the same time, these same customs of etiquette helped perpetuate an ideology of southern hospitality by interpellating individuals as subjects in both private and public spaces, by providing these individuals with a social framework through which they could imagine their relationship to the material conditions of their existence, and by reproducing submission to the discriminating worldview of southern hosts. An historical account of the South that is attentive to the ways in which the region's culture of hospitality functions as an ideology helps elucidate the connections between southern customs of

hospitality and other previously theorized markers of southern identity, such as honor, chivalry, etiquette, agrarianism, nostalgia, and passion.²⁶⁷

I

The myth of unconditional southern hospitality was invented and perpetuated by privileged white men. As early as the first decades of the eighteenth century, hosts in the southern colonies and the privileged white male guests they entertained began extolling the virtues of the region's purportedly limitless hospitality.²⁶⁸ In 1705, for example, the planter and historian Robert Beverley boasted that Virginians were "very Courteous to Travellers" and always prepared to offer "Hospitality" (312-13). Likewise, the Reverend Hugh Jones claimed in 1724 that "no people can entertain their Friends with better Cheer and Welcome" than Virginians (49). Only nine years later, William Byrd II, a Virginia planter and author, made reference in his journal to what he termed the region's already established "Rules of Hospitality" (53). Guests from the northern colonies were no less effusive in their praise of southern hospitality. In 1775, Charles Roads traveled from his home in New Jersey to North Carolina and left that province in awe of the "Hospitality of the Gentlemen of Carolina to Strangers" (qtd. in Kierner 451). Similarly, Jacob Abbott, an Amherst College Professor, described "southern hospitality" as "free," "generous," and "open-hearted" (224). A traveler "finds a welcome at every door," Abbott reported (222-3). Perhaps the most flattering descriptions of antebellum southern hospitality came from Englishmen. In a 1746 editorial for *The London Magazine*, the English adventurer, compiler, and novelist Edward Kimber recalled that he experienced "universal Hospitality" in his visit to the South. "[T]heir Manner of Living," observed Kimber, "is quite generous and open" (4). Similarly, during his visit to Virginia in 1799, the English

actor and biographer John Bernard characterized southern manners as “truly hospitable,” “refine[d],” and “convivial” (146).

No historical figure played a more formative role in the creation of the myth of southern hospitality than George Washington. Famously dedicated to an ethos of “common civility and hospitality,” Washington welcomed visitors to Mount Vernon on a massive scale. “Every one was welcome,” reports Paul Wilstach. “[B]rothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, and cousins to remote degrees; friends passing north and south, crossing from Maryland to lower Virginia, or only on their way to the plantation next beyond. Not least welcome were strangers . . . (*Mount Vernon* 194, 89). Between 1768 and 1775, about two thousand visitors were entertained at Mount Vernon. All were reportedly allowed to stay for as long as they wished (Dalzell & Dalzell 192). After the American Revolution, Washington assumed the role of “national host” and endeavored to fashion Mount Vernon into a model of hospitality for a burgeoning nation (Freeman 527; Lee 26). With Washington’s newfound fame came even more visitors to Mount Vernon. Before the war, Washington reserved the right to choose his own guests. After the war, however, “they came whether he invited them or not, and often the group around the table at dinner included people he had never met before. . . . But high or low, famous or not, they all had to be received with appropriate courtesy” (Dalzell & Dalzell 196). Mount Vernon received so many visitors after the Revolution that Washington remarked in a 1797 letter to a friend that he and Martha had not once had the opportunity to dine by themselves in twenty years (Freeman 714).

Interpreting his role of national host as obliging him to a kind of Cynic cosmopolitanism, Washington was committed to treating both familiars and strangers

with the same spirit of generous hospitality.²⁶⁹ Ultimately, Washington's boundless generosity resulted in a blurring of the distinction between his private and public lives.²⁷⁰ By opening his doors to thousands of guests, some known and others unknown, Washington surrendered both his autonomy and his privacy. As a host dedicated to providing a model of hospitality for a new nation, Washington often placed the needs of strangers above the sensibilities of those closest to him. In 1787, for example, Washington realized that he was unable to provide his mother with the hospitality she desired because he was too overburdened with the responsibility of providing for others. In a letter to his mother, Washington felt obliged to warn Mary of what she would find if she came to Mount Vernon:

My house is at your service, and [I] would press you most sincerely and most devoutly to accept it, but I am sure, and candor requires me to say, it will never answer your purposes in any shape whatsoever. For in truth it may be compared to a well resorted tavern, as scarcely any strangers who are going from north to south, or from south to north, do not spend a day or two at it. (Fitzpatrick 160-61)

Here, we can see the practical limitations of Washington's pursuit for unconditional hospitality: his inability to provide for his mother underscores the inevitable impossibility of achieving his own ideal. Even Washington, the prototype of the southern host, found himself so overwhelmed by the significant burdens of providing hospitality that he could not fulfill his obligations.

The cultural narrative of George Washington's unconditional hospitality ignores the essential role that slaves played in the production—the labor and the presentation—of hospitality at Mount Vernon, as well as the grueling conditions of life for slaves on the

plantation. For the 317 slaves on Washington's plantation, life at Mount Vernon was "rough" and "rigorous" (Haworth 212).²⁷¹ In fact, despite performing "virtually all of the essential functions" on Washington's estate, the President's slaves were "entitled to nothing more than food and a roof over their heads" (Hirschfeld 18, 32). During his visit to Mount Vernon during the summer of 1798, the well-known Polish soldier, poet, and statesman Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz observed that Washington's slaves "work all week, not having a single day for themselves, except for holidays. One sees by that that the condition of our peasants is infinitely better" (qtd. in Hirschfeld 54).²⁷² For Washington, the pretense of kindness to his slaves was more important than his real actions. Only after he began to fear for his reputation did he decide to improve conditions for slaves on his plantation. "I will not have my feelings hurt with complaints of this sort, nor lye under the imputation of starving my negros," Washington insisted at one point during the 1790s when he learned that he was "being criticized" for not providing his slaves with enough food (qtd. in Haworth 210-11). Smart enough to understand that the appearance of frugality, even in the treatment of his slaves, threatened his reputation as a generous host, Washington "hurriedly directed" that his slaves' provisions be increased (210). In the end, maintaining the pretense of a hospitable plantation was Washington's primary concern.

Despite George Washington's admirable efforts to achieve an ideal of unconditional hospitality, the practical and political limitations of antebellum southern hospitality were significant. Although Washington made sacrifices on behalf of strangers, the culture of southern hospitality differentiated between familiars and strangers. Southern hosts claimed to offer unconditional welcome to strangers, but the truth is that

they were often hostile to outsiders. As Bertram Wyatt-Brown has shown, southern hospitality began as a “family-centered” tradition (332). Whereas those of means were “obliged” to extend their hospitality to less fortunate kinfolk, expectations were “considerably more discretionary” in the case of strangers (334). For example, in his *Travels in the Confederation* (1783-1784), the German physician Johann David Schoepf observed that the “much-praised” hospitality of Virginia was “by no means unrestricted” (93). Instead, he found that it was “confined to acquaintances and those who [were] recommended” (93). The hostile nature of the hospitality Schoepf experienced can be appreciated in the following account of his travels to the east coast of Virginia:

We were told of a ‘mighty hospitable man’ living on the road; and yesterday’s praise of Virginia hospitality still resounding in our ears, we were willing to try our fortune, rode 12 long miles through sand, marsh, and forest on an arm of Nansemond Creek, and asked politely for a night’s lodgings at the house recommended. It was dark, a dismal, cheerless Christmas Eve. After repeated inquiries as to where we had come from, who had sent us, &c.; after so many reminders that this was no public house, but travelers (who withstood repulse) were taken in gratis; and after prolonged counsel between man and wife, we were at least received, with an ill grace. The next morning we took leave early and expeditiously. Not far from the house we passed Everit’s Bridge, named for our host, who had built it by authority from Assembly so as to bring the road, which lay in a different direction, before his house and store. Although he expected and got advantage from this change in the road, he considered it no business of his to look after the comfort of travellers. (96)

As Schoepf's anecdote suggests, unless a stranger could provide a "special claim to hospitality"—an introductory letter, for instance, or some other evidence of intimacy with a respected acquaintance—then he was met with "suspicion, particularly if the request for lodgings came unexpectedly" (Wyatt-Brown 335). Here, the distinction that Derrida draws between the "hospitality of invitation" (hospitality offered to an invited guest) and the "hospitality of visitation" (hospitality offered to an unsuspected visitor) is particularly relevant.²⁷³ In the antebellum households of the South, an unconditional hospitality of visitation did not exist because guests were not welcomed openly unless they were invited, either by the hosts themselves or by those whose attestations carried significant weight. In the case of unexpected visitations, suspicion was the rule rather than the exception; "special" were those who were received, and even then, they were received under specified conditions.²⁷⁴ Ultimately, the figure of the welcome stranger, upon which the ideology of southern hospitality predicated its discriminatory politics, was an empty signifier, a cultural fabrication designed to protect privileged white men behind a cloak of unconditional hospitality.

Like George Washington, southern hosts relied on the pretense of unconditional hospitality to establish their public reputations as honorable men.²⁷⁵ As an "indicator of wealth and cultural attainment," the power to offer or withhold hospitality became "the peculiar province of elite men" and "legitimated their social dominance" in antebellum society (Kierner 449-52). Thus, through their public personas as hosts, white men reaffirmed their power over members of their households and over those of inadequate social standing from whom they chose to withhold hospitality. In the case of desired guests, the offering of hospitality took the form of a "social competition" in which hosts

competed for the honor of bestowing hospitality (Kierner 453). Accordingly, hosts throughout the antebellum South kept tabs on one another, judging the hospitality they received at neighboring plantations and noting the guests who came and went from the households of other hosts (Kierner 453). In effect, the desire of southern hosts to maintain the appearance of unconditional hospitality amounted to a collective compulsion. In his *Retrospections of America, 1797-1811*, the Englishman John Bernard reveals how overly solicitous southern hosts motivated by this compulsion often shifted the burden in the exchange of hospitality from the host to the guest. After describing how a Virginia planter spent a hot summer day “bathing, drinking, shooting, and fishing” in a pond near his plantation, Bernard offers the following account:

If at length the form of a stranger appeared, he sprang from his plank and shouted an invitation to alight and take a drop of something sociable. If the traveller refused, up went the rifle to his shoulder, and compliance was demanded in the tone of a European footpad. The stranger now saw that pleasure was policy, however urgent might be his business; but if he were so unguarded as to yield to his next request to ‘strip and take a swim, he speedily found himself irretrievably in the clutches of this human alligator. The planter fixed in him all the claws of nog, flip, sling, and toddy, until the brain of the victim became so confused that the grinning negroes had no difficulty in stowing him into the wagon, whereupon the poles were struck, the horses buckled in, and the delighted planter returned home with his prize, whom he probably cooped up in a back-room with a *chevaux-de-frise* of bottles, until, by some desperate effort, the captive made his escape. (152)

Here, Bernard employs hyperbole and metaphor to characterize the receiving of hospitality as “compliance” rather than gratitude. The host is figured as a violent and devious monster, a despot intent on satisfying his own “pleasure” and not the pleasure of his guest. Held “captive” by his host, the guest receives no welcome; stripped of his subjectivity, he becomes the object of his host’s fascination and amusement. A victim of his host’s compulsive “policy” of forcing guests to receive inhospitality disguised as hospitality, the guest of Bernard’s planter emerges from his captivity with a view of southern hospitality as “antagonist[ic]” rather than generous (153). In the end, the host’s compulsion to secure a guest takes precedence over any attempt to engage in a face-to-face encounter with the individual he ensnares. So determined to perform his role as host, Bernard’s planter loses sight of achieving any semblance of ideal hospitality.

What Bernard’s critique of the Virginia planter emphasizes is the performative quality of southern hospitality. The pervasive nature of the ideology of southern hospitality dictated that exchanges of hospitality between hosts and guests were always performances. In fashioning themselves as chivalrous hosts, southern white men aspired to achieve a cultural ideal of chivalric hospitality by pretending that their offerings of hospitality were driven by honor rather than self-interest. Each encounter with a guest amounted to an imitation of this ideal of chivalry, even in cases when the host’s hypocrisy was self-evident. For poor southern whites, the socially constructed desire to perform the duties expected of an ideal host posed significant economic challenges. After all, the vast majority of southerners did not possess the resources to provide the kind of bountiful hospitality that guests received at Mount Vernon. Therefore, when strangers were received at southern homes, they were often asked to give money, either to cover

the costs of their stay or, in some cases, for the host's profit (Wyatt-Brown 336). "The charges," Wyatt-Brown explains, "were a means to make a distinction between family-centered obligation and the treatment of an alien. The cash signified the termination of obligation" (336). Here, the pretense that southern hosts proffered hospitality in the spirit of an unconditional gift breaks down. In truth, all exchanges of southern hospitality were exchanges of commodities. Interpellated as subjects in the South's capitalist economy, hosts and guests were always already engaging in public transactions—transactions that were often made possible only because of the labor carried out by other subjects.²⁷⁶ In this sense, Marcel Mauss's well-known deconstruction of "disinterested" gift exchange describes perfectly the duplicitous mentality of southern hospitality: "The form usually taken is that of the gift generously offered; but the accompanying behaviour is formal pretence and social deception, while the transaction itself is based on obligation and economic self-interest" (71, 1). Southern hosts often took advantage of this "social deception," manipulating southern codes of honor in order to demonstrate superiority over others. In public taverns, for example, the tradition of offering a drink to a stranger in the guise of an unconditional gift was, in reality, an underhanded way of challenging the stranger's honor and his financial means. "Guest and host were supposed to show respect for each other, and failure to do so sundered the transaction of honor in which they were engaged," reports Wyatt-Brown. "The stranger in a tavern, for instance, was invited to be the first to drink or at least be the first to receive the gift of a glass from the rest. But he was under obligation to play host to the next round—thereby making equal all parties present, each in turn serving as guest and host. The coercion implicit in that situation should be evident, but so should the brittleness of the feelings under the restraint

of the hospitable code” (339). Customs of southern hospitality, therefore, were embedded in a capitalist economy that both shaped and helped perpetuate the privileges of southern hosts.

Performances of southern hospitality during the antebellum period were informed by regional codes of racial and gender etiquette. These codes and the performances they engendered belied the threats of physical violence that compelled blacks and women to participate in the production of hospitality. The decriminalization of white male violence in the southern states during the antebellum period not only granted southern hosts the legal right to exercise “unchecked authority over their wives, children, servants, and slaves” but also treated that violence as “necessary” and “ordinary” (Edwards 741; Fede 93). In other words, the law sought to conceal and minimize white male violence by treating it as natural. Viewed by antebellum law as “domestic dependents” and as the “property” of their masters, women and slaves had no right to the protections of the common law of crimes (Edwards 739; Fede 95). “When legal institutions intervened,” explains Laura Edwards, “they upheld the power of individual patriarchs over their households and returned dependents to the confines of domestic space” (740). Masters could beat, whip, kill, and rape their slaves without facing any legal punishment (Fede 95; Bardaglio 757). In addition, white males possessed the legal “prerogative” to “discipline” their wives through violent means (Edwards 750). Accordingly, as scholars have demonstrated, cases of plantation masters raping male and female slaves, as well as their own wives, were “common” during the antebellum period (Cardyn 716-17). Through sexual violence, southern hosts not only reinforced their dominance over their

households but also reproduced submission to the ideology of southern hospitality by increasing “the supply of labor” on their plantations (Cardyn 717; Bardaglio 757).

Like the lives of slaves, the lives of antebellum white women were shaped in large part by the ideology of southern hospitality. Southern women both contributed to and undermined the region’s myth of unconditional hospitality. As hostesses, they acted as deputies on behalf of their husbands, delegating responsibility in the household and overseeing the production of hospitality to guests. In the process, southern women helped establish and reinforce their husbands’ public personas as reputable hosts. Just as the figure of the slaveholding man represented the ideal for southern hosts, the plantation mistress symbolized the ideal for southern hostesses. In their personification of this ideal, plantation mistresses perpetuated prevailing notions about gender difference, particularly the paternalist notions that fortified the ideology of southern hospitality. Primarily confined to the space of the household, wives of plantation hosts were expected to supervise the production and presentation of food and entertainment. In the presence of guests, all actions taken by hostesses were viewed as complementing the needs and desires of hosts. In this sense, their actions amounted to “social statements” made on behalf of their husbands (Kierner 467). However, as historians have demonstrated, a select number of antebellum women were able to subvert the ideology of southern hospitality. Unlike traditional antebellum hostesses who acted as intermediaries in the affairs of men, female hosts assumed sovereignty over households and established essential roles in exchanges of hospitality.²⁷⁷ For example, propertied widows were known to proffer hospitality “as evidence of their independence as heads of households and their status within the community” (Kierner 453).²⁷⁸

Although the law did not punish white male violence, incidents of violence against women and slaves impugned the façade of benevolent paternalism that southern hosts strived to maintain. For slaves and women, therefore, preventing or evading violence required undermining the public reputation of individual southern hosts. “Wives in the planter class,” reports Laura Edwards, “fled abuse through extended visits or invited relatives and friends into their homes to moderate their husbands’ behavior” (745). Similarly, “slaves occasionally fled to white neighbors’ houses in order to evade beatings or to seek shelter afterward” (747-48). In cases where a white male’s violent behavior posed a serious threat to his reputation as a hospitable host, neighbors might intercede (Edwards 747-48). Like George Washington, southern hosts could not afford the appearance of impropriety.

For guests who were not accustomed to plantation life, the forced nature of slave performances of hospitality could be particularly unsettling. In his visit to the South in the 1830s, for example, Jacob Abbott found that he could not “restrain a tribute of sympathy” for the “obsequious” slaves that served him (221-24). Commenting on the slaves who stood behind his chair to “watch and anticipate” his every need, Abbot could not help but think, “he knows the lash is in the yard!” (221). For Abbott, the acts of hospitality he witnessed took the form of compulsory performances rather than genuine acts of kindness: “. . . there is but little that appears like real home comfort” (221). Ultimately disillusioned by his observations of plantation life, Abbott described slavery as a “most serious political and social curse” that produces a “paralysis upon industry and improvement” (222). Instead of an economic system bolstered by the energetic productivity of slaves, Abbott saw a region whose pretensions to unconditional

hospitality were undermined by the apparent “joylessness” that sat “upon the countenances of both master and slave” (222).²⁷⁹

II

Emancipation fundamentally altered the politics of hospitality in the U.S. South. In order to retain their sovereignty over private and public spaces after the Civil War, southern hosts revised and intensified the ideology of southern hospitality. The new post-war ideology focused on preventing blacks and women from assuming positions of authority and privilege as hosts or guests. In order to accomplish their objectives, white male hosts adopted a politics aimed at justifying white male violence against women and blacks, disavowing and policing interracial desire, denying property ownership to blacks, preventing blacks from acquiring equal access to public accommodations, and resisting the growing threat of commercial hospitality in the region. Moreover, beginning in the final decades of the nineteenth century and continuing to the end of the Jim Crow period, southern hosts framed their commitment to the ideology of hospitality as a resistance to developments in modernity. In the process, they depicted southern hospitality as a defining object of cultural nostalgia and a panacea for the South’s developing anxieties about modernity.

Despite the absence of documented evidence to validate their claims, white male southerners after emancipation grounded their new ideology of hospitality in the conviction that white women needed to be protected from licentious black men.²⁸⁰ As Lisa Cardyn explains, “the southern white imaginary was imbued with the fiction that black men, whose base passions were artificially restrained by the apparatus of slavery and habitually so during the War, were now free to exercise them over the bodies of

innocent white women” (696). Assured in their belief that “female sexuality” was the “property” of men, white male hosts interpellated the bodies of white women as domains of the household (Bardaglio 754). In doing so, they interpreted and represented interracial sexual encounters between white women and black men as violations of host sovereignty. Accordingly, the imagined threat of sexual violence against white women was treated as an offense against the benevolent hospitality of southern hosts. Doubling as male property, the bodies of white women symbolized both the sexual prerogatives of white men and the sexual limitations of black men. In order to protect their property and their reputations, southern males during Reconstruction and throughout the Jim Crow era “interposed themselves as self-anointed defenders” of white female sexuality (Cardyn 679). In the formal oath for initiation into the Ku Klux Klan, for example, future members were required to promise that “[f]emales, friends, widows, and their households, shall be the special object of my care and protection” (qtd. in Cardyn 695). Through the vigilante violence of the KKK and similar organizations, these self-proclaimed protectors of white female sexuality attempted to “reinscribe” the racial and gender hierarchies of the antebellum period, all the while disguising this violence through an ideology that focused attention on their hospitality to strangers (Cardyn 718).

Through extralegal violence and codes of racial etiquette, the ideology of southern hospitality sought to disavow and police interracial sexual desire. Lynchings of black men accused of inappropriate gestures, behaviors, and/or glances in the company of white women increased “significantly” during the Jim Crow period (Cardyn 747-48). In their attempts to deter black male desire, the KKK made “sexual humiliation” a central focus of their vigilante violence (Cardyn 713). According to NAACP reports, at least 1,333

blacks were killed, maimed, and castrated in the South between 1900 and 1918 alone (Robinson 100). In the first decades of the twentieth century, antimiscegenation laws in the southern states enforced strict punishments for black men who were found guilty of having sexual relations with white women (Robinson 97-113). Although these laws were partially intended to curb desire, their primary objective was to prevent blacks and women from assuming positions of sovereignty in southern households. As Charles Robinson reveals, “Despite the rhetoric of the white South that commonly denounced interracial sex as the greatest societal tragedy, authorities usually focused the laws against public domestic relationships. What mattered most to whites was protecting white male privileges and preserving the social, not the sexual color line” (98). Private interracial liaisons most often went “unpunished,” but those couples who sought to “legitimize” their relationships publicly suffered the consequences of undermining an ideology that expressly forbid white women to live in homes with black hosts (Robinson 98). The image of a black man assuming the sovereign role of a southern host with a white hostess standing by his side enraged white southerners like nothing else. Accordingly, interracial cohabitation, both in and out of wedlock, was met with the severest punishments by the KKK.²⁸¹ In Colcasian, Louisiana, for example, a white woman, a black man, and their child were all discovered murdered for the crime of “residing as an openly married couple” (Cardyn 768). Ultimately, antimiscegenation laws and KKK violence against interracial couples reflected white male anxieties about retaining their self-proclaimed roles as southern hosts and the privileges these roles entailed. Southern households that did not include white males threatened the ideology of southern hospitality by opening up

the possibility that the notion of black and female hosts could someday become socially acceptable.

After emancipation, freed blacks attempted to undermine the authority and privileges of white male hosts by challenging the veracity of their claims to property ownership in the southern states. Blacks understood that without property of their own they would be unable to subvert the ideology of southern hospitality. In their efforts to secure land rights, blacks appealed to the same logic of squatter sovereignty that southern whites had employed for years to validate their own claims to land ownership. In 1866, for example, the freedman Bayley Wyat argued in a speech in Yorktown, Virginia, that southern blacks had earned a “divine right” to the land of their previous masters (“A Freedman’s Speech” 2). “I may state to all our friends, and to all our enemies, Wyat declared, “that we has a right to the land where we are located. For why? I tell you. Our wives, our children, our husbands, has been sold over and over again to purchase the lands we now locates upon . . . didn’t we clear the land, and raise de crops of corn, ob cotton, ob tobacco, ob rice, ob sugar, ob ebervy ting” (2). Likewise, in a petition to President Andrew Johnson, a group of freed slaves from South Carolina proclaimed, “This is our home. We have made these lands what they are” (qtd. in Vlach ix). Rejecting the attempts of southern white males to naturalize their claims to the land, freed blacks contended that their labor on plantations made them stewards of God’s gifts and therefore “entitled” them to at least a share of ownership (Foner 105). As Eric Foner reports, “Hundreds of freedmen refused either to sign labor contracts or to leave the plantations, insisting that the property belonged to them” (105). One Virginia freedman told his ex-master that he was “entitled to a part of the farm after all the work he had

done on it. The kitchen belonged to him because he had helped cut the timber to build it” (qtd. in Foner 105). In subversive acts that signaled an upheaval of the most basic customs of southern hospitality, some freed blacks usurped the sovereignty of their previous masters by taking up residence in the Big Houses of the plantations (Foner 105-06).

Many freed blacks believed that land redistribution would follow as a “logical consequence of emancipation” (Foner 105). However, they did not come to this conclusion on their own. Both during and after the war, Union soldiers and northern politicians gave blacks reason to believe that the property of their previous masters would be made available to them. Prior to emancipation, the Confiscation Acts of 1861 and 1862 made the property of Confederates liable to seizure by the federal government. Utilized by the Union Army as informers against white Confederates, slaves were very aware of the federal government’s practice of property confiscation (Fleming 722). Moreover, Union soldiers are known to have told slaves that if they joined the Union army and helped achieve a victory for the North, then they could have access to the confiscated lands. As Bayley Wyat proclaimed in his 1866 speech, “Dey told us dese lands was ‘fiscated from the Rebs, who was fightin’ de United States to keep us in slavery and to destroy the Government. De Yankee officers say to us: ‘Now, dear friends, colored men, come and go with us; we will gain de victory, and by de proclamation of our President you have your freedom, and you shall have the ‘fiscated lands’” (2).

In March of 1863, the precedent of freed blacks assuming ownership of confiscated white property was set when the federal government seized thousands of

acres on the coasts and the sea islands of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. When the land was sold at auction, freed blacks took advantage of the opportunity and purchased property (Fleming 724). Then, on January 16, 1865, General Sherman issued his infamous “Special Field Order, No. 15,” which “reserved” and “set apart” coastal and island lands from Charleston, South Carolina, down to St. Augustine, Florida, to be subdivided for the settling of freed blacks. In particular, Sherman’s Order stipulated that each family of freed slaves “shall have a plot of no more than (40) forty acres of tillable ground . . . in the possession of which land the military authorities will afford them protection.”²⁸² Encouraged by the Order, thousands of freed blacks flocked to the coast. By the end of 1865, “more than 40,000 freedmen” had relocated to the sea islands alone and began establishing residence there.²⁸³

However, in the fall of 1865, President Andrew Johnson responded to complaints made by coastal plantation owners by pardoning them and restoring their property rights (Fleming 726). Despite the Freedmen’s Bureau’s assertions that freed blacks “had been led to expect permanent possession of the lands, and that to dispossess them would be an act of bad faith,” Johnson insisted on carrying out the pardons (Fleming 726).²⁸⁴ Further frustration ensued in the following years when the federal government failed to implement promises made in the Southern Homestead Act, which President Johnson signed into law on June 21, 1866. The Act made 46,398,545 acres of public lands in Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi available for the explicit purpose of allowing freed slaves and southerners loyal to the federal government to homestead (Oubre 87). Because the Southern Homestead Act stipulated that freed slaves did not have to pay registration fees until they received their patents, they could begin settling on

and improving their land for five years without having to worry about the initial costs of acquiring property (Oubre 87; Canaday et al. 4). Yet, during the ten years that the Act was in effect, it “failed to provide landownership for significant numbers of freed people” (Canaday et al. 1).²⁸⁵ A number of factors have been cited as contributing to the Act’s failure—white opposition to black ownership, poor leadership, illiteracy, inferior farming equipment, and fraud, to name a few—but the most significant factor was the poor quality of the land made available for homesteading.²⁸⁶ As Claude Oubre reports, “Most of the land had been open to unrestricted purchase for at least thirty years. Therefore, the more accessible lands had already been taken and the remaining land available for homesteading was refuse land, either heavily overgrown woods, swamp, or treeless prairie” (187).²⁸⁷ In the end, of the 6,500 freed blacks who “entered land” per the Southern Homestead Act between 1866 and 1870, fewer than 1,000 received certificates at the end of five years (Oubre 188). For the majority of those who were attempting to homestead, the land was simply too arid to produce crops.

The overwhelming belief among freed slaves during the Reconstruction period was that the federal government had “deceived” them (Fleming 727). The North’s failure to follow through with the guarantees stipulated in Sherman’s “Special Field Order” and in the Southern Homestead Act was received as a failure to provide promised hospitality. As Bayley Wyatt put it, freed blacks felt “disappointed” that men of supposed “principle” and “honor” had been unwilling to keep “deir promise” (2). In the end, the federal government’s failure to grant blacks the legal rights of southern hosts forced blacks to resort to sharecropping, a form of economic servitude that allowed privileged white males to retain control of the South’s wealth and to maintain a pretense of benevolent

paternalism with regard to both blacks and poor whites.²⁸⁸ Although sharecroppers possessed more economic rights than slaves, they were denied the privileges enjoyed by property owners.

In addition to resisting black property ownership, southern whites tried to uphold antebellum customs of hospitality by refusing to grant blacks legal rights as guests in public spaces. During Reconstruction, advocates of racial equality in the federal government passed legislation that aimed to provide blacks throughout the U.S. with equal access to public accommodations. Effectively annulling the decision of *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857), the Fourteenth Amendment, adopted on July 9, 1868, granted blacks citizenship and provided them with a constitutional right to equal protection under state and local law.²⁸⁹ Seven years after passing the Fourteenth Amendment, the U.S. Congress issued the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which held that “all persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters, and other places of public amusement; subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law, and applicable alike to citizens of every race and color, regardless of any previous condition or servitude.” The Act also stipulated that any person who denies the rights of others to “full and equal enjoyment” of accommodations would be required to “pay the sum of five hundred dollars to the person aggrieved” and “be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor.” By granting southern blacks the right to appeal to the federal government for grievances, the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1875 marked a shift, at least for the time being, in the political dynamics of hospitality in the South. Long refused the privileges of guests in the South, blacks

suddenly found that southern legislators and judges no longer served as supreme arbitrators in matters regarding access to public accommodations. Blacks denied access to hotels, railway cars, hospitals, theaters, and other public spaces now had legal recourse in their efforts to achieve guest status. In effect, the Civil Rights Act of 1875 made hospitality a matter of federal law.²⁹⁰

However, the protections provided by the Civil Rights Act of 1875 were revoked only eight years later when the U.S. Supreme Court declared the Act unconstitutional. Siding with southern white males who believed that granting blacks equal access to public accommodations would denigrate the status of the guest throughout the South and therefore eliminate the privileges southern hosts received by offering hospitality to strangers, the Supreme Court's decision in the *Civil Rights Cases* of 1883 established that it would not "supersede" the sovereignty of state legislatures in cases of public accommodations (9).²⁹¹ The Fourteenth Amendment, wrote Justice Joseph Bradley, "does not authorize congress to create a code of municipal law for the regulation of private rights; but to provide modes of redress against the operation of state laws, and the action of state officers, executive or judicial" (7). Declaring the Civil Rights Act of 1875 "unconstitutional and void," the *Civil Rights Cases* decision affirmed the "private status" of proprietors and "declared that this status protected them from federal prosecution" (Sandoval-Strausz 301). In short, the Court's 1883 decision pronounced that the sovereignty of states, local governments, and private business superseded the sovereignty of the nation and the rights of racialized guests when it came to questions of hospitality. Not until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 did the federal government issue a constitutional guarantee entitling all persons to "the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services,

facilities, and privileges, advantages, and accommodations of any place of public accommodation” (Sec. 201a).

Rather than show deference to blacks and other marginalized minorities, the South adopted policies of segregation in public spaces. Between 1896 and 1954, the “separate but equal” doctrine introduced in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case granted states constitutional authority to segregate public facilities based on race.²⁹² What followed during the first two decades of the twentieth century was a “mushroom growth of discriminatory and segregation laws” in the South, a legal stampede aimed at preventing blacks from receiving access, protection, and due process (Woodward 98).²⁹³ Whereas blacks were granted limited access to public accommodations during Reconstruction and then excluded from public spaces in the two decades following Reconstruction, the *Plessy* decision in 1896 made separation rather than exclusion the prevailing method of withholding hospitality in the South.²⁹⁴ A host’s first order of business changed from deciding whether to reject or welcome a guest to determining into which space a given guest should be sent. Theater ushers, railway conductors, hotel clerks, bus drivers, and hospital administrators were granted legal authority to discriminate among guests based on race and to distribute them as they saw fit.

The South’s aversion to nationalizing hospitality law was informed significantly by its regional commitment to an ethos of private hospitality. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the South responded with hostility to the growing popularity of commercial hotels in the United States. As A. K. Sandoval-Strausz reports in his study *Hotel: An American History*,

While Americans were building hotels nationwide, they were not doing so with equal enthusiasm in all parts of the country. . . . By any available measure, the South was less equipped to provide for travelers than any other part of the country. A few states in the region, like Virginia and Arkansas, had one inn or hotel for every 3,000 to 4,000 inhabitants by the 1870s, but more typical were North Carolina and Florida, with one per 7,000 to 9,000 in those years; there were also exceptionally commercially inhospitable states like Alabama at one per 8,600 to 9,000, and South Carolina, at one per 10,000 to 14,000 from 1870 to 1880. In dramatic contrast, almost every part of the West was generously supplied with inns and hotels by the 1870s, boasting exceptional ratios like those in Oregon (one per 580 to 810 residents), California (one per 500 to 550), and Nevada (one per 310 to 350). (103-04)

While Sandoval-Strausz suggests that the South's lack of enthusiasm for "hotel life" may have been caused by the region's "strongly rural character," "underdeveloped railways," and its appreciation for "fixity of residence," I argue that this hostility was instigated by southern white males who believed that the presence of commercial hotels in the South threatened to undermine their reputations as hospitable hosts and therefore eliminate the pretenses that allowed them to disavow their oppression of women and blacks (103). In this sense, southern hosts viewed commercial hotels as potential usurpers of their culturally established authority and privileges. In addition, southern hosts were dissatisfied with the terms of exchange involved in commercial hospitality. During the nineteenth century, many Americans began to see hotels as "an integrated national system that could offer wayfarers predictable, dependable hospitality" (Sandoval-Strausz

99). This national shift from private hospitality to commercial hospitality altered the terms and expectations of the host-guest relationship, particularly in the South. Despite the failures of federal legislators to ensure universal access to public accommodations, proprietors of public institutions were still subject to innkeeper laws and ran the risk of losing their commercial licenses if they did not treat their guests with deference.²⁹⁵ The sacrifices required of proprietors to treat guests—many of whom were foreign or racially other—with the deference expected of them contrasted markedly with the sovereign privileges traditionally afforded private hosts in the South. Thus, a welcoming of commercial hospitality in the South would have required a willingness to recast the host-guest relationship to allow for a privileging of the rights of guests over and above the rights of hosts. This was a sacrifice that many southern hosts were unwilling to make. As the well-known lawyer and slavery apologist D. R. Hundley remarked in 1860, “the bane of hotel life and the curse of boarding houses have not as yet extended their pernicious influences to our Southern states” (qtd. Sandoval-Strausz 104).

The growing popularity of commercial hospitality was not the only sign of modernity that threatened to undermine the myth of the unconditional southern host. Modern developments, such as industrialization, urbanization, unionization, and first-wave feminism, challenged the foundational principles of the South’s politics of disavowal. Still holding fast to the myth of unconditional southern hospitality, defenders of the Old South condemned these modern developments for interfering with the region’s ability to carry on with its commitment to providing hospitality to strangers. In his “Introduction” to the Agrarian manifesto *I’ll Take My Stand* (1930), for example, John Crowe Ransom argued that modern industry had produced a “curse” on southern

“manners” and “hospitality” (xv). Similarly, Josephine Pinckney, the southern poet and novelist, wrote in 1935 that urbanization threatened household security and therefore the southern ethos of hospitality. “[M]istrust of strangers,” Pinckney claimed, is “an inevitable part of metropolitan psychology” (42). Yearning for the old days, when southerners could “leave the door on the latch, secure in the knowledge that none but friends will open it,” Pinckney bemoaned conditions in the modern South where, she argued, “quick and easy transportation” was producing a region “full to overcrowding with people” (42, 47). Moreover, Pinckney noted feminism’s role in destabilizing traditional distinctions in gender roles throughout the South and the inevitable effects this destabilization had on the production of hospitality in southern households. The “modern lady,” Pinckney asserted, was in “sharp conflict” with the figure of the plantation mistress (43-4). By 1936, the year that Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone With The Wind* captivated the attention of the South, there was no question that the ideology of southern hospitality was in crisis.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

¹ Paul Wistach's account of Washington's hospitality is representative of the extensive Mount Vernon mythology: "Every one was welcome: brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, and cousins to remote degrees; friends passing north and south, crossing from Maryland to lower Virginia, or only on their way to the plantation next beyond. Not least welcome were strangers . . ." (89). For other accounts that idealize Washington's hospitality at Mount Vernon, see Dalzell & Dalzell 192-98, Hunter 30-3, Latrobe 50-63, and Lee 26.

² By 1786, Washington "had succeeded in establishing a slave labor force that performed virtually all of the essential functions of the estate: from overseer to miller, from household cook to blacksmith" (Hirschfield 18). According to Washington's financial accounts, he owned 216 slaves in 1786, 122 of whom he identified as productive men and women, 88 of whom he identified as children. By 1799, he had increased his labor force to 317 slaves (20). Despite constituting "the backbone" of Washington's labor force, Washington's slaves were "entitled to nothing more than food and a roof over their heads" (32). For critical accounts of Washington's treatment of slaves written by foreign visitors to Mount Vernon, see Niemcewicz 102 and Parkinson 420-54.

³ Even the few scholars of American literature who have taken up hospitality as a central component of their work have failed to recognize the larger and more exigent implications of their inquiries, thereby severely limiting their focus. Puspa L. Damai concentrates in his dissertation on what he calls "minor" scenes of welcome that deal specifically with the "politics of belonging (11, 29), Joseph A. George focuses in his dissertation on scenes of hospitality in post-World War II suburban American literature, and Cynthia Schoolar Williams emphasizes transatlantic forms of intellectual hospitality between the US and Britain from 1815-1835.

⁴ Derrida also uses the terms "pure" hospitality ("A" 129; "PH" 7), "absolute" hospitality (*OH* 25), and "the hospitality of visitation" ("H" 14) when referring to unconditional hospitality. In addition, he also uses the terms "tolerance" ("A" 127-28) and "the hospitality of invitation" ("H" 14) when referring to conditional hospitality.

⁵ In both *Of Hospitality* and "The Principle of Hospitality," Derrida argues that asking a guest to speak the language of the host is the "first act of violence" in an exchange of hospitality (*OH* 15-7; "'PH" 7).

⁶ Derrida refers to this necessary repetition of exchange, this "double postulation of giving and taking," as the "law of iterability": "For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, counter-gift, or debt" ("H" 7; *GT* 12). Accordingly, Derrida concludes, "no one welcomed is ever completely welcome" ("H" 6).

⁷ Derrida began using the term "affirmative" to characterize deconstruction as early as the mid-1960s. In a number of conference papers and articles published between 1964 and 1967, Derrida articulated his emerging theory and practice of "affirmation" through

repeated references to the *affirmative* and *affirming* work of his philosophical and literary influences. In these essays, he speaks of Edmond Jabès's "persistent affirmation" of "*le libre*" ("EJ" 65), Emmanuel Levinas's "reaffirming ethics" of the face-to-face encounter ("VM" 111), Antonin Artaud's "*revolutionary* affirmation" of cruelty ("PS" 189; "TC" 232-33), Claude Lévi-Strauss's contradictory "affirmation" of nature and culture ("SSP" 284), and Michel Foucault's transgressive "nonpositive affirmation" (*WD* 335). Most importantly, Derrida concludes two of his most famous early essays—"Différance" and "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences"—by employing Nietzsche's notion of Dionysian affirmation to describe the objectives of deconstruction ("D" 27; "SSP" 292). Faced with the knowledge of a world without a center—that is, without the presence of a transcendental signified capable of orienting and structuring all things—Derrida advises a practice of affirmation committed to rejoicing in the infinite "possibility of play" ("SSP" 292; "E" 297). As the final paragraphs of "Différance" and "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" make apparent, the primary source of Derrida's notion of affirmation is Nietzsche's idea of Dionysian affirmation, introduced in *The Birth of Tragedy* and elaborated on in several other works, most notably *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *The Will to Power*. Through his theory of "the eternal circulation" and his belief in the liberating power of suffering, Nietzsche argues that the "highest state a philosopher can attain" is an "absolute affirmation of the world"—that is, an affirmation of the world "as it is, without subtraction, exception, or selection" (*Will to Power* IV 1019, 1041). Positing that everything in the world amounts to a "great ring" where no one thing is "self-sufficient," Nietzsche asserts that "everything is equally valuable, eternal, necessary" (*Will to Power* II 293, IV 1032). Accordingly, he concludes, "If we affirm one single moment, we thus affirm not only ourselves but all existence" (*Will to Power* IV 1032). For Nietzsche, therefore, affirmation involves accepting and celebrating time as endlessly revolving, as comprised of perpetually repeating moments of commensurate value. Nietzsche's vision of affirming the future that "is to come" through a celebration of the eternal present is a central component of Derrida's theory of hospitality. Through Derrida, we come to see the "gateway" of the moment as an opportunity to welcome the future in the present, to welcome simultaneously both the present guest and the coming guest of the future—what Derrida would call the guest "*à venir*" ("A" 120). By the late 1970s and early 1980s, Derrida began to refer regularly to deconstruction as an "affirmative movement," one focused on celebrating *différance* rather than bemoaning nonpresence ("WB" 149; *S* 36-7). During the early 1990s, he reiterated his emphasis on the affirmative character of deconstruction in texts like *Spectres of Marx*, where he stresses deconstruction's integral role in clearing the way for a radical kind of "affirmative thinking" that makes it possible to imagine and produce "new effective forms of action" (94, 111-12).

⁸ In his essay "Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce," Derrida is clear to point out that the "yes of affirmation" is a "living yes," a relational act of engagement addressed to the other and grounded in a specific time and place ("UG" 56). An ethics of affirmation, therefore, involves offering hospitality in the spirit of the *affirmative*: "Yes, I speak to you, I address you, I listen to you" ("TL" 180). Without this "yes" and the moment of undecidability that precedes it, affirmative hospitality would not be possible.

⁹ Derrida emphasizes the important function that hospitality plays in cultivating culture. In "The Principle of Hospitality," he writes, "Doubtless, all ethics of hospitality are not

the same, but there is no culture or social bond without a principle of hospitality” (6). In *Rogues*, he refers to the interpersonal bond that hospitality makes possible and promotes as “living together” (11).

¹⁰ “The other is infinitely other because we never have any access to the other *as such*. That is why he/she is *the* other. This separation, this dissociation is not only a limit, but it is also the condition of the relation to the other, a non-relation as relation. When Levinas speaks of separation, the separation is the condition of the social bond” (“HJR” 71)

¹¹ In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Julia Kristeva refers to this approach to hospitality as making an effort to “live *as others*,” to be consciously conscious of “*being an other*” (2, 13). She advises an ethics of hospitality grounded in a willingness to imagine oneself in the “*place*” of the guest, which includes relating in a non-reductive way with the other by recalling what it feels like to be in the position of the arriving stranger (13).

¹² Derrida further describes the openness of the host as a “rational experience of *receiving*,” of responding openly to “*what arrives, what comes about*” (A 48; “UWC” 234). Furthermore, the host who is open to the guest endeavors to learn from and about their guest without making the process of knowledge-gathering a “condition” of hospitality (“PH” 7). In other words, the host’s affirmation of the guest comes not in interrogating the other or in reducing the other to what Levinas would call “the same” but in affirming what they *receive* from the other: “Hospitality consists in doing everything to address the other, to accord him, even to ask him his name, while keeping this question from being a ‘condition’ . . .” (“PH” 7)

¹³ In *The Singularity of Literature*, Derek Attridge advocates a similar kind of creativity on behalf of the host: “. . . respect for the singularity of the other person requires that *each time* we encounter him or her we do so with a readiness to be creative in our response—an imperative that also springs from the fact that he or she is no longer exactly the same person as before. ‘The other’ in this situation is therefore not, strictly speaking, a *person* as conventionally understood in ethics or psychology; it is once again a relation—or a relating—between me, as the same, and that which, in its uniqueness, is heterogeneous to me and interrupts my sameness. If I succeed in responding adequately to the otherness and singularity of the other, it is the other *in its relating to me*—always in a specific time and place—to which I am responding, in creatively changing myself and perhaps a little of the world as well” (33).

¹⁴ My observations about the deliberative quality of affirmative hospitality are based in part on theories of deliberative democracy outlined by Chantal Mouffe (1999 & 2013), Amanda Anderson, Seyla Benhabib, and Joshua Cohen. That being said, the deliberative quality of affirmative hospitality is not entirely consistent with established accounts of deliberative democracy.

¹⁵ As Derrida points out, the very idea of unconditional hospitality provides us with a foundation for imagining what a “pure ethics” might look like, but the inherent conditionality of hospitality is what makes an ethical decision possible: “So when I say ‘I don’t know what to do,’ this is not the negative condition of decision. It is rather the possibility of a decision” (“A” 129-131; “HJR 66). In other words, we can “take responsibility” for an act of hospitality only because it requires us to deliberate (“HJR” 66).

¹⁶ Rather than allow a fixation on the “incalculable” to result in paralysis, the host must accept the fact that every act of hospitality is necessarily imperfectible, inherently flawed

from the very outset, limited by the phenomenological fact of “infinite alterity” (“HJR” 71). To “overcome” the “aporetic contradiction” posed by the arrival of the guest, the host must be willing to make a decision that “proceeds beyond knowledge,” to surrender himself or herself to the unknown (“H” 8).

Chapter 1

¹⁷ As Robert Benton observes, “Breakfast” is the most “neglected” story in Steinbeck’s *The Long Valley* collection (33). In 1972, *Steinbeck Quarterly* dedicated two editions to critical essays on *The Long Valley*. However, Tetsumaro Hayashi, the journal’s editor, chose not to include an essay on “Breakfast,” reasoning that the story is a “comparatively insignificant piece” (67). In his essay on “Breakfast,” Benton limits his discussion to Steinbeck’s “craftsmanship” (33). He argues that the integration of the short story into *The Grapes of Wrath* demonstrates Steinbeck’s refined prose (36-7). Gary Schmidt suggests that “Breakfast” was inspired by Steinbeck’s “walks around the migrant camps of the Salinas Valley” in the summer of 1934 (304). David Wyatt has put forward the most comprehensive and convincing examination of “Breakfast,” especially in terms of the story’s relationship to the revised scene in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Wyatt argues that the encounter between Tom Joad and the Wallaces at Weedpatch suggests that the romantic image of “Breakfast” is “no longer attractive or credible to Steinbeck” (22). For more on “Breakfast,” see also Meyer and Werlock.

¹⁸ “Breakfast” was first published in *Pacific Weekly* on November 9, 1936. It was then included in Steinbeck’s short story collection *The Long Valley* in 1938 (Benton 33; Werlock 36).

¹⁹ I date this shift in Steinbeck’s thinking from the summer of 1934, when he composed “Breakfast,” to the spring of 1938, when he began working on the manuscript for *The Grapes of Wrath*. John Timmerman reports that Steinbeck composed “Breakfast” by the “end of August” 1934 (xvii). Steinbeck began working on what became the manuscript for *The Grapes of Wrath* in late May of 1938 (*Working Days* 19).

²⁰ See Cerce 29, Denning 266, Szalay 175, and Veggian 355.

²¹ As Ann Campbell has noted, the “practical effect” of Steinbeck’s novel on the Roosevelt administration and Congress was undeniable: the Farm Security Administration, the New Deal agency in charge of the migrant federal camps, “was the only relief agency to get a larger appropriation out of Congress [in 1939] than the Bureau of the Budget had recommended” (404).

²² Casy maintains a deferential attitude toward the Joads and the hospitality they provide. Perhaps more than anyone else in the novel, he is aware of the importance of reciprocity. His inability to return the Joads’ hospitality in any substantive way leads him to consider leaving the family even before he is arrested: “I was thinkin’ I’d go off alone by myself. I’m a-eating’ your food an’ a-takin’ up room. An’ I ain’t give you nothin’. Maybe I could get a steady job an’ maybe pay back some a the stuff you’ve give me” (251).

²³ However, it is also from the Hudson that the Joads withhold hospitality. In New Mexico, for example, Tom turns down a one-eyed mechanic’s request to join them in the Hudson truck: “Christ, no. We’re so goddamn full now we can’t move” (180).

²⁴ It is worth making a distinction here between “categorical” and “unconditional” hospitality. The former implies that hospitality will always be provided when a stranger

arrives, whether expected or unexpected. The latter implies not only that hospitality will always be provided but also that the hospitality proffered is unlimited. In other words, “unconditional” hospitality implies that the resources and patience required to provide hospitality are infinite.

²⁵ For an alternative reading of this scene, see Motley 402-03.

²⁶ Ma Joad demonstrates her indoctrination in this patriarchal ideology in this scene when Jim Casy assumes the task of salting down the meat for supper. “It’s women’s work,” she tells Casy (107).

²⁷ For analyses that focus on Steinbeck’s treatment of family in *The Grapes of Wrath*, see Cunningham 49, Hunter 44-7, Sklar 509-26, Williamson 92-3, and Wyatt 19.

²⁸ My analysis here is very much influenced by Homi Bhabha’s notion of fetishistic discourses of disavowal. Bhabha argues that colonialist discourses employs a “complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode” when it comes to the “ideological construction of otherness” (“The Other” 18-22). Through fetishism, Bhabha shows, colonialist discourse attempts to disavow difference. The result is a “form of multiple and contradictory belief,” a mode of representation that relies both on “recognition of difference and [a] disavowal of it” (27).

²⁹ For a discussion about the representatively American qualities of the Joads, see Owens 132-34.

³⁰ For historical accounts of migrant farm labor in California, see Daniel, McWilliams *Factories*, and Taylor & Vasey.

³¹ In 1942, Carey McWilliams reported, “Between July 1, 1935, and July 1, 1939, approximately 350,000 dust-bowl migrants—farmers and the descendants of farmers—crossed the Arizona border into California . . .” (*Ill Fares* 30). The vast majority of these migrants—nine out of ten—McWilliams found, were “native White Americans” (*Ill Fares* 33; *Factories* 308). The result, McWilliams concluded, was that “Negroes, Mexicans, and foreign-born” now constituted “less than 5 per cent of the total” migrant population in California (33). However, more recently, James Gregory has identified a significant discrepancy between early reports about the number of Dust Bowl families who migrated to California and the actual figures. Making a distinction between Dust Bowl states and southwestern states, Gregory suggests that “less than 16,000 people from the Dust Bowl proper ended up in California, barely 6 percent of the total from the Southwestern states” (11). Gregory argues that the reason for the discrepancy was a widespread confusion by journalists about the difference between “dust” and “drought” (11). However, neither Gregory’s nor McWilliams’s statistics contradict the fact that *The Grapes of Wrath* does not reflect an accurate portrait of the relative number of non-white migrants in California during the late 1930s.

³² Various scholars have analyzed Steinbeck’s use of the dialectical form in *Grapes*, but none has made the argument that the intercalary chapters challenge the repressive nature of the narrative chapters. For a sampling of these analyses, see Griesbach, Owens & Torres, and Motley 404.

³³ In his analysis of Morrison’s *Beloved*, Bhabha describes this act of literary reinscription as a process of releasing “unspoken” acts from “erasure and repression” (“The World” 146).

³⁴ “To take up the figure of the door, for there to be hospitality, there must be a door. But if there is a door, there is no longer hospitality. There is no hospitable house. There is no

house without doors and windows. But as soon as there are a door and windows, it means that someone has the key to them and consequently controls the conditions of hospitality. There must be a threshold. But if there is a threshold, there is no longer hospitality” (“H” 14).

³⁵ “In France, the phrase ‘threshold of tolerance’ was used to describe the limit beyond which it is no longer decent to ask a national community to welcome any more foreigners, immigrant workers, and the like. François Mitterand once used this unfortunate expression as a self-justifying word of caution: beyond a certain number of foreigners or immigrants who do not share our nationality, our language, our culture, and our customs, a quasi-organic and unpreventable—in short, a natural—phenomenon of rejection can be expected” (“A” 128)

³⁶ “Squatter villages varying in size from a few families to several hundred persons located near an outlying service station or grocery store where residents obtained water and supplies. Estimates of the number of families living under such conditions ranged well into the thousands during 1937, when the squatter problem was at its worst” (Gregory 64). For the distinction between “Hooverilles” and “Little Oklahomas,” or “Okieilles,” see Gregory 70-7.

³⁷ For accounts of the poor conditions in the Hooverilles, see Stanley 25-26 and Gregory 64-8.

³⁸ Charles Cunningham, for example, contends that Steinbeck “relies on the ideological notion of the self-contained family to win the reader’s concern for the Joads, and then argues for the necessity of communal, rather than familial, welfare” (358). See also Hunter 44-7, Sklar 509-26, Williamson 92-3, and Wyatt 19.

³⁹ Of all the Joads, Uncle John has the most difficulty coming to terms with conditionality. In the Hooverville scene, Ma’s query causes Uncle John, who has already filled his plate, to look up and “see” the begging children for the “first time” (257). Immediately feeling guilty for not being able to provide enough food for the children, Uncle John declares that he has lost his appetite. Unable to eat in front of the children or any place where he himself might be able to “see ‘em,” John foregoes his dinner (257). Throughout the novel, Uncle John struggles with an inability to accept his own sin: “Yeah, but you ain’t got a sin on your soul like me” (224). Casy tries to get him to accept sin as a reality of life: “Ever’body got sins. A sin is somepin you ain’t sure about. Them people that’s sure about ever’thing an’ ain’t got no sin . . .” (224). But Uncle John remains beaten down by his own guilt: “No good to nobody—jus’ a-draggin’ my sins like dirty drawers ‘mongst nice folks” (276). It is also worth noting that Uncle John’s inability to eat his food while the starving children are watching resembles a scene in Tom Collins’s memoir *Bringing in the Sheaves*, in which Collins describes Steinbeck’s inability to eat after having returned from the Visalia flooding in March 1938: “I can’t eat that after what I have seen these past two weeks Makes me sick to look at it. Why should I eat this fine meal while those thousands out there are in such misery?” (Collins 224).

⁴⁰ The cartoon’s accompanying article reads: “In directing the formation of a special Federal co-ordinating group on migrants, [Roosevelt] has authorized a constructive program, which we hope will be put in operation, as he directed, to ‘find a way without delay to extend all possible co-operation to the state in alleviating the conditions existing’” (“Welcome” par. 2). However, I have been unable to identify particulars about the “coordinating group” referred to in the article.

⁴¹ In reference to state hospitality, Mireille Rosello has used the term “supra host” to describe the preeminent position of the state vis-à-vis other host-figures (175).

⁴² This is not to say that Steinbeck entirely abandons his support of federal welfarism. Indeed, as Cliff Lewis has convincingly shown, Steinbeck continued to work and advocate on behalf of New Deal policies through the 1940s (23-36).

⁴³ Even before Wilson, both Art Kuhl and Burton Rascoe denounced *The Grapes of Wrath* as “usual propaganda” (163) and “silly propaganda” respectively in their 1939 reviews (38).

⁴⁴ Focusing his attention primarily on Steinbeck’s public and clandestine work on behalf of the Roosevelt administration during the 1940s, Lewis argues convincingly that Steinbeck was a dedicated and valuable proponent of New Deal federalism. Yet, Lewis’s findings cannot erase the reality of Steinbeck’s critical account of the FSA program in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

⁴⁵ See Cerce for a reading of Weedpatch as a “communist utopia” (29).

⁴⁶ See Keane for a detailed and enlightening analysis of Zanuck’s film alongside Steinbeck’s novel.

⁴⁷ For a reading of Zanuck’s *Weedpatch* as a “ringing endorsement of Roosevelt’s New Deal,” see Denning 266.

⁴⁸ “Earlier in the novel, there had in fact been two climactic scenes, with which he might have concluded his tale on an upbeat note more appropriate to its avowed politics. The first of these (with which John Ford did in fact end his film version—in homage presumably to F.D.R. and the New Deal) occurs when the Joads discover . . . It seems to me, however, that the milk of a half-starved Okie girl is not likely to be copious and rich enough to sustain life and that, in any case, the old man she is suckles is beyond the point of saving. . . . In my opinion, therefore, *The Grapes of Wrath* ends not on the note of pseudo-Emersonian cosmic optimism which it has sustained up to that point but on a note of tragic despair . . .” (Fiedler 63)

⁴⁹ For readings of “The Harvest Gypsies” that treat the series as evidence of Steinbeck’s federalist politics in *The Grapes of Wrath*, see Cox “Fact” and Denning. For a reading that refutes Denning’s claims about the similarities between the novel and “The Harvest Gypsies,” see Cunningham 343-58.

⁵⁰ “Earlier in [August 1936] he had had a visit from George West, chief editorial editor for the *San Francisco News*, who asked him to write a series of articles for the *News* on migrant farm labor in California. West wanted Steinbeck to go into the agricultural areas of the state and observe living and working conditions for himself, to report on these and to focus particularly on the Dust Bowl migration and attempts by the federal government to ease the problem by constructing sanitary camps for the migrants” (Benson *True* 332). Benson suggests that the Resettlement Administration sought out Steinbeck because the agency was “having a hard time selling its program” (332). For more on the historical origins of “The Harvest Gypsies” series, see Benson “To Tom” 173-75 and 181-82, as well as Benson *True* 332-38. On the role that *In Dubious Battle* played in generating Steinbeck’s reputation as a labor sympathizer, see DeMott *Working* xxxiv-xxxvi.

⁵¹ For more on the history of the Arvin Camp, see Stanley 29-33 and Campbell.

⁵² Roosevelt created the Resettlement Administration (RA) in the spring of 1935 by executive order. The RA “gathered together several administrative bits and pieces and consolidated them as a new federal agency” (Baldwin 3). During the summer of 1937, the

RA was transformed into the Farm Security Administration and placed under control of the Department of Agriculture (Baldwin 3; Stein 155). Within the reconstituted FSA was the Resettlement Division, which was responsible for administering the migrant labor camps (Baldwin 222). As Sidney Baldwin reports, “With establishment of the FSA in 1937, a Migratory Farm Labor Section was created in the Resettlement Division, with responsibility for administering a labor camp program. . . . The program promptly expanded to include temporary and permanent camps and shelters, with sanitary facilities, medical care, and recreational facilities, located wherever migrants congregated along the routes of seasonal travel in several states. By the end of 1942, the FSA had built ninety-five camps, with accommodations for approximately 75,000 people. Although the primary purpose of the program was merely to improve the living conditions of the migrants while en route between work and not to alter their status, the leaders of the FSA continued to dream of a program that some day might grant this class of farm families great permanent economic and social security and stronger bargaining power” (222). For more on the origins and history of the RA/FSA camps, see Benson “To Tom” 160-63 and Stein 150-92.

⁵³ Collins is also the “Tom” to whom Steinbeck dedicates his novel: “To TOM who lived it.”

⁵⁴ For more on Steinbeck’s visit to Arvin and the relationship between Steinbeck and Collins, see Benson “To Tom,” Collins, Cox “Fact” 12-5, DeMott “Truly” 274-77, and Wollenberg vii.

⁵⁵ After visiting the San Joaquin Valley but before his “Harvest Gypsies” series was featured in *The San Francisco New*, Steinbeck also published an article in *The Nation* (“Dubious Battle in California”) on September 12, 1936. Like his “Harvest Gypsies” articles, the piece in *The Nation* characterizes the Okies as a “new race” of migrants who should be “given the right to live decently” (304). However, in *The Nation*, Steinbeck mentions the federal camps in only one sentence, focusing his attention instead on the horrid conditions in the squatters’ camps (303).

⁵⁶ For critical readings of Steinbeck’s “Harvest Gypsies” series, see Cunningham 18-29 and Wollenberg.

⁵⁷ As one Weedpatch resident explains, “This here’s United States, not California” (334).

⁵⁸ I am by no means suggesting that Steinbeck abandons his support for Roosevelt’s New Deal welfarism. Indeed, Steinbeck’s first contact with Roosevelt comes on February 9, 1939, when he sends a telegram to the White House protesting the “curtailment of the FSA Camps and relief program” (qtd. in Lewis 24). I am simply suggesting that Steinbeck came to the conclusion during the late 1930s that federal relief camps were not a solution to the migrant labor problem in California.

⁵⁹ Steinbeck returned to the San Joaquin Valley for a month during the fall of 1937, then for two weeks in February of 1938, and finally for approximately a week during March of 1938. For more on the precise details of these visits, see Steinbeck *Life* 158-62, Collins 213-26, Benson *True* 369-77, DeMott *Working Days* xxxvi-xlii, and DeMott “Truly” 281-83.

⁶⁰ Steinbeck’s “Foreword” to Collins’s memoir attests to the accuracy of the camp manager’s accounts, as do Steinbeck’s diary and letters, which confirm the timeline of events outlined in *Bringing in the Sheaves*. For a history of Collins’s memoir, see DeMott “Introduction” xxix.

⁶¹ In part, Steinbeck's changed attitude toward welfarism resulted simply from his realization that federal aid was an inadequate solution as long as citizens, businesses, and organizations in California persisted in "sabotaging" the government's relief efforts (Steinbeck *Life* 158). Until Californians were ready to treat migrant laborers as welcome guests and not as uninvited "outsiders," the hospitality of the federal government served merely as a temporary solution to a much larger problem (*Life* 158).

⁶² As Steinbeck's diary and letters make clear, it was the sickening images that he observed and the tragic stories that he heard during the Visalia flood that provided the impetus for his narrative about the Joads and the source material for the final chapters in his novel. In particular, one story that Steinbeck describes in a letter to Elizabeth Otis seems to have provided him with the idea for the novel's final scene: "And we found a boy in jail for a felony because he stole two old radiators because his mother was starving to death and in stealing them he broke a little padlock on a shed" (*Life* 161).

⁶³ For more on the "grand-in-aid" program and other similar New Deal programs, see Stein 140-44.

⁶⁴ Walter Stein notes that the Roosevelt administration initially provided support to interstate migrants through relief measures passed during the First Hundred Days but that this support was abandoned by mid-1935: "By mid-1935, the Roosevelt administration had determined that the federal government could well afford to remove itself from the business of direct relief. FERA was gradually phased out, and direct relief was replaced with public works and work relief programs. . . . The federal government's sole attempt to aid interstate migrants ended" (143).

⁶⁵ Through Tom's dialogue with the Wallaces, we get the impression that the FSA culture at Weedpatch discourages migrants from identifying themselves by name. As Timothy Wallace explains, "you git outa the habit a mentionin' your name" (292). The fact that Tom learns the Wallaces names in *Grapes* is another way in which the hospitality he receives is conditional. As Derrida explains, the difference "between the foreigner and the absolute other is that the latter cannot have a name or a family name" (*OH* 25).

⁶⁶ In this sense, Steinbeck's account of Weedpatch accords with Carey McWilliams's renowned account in *Factories in the Field*: "But the migratory camps are not a solution" (303).

⁶⁷ Tom is asked to identify his name, his father's name, his state of origin, his occupation, his family's financial status, and the details of his stay in California thus far (286-87).

⁶⁸ Of course, the Joads are welcomed into Weedpatch only because the watchman does not know that Tom is a fugitive from the law who has broken his parole by leaving the state of Oklahoma.

⁶⁹ In rare cases when non-whites were received into federal camps, the FSA maintained a system of racial segregation (Stein 171). However, aware that California's non-white population was "strongly opposed to segregation in tax supported camps," the FSA never formally acknowledged its "unofficial practice" of internal segregation (Stein 171). According to Walter Stein, when Tom Collins, the manager at the Arvin Federal Camp, was asked about the FSA practices of racial exclusion and segregation in the case of African-Americans, he reported that the FSA "do[es] not discriminate—color—race or creed" but that if "a need arises . . . we . . . can easily solve it by suggesting to the Negro group that they occupy a certain section, and if necessary explain to them the advantage

of having the colored group to itself” (171). For more on the demographics of the FSA camps, see Gregory 143, 183, and 264 n. 42.

⁷⁰ Whereas Steinbeck describes the New Deal relief camps as a “unique” form of federal hospitality in his “Harvest Gypsies” series (40), he deliberately portrays Weedpatch in *The Grapes of Wrath* as representative of an existing tradition of exclusive and contingent American hospitality. In particular, Steinbeck draws a subtle but significant parallel between the federal hospitality offered to migrant laborers at FSA camps and the federal hospitality offered to Native Americans on reservations. In response to Tom’s observation that he looks “all Injun,” Jules Vitela, the “half-Cherokee” laborer at Weedpatch, bemoans the fact that he does not possess enough Indian blood to warrant receiving a plot of land on a reservation: “Wisht I was a full-blood. I’d have my lan’ on the reservation. Them full-bloods got it pretty nice, some of ‘em” (339). Vitela’s allusion to the similarly conditional nature of federal hospitality on Native-American reservations invites us to view the FSA camps not as unprecedented experiments in New Deal welfarism but as symptomatic of a longstanding pattern in American political history.

⁷¹ Critics have traditionally interpreted Steinbeck’s depiction of the Weedpatch Ladies’ Committee and of the camp itself as endorsing the FSA’s Marxist culture of welfarism. Danica Cerce, for example, argues that Steinbeck’s Weedpatch imagines a “utopian communist society,” inasmuch as “all the mebers work towards a common goal (the welfare of the whole community and each individual), help and respect each other, and share their sorrows and joys” (30).

⁷² Earlier scenes in the novel draw our attention to a pervasive anxiety in the migrant community about being seen as soliciting the “charity” of others. When the Joads stop at a gas station in western Oklahoma, they become offended when the proprietor implies that they might be “beggin’”: “We’re payin’ our way . . . You got no call to give us a goin’-over. We ain’t asked you for nothin’” (126). Shortly thereafter, Pa proudly announces, “We never took nothin’ we couldn’ pay; we never suffered no man’s charity” (139). The Joads’ opposition to charity—that is, to receiving something without paying for it—is grounded in their fervent belief in reciprocal exchange. They believe they have an ethical obligation to pay, work, or trade for what they receive, and they are hostile to any suggestion to the contrary. As their relationship with the Wilsons demonstrates, this sense of ethical obligation is particularly important to the Joads in cases of offering and/or receiving hospitality. When the Wilsons’ welcome a dying Grampa into their tent, the Joads feel “beholden” to their hosts (139).

⁷³ For other discussions on the subject of “charity” at Weedpatch and in other FSA camps, see Gregory 283 n. 103, Cox 20, and Cunningham 340-41.

⁷⁴ In his parody of the Weedpatch Ladies’ Committee, Steinbeck demonstrates how the FSA camps, as American spaces of exceptional hospitality, functioned as ideological apparatuses of the state. Although the FSA camps did provide hospitality to homeless and unemployed migrants, they also worked to reassert and normalize codes of behavior according to the prevailing values of the federal government. Like Indian reservations, which were designed to fundamentally transform the cultural patterns of Native Americans, and, later, Indian boarding schools, which were devised to destroy tribal identities, the FSA camps were envisaged as spaces that could facilitate the “obliteration” of migrant individualism (Stein 173). Crediting an ethos of rugged individualism with causing the Dust Bowl in the first place, FSA officials hoped to use the relief camps to

“remake” Okies in the image of “cooperative citizens” by teaching them to subordinate their private interests to the welfare of the community (Stein 166-73).

⁷⁵ Desperate to have something to believe in, they dream of a “rich” and “new” land where “you can reach anywhere and pick an orange” and where anyone “can start again” (87, 34). For critics who have written about Steinbeck’s engagement with the mythology of California in *The Grapes of Wrath*, see August, Fossey, Owens, and Wyatt.

⁷⁶ The Joads’ stubborn belief in the trustworthiness of advertisements is not limited to handbills. Rose of Sharon, for example, fashions her imagined future life in California with Connie out of what she’s “seen” in pulp romance magazines: “An’ after he studies at night, why—it’ll be nice, an’ he tore a page outa *Western Love Stories*, an’ he’s gonna send off for a course, ‘cause it don’t cost nothin’ to send off. Says right on that clipping. I seen it” (164-65).

⁷⁷ As a metaphor for false gestures of hospitality, the handbills could signify what Walter Benjamin might call the “decay” of hospitality’s “aura” (“Work” 223). In the absence of the face-to-face encounter, the textual invitation replaces “authenticity” and “uniqueness” with “reproducibility” (“Work” 220-24).

⁷⁸ As Frank Taylor reported as early as November of 1939, “Only two cases were unearthed, one by a labor contractor in Santa Barbara County, another by an Imperial Valley contractor. The licenses of both have since been revoked. At the Associated Farmers head office in San Francisco, I saw hundreds of clippings from Midwest newspapers—publicity inspired by the Association—advising migrants not to come to California” (238).

⁷⁹ For Derrida’s work on written speech acts, see “Signature Event Context” in *LI* 1-23. For scholars who have written about Derrida and hospitality within the context of speech-act theory, see Burt 109-39 and de Ville 45-57.

⁸⁰ At the same time, however, Steinbeck demonstrates the extent to which survival in the migrant world often depends on the hospitality of others and, therefore, requires migrants both to be more cognizant of false invitations of hospitality and to be less selective at the same time.

⁸¹ It is worth noting that one of the conditions of the driver’s hospitality is that Tom must withstand his host’s “secret investigating casualness” (9). Observing from the start that Tom is wearing brand new clothes, the driver engages in a “subtle examination” throughout their ride in an attempt to learn Tom’s background, particularly the reason for his imprisonment at McAlester (8).

⁸² The truckers, on the other hands, are a different case altogether. Mae sees them as “the backbone of the joint” (154). Unlike the migrants, the truckers are worth Mae’s time: “Treat ‘em right an’ they come back” (154). Hence, Mae always “smiles” at them, “fixes her hair back so that her breasts will lift with her raised arms,” and “passes the time of day” with them over “jokes” (154).

⁸³ This lawless notion of hospitality extends to the Joads’ treatment of Grampa after he passes away. Although they wish they could bury him back in Oklahoma, they are grateful for the opportunity to bury him themselves. “Grampa buried his pa with his own hand, done it in dignity, an’ shaped the grave nice with his own shovel,” Pa explains. “That was a time when a man had the right to be buried by his own son an’ a son had the right to bury his own father” (140). Here, Pa makes a clear distinction between the law and what he calls “decency” (140). “Sometimes,” he argues, “the law can’t be foller’d no

way. . . . Sometimes a fella got to sift the law” (140). Here, Pa advocates an ethics that values hospitable obligations to the dead above the rule of law. Although they are forced to bury Grampa in a land that is “foreign” to him, they strive to maintain the rituals of tradition: “Then the shovel went from hand to hand until every man had his turn. When all had taken their duty and their right, Pa attacked the mound of loose dirt and hurriedly filled the hole” (144). Later, after Granma dies, the Joads feel the same responsibility to give her a proper burial, but they no longer have enough money to be hospitable to the dead: “You ain’t to feel bad. We couldn’ no matter how hard we tried, no matter what we done. We jus’ didn’ have it; embalming, an’ a coffin an’ preacher, an’ a plot in a graveyard. It would of took ten times what we got. We done the bes’ we could” (240-41).

⁸⁴ Perhaps the most powerful patriarchal image in the novel is Steinbeck’s tableaux of the Joads’ squatting circle: Pa, Uncle John, and Grampa—“the nucleus” of the family—squat in the center of the circle, close to the land, while the women and children take their places around the men (100). See Motley for a detailed analysis of the “patriarchal structure” of the squatting circle (402-03).

⁸⁵ For more on the distinction between the trope of the female “hostess” and the “female host,” see Still and McNulty.

⁸⁶ In perhaps the most scathing attack of Steinbeck’s final scene, Howard Levant describes the end of *The Grapes of Wrath* as “a disaster from the outset” and charges Steinbeck with allowing his “extreme dependence on allegory” to prevent him from achieving any semblance of narrative “credibility”: “. . . there is no more than a formulated ending, a pseudoclose that does not convince because its design is an a priori assertion of structure, not the supportive and necessary skeleton of a realized context” (32-3). Furthermore, Leslie Fiedler denounces Rose of Sharon’s gesture as futile, arguing that “the milk of a half-starved Okie girl is not likely to be copious and rich enough to sustain life and that, in any case, the old man she suckles is beyond the point of saving . . .” (63).

⁸⁷ Of course, numerous scholars have also celebrated Steinbeck’s final scene, lauding it as “splendid” (de Scheinitz 369); “honest, honorable, and even prophetic” (Chametzky 57); and “optimistic” (Pollock 226). In vigorous defense of Steinbeck, Peter Lisca argues that “the novel’s thematic treatment of material made it possible for Steinbeck to end on a high point, to bring his novel to a symbolic climax without doing violence to credulity, structure, or theme” (308-09). A number of critics have also argued that Rose of Sharon’s act is representative of hope and regeneration (see Carpenter 321, Ditsky 43, Hunter 47, McCarthy 66-7, and Sklar 526-27). Others have focused attention on the Christian symbolism in the scene (see Shockley, Dunn, and Rombold).

⁸⁸ A number of scholars have put forward detailed interpretations outlining and identifying the significance and meaning of Roseharn’s “mysterious” smile. Howard Sklar argues that the smile represents “a silent recognition of the naturalness of extending sympathy beyond the confines of one’s circule of family” (526). Jennifer Williamson suggests that the smile “holds as much threat as it does allure” (92). Warren Motley maintains that Roseharn’s smile “announces her initiation into a matriarchal mystery: the capacity to nurture life” (411). However, what these analyses fail to recognize is that Steinbeck repeatedly associates Roseharn with an enigmatic smile throughout the novel. When we are first introduced to her, she is described as having a “self-sufficient smile”

(95). Shortly thereafter, we hear of her “self-satisfied smile” (98). Later, we are told that she looks at Connie and “smile[s] secretly” (129). Although Rose of Sharon clearly undergoes some sort of transformation in the final chapters of the novel, her “mysterious” smile in the closing scene does not point to that transformation.

⁸⁹ “. . . I am not claiming that hospitality is this double bind or this aporetic contradiction and that therefore wherever hospitality is, there is no hospitality. No, I am saying that this apparently aporetic paralysis on the threshold ‘is’ what must be overcome . . . It is necessary to do the impossible. (“H” 14)

⁹⁰ See, for example, Carpenter 321 and Motley 411.

Chapter Two

⁹¹ *Gone With The Wind* is filled with clearly identifiable scenes of hospitality and inhospitality. The novel opens with a scene in which Scarlett O’Hara commits a “breach of hospitality” when she fails to invite the Tartleton twins to stay at Tara for supper (43). Following this scene of withheld hospitality is the barbecue at Twelve Oaks, in which John Wilkes, “famed throughout the state for his hospitality,” welcomes friends and family to his plantation (107). Then, there is the dramatic scene after Charles Hamilton’s death when Aunt Pitty and Melanie welcome Scarlett into their Atlanta home and invite her to “make her home permanently with them” (160). There are the many scenes in which Rhett Butler is welcomed into the homes of female aristocrats in Atlanta (201, 224-26, 235-36). During the war, there are several scenes in which Scarlett and Melanie are forced to offer or withhold hospitality from starved and wounded soldiers (309, 320, 392, 418, 436, 451, 472-473, 478). Following the war, there are scenes in which Melanie welcomes strangers into the basement rooms of her Atlanta home (697-98, 704, 760). Finally, there are a number of scenes in which Scarlett and Rhett, once married, are either invited to or turned away from Atlanta parties based on their politics (804, 833, 863).

⁹² There are also passages in *Gone With The Wind* when the novel appears to suggest that the South did not abandon its commitment to unconditional hospitality in the postbellum period: “Times had changed, money was scarce, but nothing had altered the rule of Southern life that families always made room gladly for indigent or unmarried female relatives” (681-82).

⁹³ Unlike the broader category of the other, the stranger is, by definition, part of the traditional tropology of hospitality narratives. In hospitality stories, the stranger is a prospective guest. The stranger becomes a guest after receiving hospitality, which involves entering into a pact of hospitality with a host. The act of hospitality signals that the host has deemed the stranger non-hostile and capable of reciprocity. In addition, the act of hospitality confers on the stranger the status, privileges, and responsibilities of a guest (Benveniste 71-5; Maline 182-86; Ricoeur 38; van der Waat 22-3).

⁹⁴ In Chapter 13, Rhett asks Scarlett, “Why should I fight to uphold the system that cast me out?” (238).

⁹⁵ In the case in question, Rhett silences himself by asking to see John Wilkes’s library before any of the guests have a chance to confront him (124). At no point in *Gone With The Wind* is any character prevented from entering a household or forcibly removed from one. The closest incidence of an aspiring guest being sent away is when Melanie Wilkes persuades a Yankee soldier that it would be disrespectful to enter her home in search of

her husband and his Klu Klux Klan friends: "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Wilkes. I meant no disrespect. If you give me your word, I will not search the house" (744).

⁹⁶ For a detailed discussion on Mitchell's coding of Rhett as black, see Joel Williamson 97-100.

⁹⁷ Responses to the "rape" scene vary considerably in criticism about the novel. On one hand, Leslie Feidler writes that Rhett's rape of Scarlett is "based on a fantasy of inter-ethnic rape as the supreme expression of the violence between sexes and races" (247). On the other hand, Kenneth O'Brien argues that "Mitchell portrays rape as an integral facet of human sexual relations, having nothing to do with race" (162). At the same time, Kathryn Lee Seidel notes that Scarlett is "raped within the bounds of marriage: it is a rape but it is not" (56).

⁹⁸ Rhett Butler is not the only character in *Gone With The Wind* who Mitchell figures as a stranger and who provides us with a stranger's perspective on southern hospitality. For example, though he has been accepted into the aristocracy, Gerald O'Hara was originally a stranger to the South. Mitchell figures O'Hara as a stranger on multiple occasions (60, 68-69) and uses O'Hara's outsider's perspective to critique various aspects of southern hospitality (62).

⁹⁹ For studies about the secretive and deceptive elements of the Klan organization, see Chalmers and MacLean.

¹⁰⁰ Tracy McNulty and Judith Still have recently distinguished between "hostesses" and "female hosts." According to McNulty and Still, the traditional hostess functions as a sexualized body through which two or more men communicate with one another, whereas a female host assumes and displays sovereignty over a household and in exchanges of hospitality. In other words, whereas a hostess possesses authority that is inextricably linked to her sexuality and that is "delegated" to her by a male host, a female host operates with independence and autonomy in her relations with guests and household members (Still 151-52; McNulty xxxvii-xlii).

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Tippen.

¹⁰² One of the first things that Sutpen observes about life in coastal Virginia that is different from life in the mountains of western Virginia is that white men on the coast "evade" physical labor by having their slaves perform it for them (180). He first notices this when his family descends from the mountains and he sees "niggers working in the fields while white men sat fine horses and watched them" (183). This image of white men watching while their black slaves perform physical labor for them recurs over and over again in Sutpen's early observations of Tidewater life (179-85). In particular, Sutpen is mesmerized by the sight of black slaves performing menial "personal offices" for their white masters, the kinds of personal offices "that all men have had to do for themselves since time began and would have to do until they died and which no man ever has or ever will like to do but which no man that he knew had ever anymore thought of evading than he had thought of evading the effort of chewing and swallowing and breathing" (180). Among the personal offices that Sutpen observes slaves performing for their white masters are "pouring the very whiskey from the jug and putting the glass into his hand or pulling off his boots for him to go to bed" (180). In one instance, Sutpen fixates on the sight of a plantation owner lying comfortably in a hammock while his slave "fan[s] him," "bring[s] him drinks," "hand[s] him" jugs of water, and "carr[ies]" wood for him (184-85). So fascinated is Sutpen by the image of the plantation owner "being waited on" that

he “creep[s] up among the tangled shrubbery of the lawn and lie[s] hidden and watch[es]” as the black slave performs “endless repetitive personal offices” for him (179-80, 184-85). In this scene, the young Sutpen voyeuristically satisfies his own desire to evade work by watching the plantation owner being waited on by his slave. Putting himself in the place of the plantation owner, he imagines what it would be like to “not have to” perform personal offices for himself (185).

¹⁰³ As Sutpen watches the slave carry wood and water into the big house for the plantation owner’s sisters to wash and cook with, he notes “the pleasure” it would give his own sisters “for their neighbors . . . to see them being waited on” (185). In coming to this understanding, Sutpen realizes that it is not just the desire to evade work that motivates slaveholding southerners to have their slaves perform personal offices for them; it is also their desire to be seen not having to perform these offices themselves. Sutpen describes the kinds of work that his sisters perform—washing and cooking—as “brutish and stupidly out of all proportion to its reward,” as labor that “only a beast could and would endure” (191). If his sisters could evade this “brutish” work and be seen evading it, Sutpen concludes that his sisters would appear more human in the eyes of their neighbors. The “pleasure” that Sutpen imagines his sisters would receive by knowing that they are being watched by their neighbors is experienced vicariously by Sutpen as he watches the plantation owner and his sisters being attended to. This vicarious pleasure explains not only why Sutpen enjoys watching but also, in a more general sense, how and why the South’s fetishism of hospitality during the antebellum period was fed by the voyeuristic instinct. By engaging in voyeuristic acts like the one Sutpen engages in, non-slaveholding whites in the South could vicariously satisfy their own desires to evade physical labor and to be seen evading it.

¹⁰⁴ Sutpen also emphasizes the fetishistic nature and function of southern hospitality when he talks about how southerners are always “talking about” southern hospitality but “never” acknowledge out loud what they are really talking about: “. . . the men and the women were talking about the same thing though it had never once been mentioned by name, like when people talk about privation without mentioning the siege, about sickness without ever naming the epidemic” (186-87).

¹⁰⁵ See Freud’s essay “Fetishism” for the role that substitutive ideas play in helping to disavow fetishes.

¹⁰⁶ In Freudian terms, Sutpen’s positive vision of hospitality masks the class difference that was revealed by the scene at the big house and “restores” that difference with the appearance of an “original presence” (Bhabha “The Other Question” 27).

¹⁰⁷ The experience of being turned away from the front door of the big house upends Sutpen’s existing worldview and requires him to fundamentally reassess his place in the social order. He undertakes this reassessment by imagining himself through the eyes of the plantation owner. In replaying the encounter at the big house in his mind, Sutpen imagines the plantation owner looking out from inside the big house through the half-closed door and “seeing” him standing there and thinking that he and his family are no better than “cattle,” “creatures” without “hope” or “purpose” (190). He then begins to think of his “home” through the eyes of the plantation owner and suddenly realizes how “rotten” the log walls are, how “sagging” the roof is, and how “brutish” and “crude” and “out of all proportion to its reward” the labor is that he and his family perform there (190-91). Seeing himself, his home, and his family through the eyes of the plantation owner

forces Sutpen to recognize his own “difference” from the plantation owner (183). It forces him to recognize not only how different his circumstances are from the plantation owner’s but also how differently he and his family are seen by others. This recognition of difference shatters Sutpen’s “innocence” and produces an “explosion” in his worldview (192).

¹⁰⁸ From the moment that he formulates the design, Sutpen remains constantly “vigilant,” always “alert” to how every possible “circumstance” can impact the design (41). Every action Sutpen takes is “measure[ed]” and “weigh[ed]” according to whether that action will help him achieve his design (41). Thus, when he learns that Eulalia is of mixed descent and no longer “incremental” to his design, he promptly “put[s]” her “aside” (194). No longer capable of helping him achieve his design, Eulalia ceases to serve any redeeming purpose. Sutpen views his marriage to Eulalia as his one permissible “mistake” in the execution of his design and allows himself no other (41). To his thinking, a second mistake could lead to his “doom” (41). Sutpen’s unwavering commitment to his design is also evident in his calculating frugality. Intent on accumulating the wealth required to achieve self-reliance, Sutpen is steadfast about not amassing debts in the meantime. He does not drink in public taverns because he does not want to put himself in a position where he might not be able to “pay his share or return the courtesy” (25). Sutpen exhibits the same frugality when men from Jefferson come out to Sutpen’s Hundred to camp in the empty rooms of his incomplete plantation home: he partakes of the liquor that his guests provide with “sparing calculation,” “keeping” a “mental” tally of the amount he “accept[s]” alongside the amount he “supplie[s]” (30). All of this frugality is motivated by an all-encompassing commitment to the design.

¹⁰⁹ Much has been said about the attitudes of characters in *Absalom, Absalom!* toward the past and history. Robert Dunne argues that Sutpen fails to achieve his design in large part because he “fails to keep past events *in the past*” (60). According to Dunne, Sutpen’s repeated efforts to erase his past and to start over reflect a preoccupation with the past that leaves him “helpless against the impending reality of the future” (61).¹⁰⁹ Jessica Hurley likewise maintains that Sutpen spends much of the novel struggling to keep his “past at bay” only to find that he is unable to “keep his past where it should be” (66). Hurley suggests that the combination of Sutpen’s rejection of his past and the continuing reappearance of his past in the novel makes for a “haunted” narrative in which ghostly figures from the past constantly haunt the present (66). Like Hurley, Wade Newhouse contends that Sutpen’s “failures” to come to terms with his past are intended to be read as “representative” of the South’s failures “generally” and, more specifically, of its “strategies of concealing and evading” its “dark flaws” (146). In contrast to Dunne and Hurley, Joshua McClennen suggests that Sutpen shows not a preoccupation with the past but, instead, a complete disregard for its “meaning” (358).¹⁰⁹ In McClennen’s estimation, Sutpen views history, including his own history, as “the meaningless product of accident and human activities” (359).

¹¹⁰ Sutpen is a “ghost” who haunts Quentin like a “fever” (8). Rosa is a “ghost” who haunts the present due to her inability to “forgive” or “revenge” Sutpen (8). Charles Bon is a “phantom” from Sutpen’s repressed past who . . . (82).

¹¹¹ We learn in the first chapter that Quentin is haunted by a constant barrage of living and dead “ghosts” who have arrived unbidden and taken up residence in his “body”: “His childhood was full of them; his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous

defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. He was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts . . ." (7). Quentin's "very body" is a "hall" where the "defeated" ghosts of the South's past seek recognition from a present that is intent on disavowing any memory of them.

¹¹² Sutpen's internalization of the logic of southern hospitality is evidenced by the fact that he makes his decision to reject Bon based not on public opinion. As he himself is willing to admit, the union between Charles Bon and Judith Sutpen would appear "normal," "natural," and "successful" to the "public eye" (220).

¹¹³ Like their father before them, both Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon also fail miserably in their efforts to keep the past at bay. Charles Bon's efforts to deny his parentage of an interracial son cannot prevent that son and that son's son from haunting Sutpen's Hundred for years to come (300).

¹¹⁴ As Rosa's narration makes very clear, Clytie plays the role of a "cold Cerberus" at Sutpen's Hundred (109). Guarding the gates of Sutpen's "private hell," she keeps watch for visitors and prevents the unlicensed escape of those who enter the mansion (109). As a "replica" of Sutpen and an "instrument" of his will, Clytie is ordered to "preside" over his home in "his absence" (110-11). In her position as the black mistress of Sutpen's Hundred, Clytie temporarily assumes the privileged role of the white male host. Therefore, when Wash Jones tries to enter the Big House while Sutpen is away at war, Clytie lays down the law of Sutpen's inhospitality: "Stop right there, white man Stop right where you is. You aint never crossed this door while Colonel was here and you aint going to cross it now" (226). Like the "monkey-dressed nigger" who directs the young Sutpen around to the back door of the Big House, Clytie has been granted the authority to proffer or withhold hospitality, both because of and despite the "coffee-color" of her skin (126).

¹¹⁵ Although Clytie is half-black and, therefore, also half-white, Rosa is not capable of thinking beyond the legal designations of her time. To Rosa, Clytie is defined by what she is not. As the daughter of a slave woman, Clytie is "inscrutable," "perverse," "amoral," "evil," "untamed," "indolent," and "savage" (110-11, 126).

¹¹⁶ However, it is worth nothing that Rosa claims to have demonstrated an aversion to physical intimacy with Clytie as a child: "But not I. Even as a child, I would not even play with the same objects which she and Judith played with, as though that warped and spartan solitude which I called my childhood, which had taught me (and little else) to listen before I could comprehend and to understand before I even heard, had also taught me not only to instinctively fear her and what she was, but to shun the very objects which she had touched" (112).

¹¹⁷ In his first two visits to Sutpen's Hundred, Bon is clearly figured as Henry's invited "guest" (77, 215, 255). In his third visit, Henry shoots Bon for disregarding his directive not to pass through the plantation gates: "*Don't you pass the shadow of this post, this branch, Charles; and I am going to pass it, Henry*" (106). Fittingly, Rosa describes Henry's murder of Bon as an irrevocable act of inhospitality: "*That sound was merely the sharp and final clap-to of a door between us and all that was, all that might have been . . .*" (127).

¹¹⁸ General Compson's "offer to lend [Sutpen] seed cotton for his start," and Goodhue Coldfield's offers to "shield" Sutpen and offer him "protection" (23, 12, 9). It is ultimately General Compson and Goodhue Coldfield's hospitality to Sutpen that enables

him to become “the biggest landowner and cotton player in the county” (56): “Yoknapatawpha County supplied him with it. He sought the guarantee of reputable men to barricade him from the other and later strangers who might come seeking him in turn, and Jefferson gave him that. . . . the men who had given him protection . . . it was mine and Ellen’s father who gave him that” (9).

¹¹⁹ Even in death, we are told, Sutpen remains a stranger to Jeffersonians: his gravestone, unlike Ellen’s, does not “divulge where and when” he was born (153).

¹²⁰ The Holston House, located on the Square in the center of Jefferson, appears in a number of Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha stories, including *Light in August*, *The Unvanquished*, *The Mansion*, and *Flags in the Dust*, among others.

¹²¹ It is ultimately General Compson and Goodhue Coldfield’s hospitality to Sutpen that enables him to become “the biggest landowner and cotton player in the county” (56): “Yoknapatawpha County supplied him with it. He sought the guarantee of reputable men to barricade him from the other and later strangers who might come seeking him in turn, and Jefferson gave him that. . . . the men who had given him protection . . . it was mine and Ellen’s father who gave him that” (9).

¹²² “. . . if conditions were reversed and Henry was the stranger and he (Bon) the scion . . .” (255).

¹²³ This latter threat, at least in Quentin and Shreve’s estimation, ultimately leads to Henry’s decision to kill Bon (285). Ultimately, it is Bon’s racial otherness that most clearly demarcates him as a stranger in the novel. On how Bon is both familiar and strange.

¹²⁴ “. . . the house which he had built, which some suppuration of himself had created about him as the sweat of his body might have created, produced some (even if invisible) cocoon-like and complementary shell in which Ellen had to live and die a stranger . . .” (111).

¹²⁵ “. . . the *My dear son* in his father’s sloped fine hand out of that dead dusty summer where he had prepared for Harvard so that his father’s hand could lie on a strange lamplit table in Cambridge; that dead summer twilight—the wisteria, the cigar-smell, the fireflies—attenuated up from Mississippi and into this strange room, across this strange iron New England snow” (141).

¹²⁶ Descriptions of southern hospitality and inhospitality abound in *Absalom, Absalom!* These descriptions often repeat and echo one another. Early on, Mr. Compson describes the hospitality that Rosa’s family provides her after her father’s death as a proffering of “food and shelter and protection” (47). Later, Rosa uses the same words when speaking about the hospitality that she receives at Sutpen’s Hundred: “. . . food and protection and shelter . . .” (137). Mr. Compson then repeats himself, using a strikingly similar phrase when characterizing the hospitality that Sutpen provides to his family at Sutpen’s Hundred: “. . . food and shelter and clothing . . .” (88). And, toward the end of the novel, Quentin echoes the same language that he has heard previously from his father and Rosa, describing southern hospitality to Shreve as offering “food and clothes and shelter” (279). There are also, of course, the repeated descriptions of the inhospitality Sutpen shows Wash Jones. These repeated descriptions serve both to recall and repress Sutpen’s childhood trauma. See Brooks, Casero, and Dalziel on the repressive qualities of the narration in *Absalom, Absalom!*

¹²⁷ For a reading of *Jubilee* in terms of *Gone With The Wind*, see Mary Condé 212-14.

¹²⁸ For a reading of *Jubilee* that focuses on the novel's participation in the black revisionist movement of the 1930s, see Dieng.

¹²⁹ With their trust in the federal government "shaken" after failed attempts at land confiscation and redistribution, the freedman Bayley Wyat proclaimed that the only chance blacks had of receiving hospitality in the future was to turn to God: "I tell you who we is to trust. We is to trust God, and he will bring us all out ob de wilderness, somehow, and sometime, and somewhere" (2). But God's hospitality, Wyat explained, is not proffered to everyone. One must demonstrate hospitality to others before receiving God's gifts: "We must form societies to help each other who cannot help demselves . . . I tell you dat God won't help those dat won't help themselves" (3).

¹³⁰ For a study on Walker's "humanism," see Gwin.

¹³¹ For a reading of *Jubilee* that pays particular attention to Vyry's racial identity, see Cliff.

¹³² For a discussion on the figuration of Heaven as home in black folklore, see Mason Brewer 146.

¹³³ In keeping with the analogies of folklore, Brother Ezekiel refers to Lincoln as "our Moses" (242-43). In her essay "How I Wrote *Jubilee*," Walker explains that she wanted "to press the leitmotiv of the biblical analogy of Hebrews in Egypt with folk in America. I had always known that Negro slaves prayed for a Moses to deliver them from Pharaoh" (62).

¹³⁴ For analyses of the folk elements in *Jubilee*, see Carmichael 74; Thomas 137-40; and Traylor 513-18.

¹³⁵ James E. Spears reports that "Of the fifty-eight chapters, twenty-two begin with spiritual, and thirty-six with secular, epigraphs" (14).

¹³⁶ All biblical quotations are taken from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Edition*.

¹³⁷ For a detailed critical analysis of Leviticus 25, see John Bergsma 81-105.

¹³⁸ "Innis Brown had always had a dream, a daydream, something like a castle in the air. He dreamed of a farm of his own, a place further west with a team of mules, with a house for a family, and a cotton crop of his own" (296).

¹³⁹ Less optimistic, Vyry recognizes Sherman's "Special Field Order" as "too good to be true" (343). She also questions Innis's reference to the "word" of the government by asking, "What kinda word?" (343).

¹⁴⁰ For a reading of Vyry in terms of her insistence on "resolution and forgiveness," see Minrose Gwin 132-50.

PART THREE

¹⁴¹ For definitions of "politics of recognition," see Taylor, Fraser "Why Overcoming Prejudice" 22-4, Day 34-38 and 197-199, and Coulthard 3.

¹⁴² ". . . the state does not recognize the value or equality of all 'communities'; rather, it merely recognizes their 'existence'" (198).

¹⁴³ ". . . the expression of Indigenous anticolonial nationalism that emerged during this period forced colonial power to modify itself from a structure that was once primarily reinforced by policies, techniques, and ideologies explicitly oriented around the genocidal exclusion/assimilation double, to one that is now reproduced through a seemingly more

conciliatory set of discourses and institutional practices that emphasize our *recognition* and *accommodation*. Regardless of this modification, however, the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state has remained *colonial* to its foundation” (6)

¹⁴⁴ Even Charles Taylor, the leading proponent of recognition politics in North America, has admitted that liberal regimes of recognition in Canada and the U.S. have tended to be “inauthentic,” “condescending,” and “homogenizing” (50, 71-2).

¹⁴⁵ The practice of settler colonialism is a distinct form of colonialism in which the settler colony invades the settler society and establishes sovereignty. For definitions of settler colonialism, see Veracini 204 and Wolfe 387-92.

Chapter Three

¹⁴⁶ All references to writings by Zitkala-Ša are taken from *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings* unless otherwise noted.

¹⁴⁷ After having been virtually ignored by academic scholars for most of the twentieth century, Zitkala-Ša has recently emerged as a seminal figure in Native American studies and American literary studies. The Yankton Dakota author’s life and work now figure prominently as subjects of study in leading journals and collections of criticism. Since 2000, no fewer than twenty books of literary and/or cultural criticism have included a chapter on Zitkala-Ša. During the same time period, as many as twelve articles on Zitkala-Ša have appeared in *Arizona Quarterly*, *American Indian Quarterly*, and *Studies in American Indian Literatures* alone. Moreover, it has become commonplace to feature selections of Zitkala-Ša’s fiction and non-fiction in anthologies of American literature. The editors of the most recent *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, for example, devote twenty-three pages to Zitkala-Ša, more pages than they devote to several major authors from the first half of the twentieth century, including Hemingway, Steinbeck, and Dreiser. Likewise, recent editions of *The Bedford Anthology of American Literature*, *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, and *The Vintage Book of American Women Writers* feature work by Zitkala-Ša.

¹⁴⁸ Lyons defines “rhetorical sovereignty” as “the inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse” (449-50). See Enoch for a reading of Zitkala-Ša’s boarding school narratives in terms of Lyons’ theory of rhetorical sovereignty.

¹⁴⁹ *Dreams and Thunder* consists of ten legends, four original short stories, five poems, and one opera. Jane Hafen selected and edited the texts in the volume. For more on categorizing the tales in *Dreams and Thunder*, see Hafen “Stories” 3-5. For discussions on the literary category of the legend, particularly in the context of Native American literature, see Ballinger 12, Beckwith 339-40, and Ramsey 6. For a particular focus on the cultural functions of Sioux legends, see Beckwith, Gibbon 151, and Marshall.

¹⁵⁰ Although I do not speak the Dakota language, the changes that Zitkala-Ša makes to the traditional Dakota legends can be ascertained through comparisons to other translations published by other Sioux authors during the first decades of the twentieth century. Notable examples are Charles Eastman’s *Wigwam Evenings* (1909) and Ellen Deloria’s *Dakota Texts* (1932), both of which include some of the same tales. Deloria’s collection is particularly valuable because it includes both literal and creative translations

of traditional legends. For discussions on the differences between Zitkala-Ša's translations and other contemporary translations, see Davidson & Norris 3-4, Smith 47-52, and Stout 304-05.

¹⁵¹ As Robert Williams notes, "Indians, particularly during the crucial early stages of the Encounter era, did not act as obstacles to white expansion in North America. Quite the opposite, Indians responded as active facilitators of the many multicultural accommodations that Europeans found absolutely essential for survival on a colonial frontier" (20). Likewise, Francis Jennings argues, "Indian cooperation was the prime requisite for European penetration and colonization of the North American continent" (367). For more accounts of Native American hospitality to Europeans and Americans, see Bartram 16, Carver 25, Franklin, Heckewelder 148-49, Newquist 23-6, Thwaites 207-09, Wallace 27, Williams 28-36, and Zeiseberger 116-23.

¹⁵² Much of the scholarship about Zitkala-Ša's legends has focused attention on her "Preface." For two particularly insightful examples, see Myers 121-22 and Smith 47-8.

¹⁵³ For a history of *ohunkakan*, see Myers 122-23 and Stout 304-05.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Dorris makes a similar claim in his account of the contact period: "though Europeans looked like adults, they frequently seemed unable to feed themselves and to be perpetually on the brink of starving to death" ("Grass Still" 45).

¹⁵⁵ For a history of European and American characterizations of Indians as child-savages, see Roy Harvey Pearce's *The Savages of America*.

¹⁵⁶ See Rogin 114-23 and 169-232 for a historical account of American paternalistic discourse as it relates to Native Americans. For specific examples of American government officials employing a paternalistic discourse when referring to Native Americans, see Dawes 29.

¹⁵⁷ As Mary Lethert Wingred notes, extended kinship has been the central "organizing principle" of Dakota society for centuries (1). For more on Sioux kinship systems, see Gibbon 100-01 and Hassrick 107-19.

¹⁵⁸ According to Zitkala-Ša's narrator, this is the bear's "noisy way of saying 'the food was very good!'" (28).

¹⁵⁹ No early American writer more astutely or passionately describes the European exploitation of Native American hospitality than Benjamin Franklin. See, for example, *A Narrative of the Late Massacres*.

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, "A Dream of Her Grandfather" (141). For a history of international treaty law pertaining to Indian tribes, see Cohen 1-2, 10-13, 20-26, and 204-05; Murray 54-5; and Williams 43-8, 50-3.

¹⁶¹ This historical rhetoric and the acts of exploitation that accompany it are described well in a passage from a speech given by Henry Dawes in 1883: "When we were weak and he was strong we begun by deceiving him, and getting away from him by fraud or chicanery, what we were unable to get by power. When we became strong and begun to push him back from his own heritage, that we claimed the right to possess, then we undertook to isolate him and draw a line making it a penitentiary offense for a white man or an Indian to cross it . . ." (28).

¹⁶² The discovery doctrine dates back to the period of European discovery in North America and was codified into American law in Chief Justice John Marshall's 1823 decision in *Johnson v. McIntosh*. For a history of this doctrine, see Watson "The Discovery Doctrine."

¹⁶³ Ultimately, the badger in Zitkala-Ša's legend turns to the Great Spirit for help. He builds a sacred lodge and makes an offering of buffalo blood. In reply to the badger's sacred prayer, the Great Spirit sends him "the avenger" in the person of a Dakota man with a magic arrow (31). After hearing the badger's story, the avenger offers to accompany him to his old home to seek the bear's hospitality. Unsatisfied with the bear's offering of a knife as recompense for his actions, the avenger announces that he has "come to do justice" and demands that the bear "return" the badger's dwelling to its rightful owner (32). Fearing the well-known power of the avenger, the bear flees to the forest. As the badgers repossess their old home, the avenger bids them goodbye, proclaiming, "I go . . . over the earth" (32).

¹⁶⁴ In addition to Iktomi, Wakan Tanka, Inyan, and Wakinyan are three of the most important figures in Sioux mythology. Wakan Tanka is the all-powerful Great Spirit (Walker 8-10; 206-41). Inyan, the great stone god, is the "first in existence" and the "grandfather of all things" (Walker 10). Wakinyan is the great thunderbird, or the Winged-One, who also happened to give birth to Iktomi (Walker 46).

¹⁶⁵ For further discussion on these statistical differences, see Smith 58.

¹⁶⁶ The four tales in *Old Indian Legends* in which Iktomi does not appear are "The Badger and the Bear," "Dance in a Buffalo Skull," "The Toad and the Boy," and "Iya, the Camp-Eater." The three tales in *Dreams and Thunder* in which Iktomi does appear are "Buzzard Skin and the Sea Monsters," "Zicha, the Squirrel, and Iktomi," and "When the Buffalo Herd Went West."

¹⁶⁷ In the limited scholarship that has been produced on Zitkala-Ša's legends, occasional attempts have been made to explain the Dakota author's fascination with Iktomi. Jeanne Smith has suggested that Iktomi holds appeal for Zitkala-Ša because he provides her with a medium through which to explore and reflect on her own efforts at playing the trickster: "The trickster, whose survival depends largely on techniques of masking, deceptive speech, and subversion, is a highly appropriate choice for an author faced with having to preserve her culture by publishing for an American audience in English . . ." (49). Arguing that Zitkala-Ša herself performs the role of the trickster in her "Preface" to *Old Indian Legends* through her skillful employment of "smooth-talk" and "tactful diplomacy," Smith maintains that Zitkala-Ša uses Iktomi to model the kinds of subversive trickery that she hopes to inspire in her Native American readers (47). More recently, Robin DeRosa has put forward a reading in which she contends that Zitkala-Ša's Iktomi challenges existing cultural paradigms from the "borderland position" of an "outsider" (182). Reiterating conventional characterizations of Indian trickster figures, which rely heavily on a discourse of marginality, DeRosa insists that the Iktomi of Zitkala-Ša's legends "remains an outsider" despite his destructive behavior (182). Restricted to the margins of society, where cultures intersect and clash, the Iktomi of DeRosa's reading is treated as an exterior threat. As such, he is disassociated from the dominant culture he threatens, held at a distance, othered, treated as essentially different. For further discussion on the use of metaphors of marginality in theoretical characterizations of tricksters, see Ballinger 25-6. For an example of a theorization of the Indian trickster figure that relies heavily on metaphors of marginality, see Babcock-Abrahams. For readings of Iktomi more generally as a liberating figure, see Vizenor "Trickster Discourse."

¹⁶⁸ In other translated versions of this legend, Iktomi does not build an improvised space in which to sing his songs. Instead, he simply sings his songs out in the open. See, for example, Ellen Deloria's "Ikto'mi Tricks the Pheasants" (20).

¹⁶⁹ During the 1850s, the US federal government abandoned an existing strategy of Indian removal and adopted a new and seemingly more benevolent policy of confining Native Americans on reservations (Cave 1330-42; Satz 126-45; Phillips 5-6; Cohen 65). Unlike Indian removal, which aimed simply at excluding Native Americans from the dominant spaces of American society, the reservation system was represented as a measure taken in order to protect and provide for indigenous peoples. Echoing the rhetoric used to justify the confinement of the mentally ill and the poor, federal officials argued that the implementation of the reservation system was motivated by a "sincere humanitarian desire" to provide for the "general improvement" of Native Americans (Satz 2; Lea 3-4). Reservations were, therefore, portrayed as "refuges" created in order to make it possible for Indian tribes to survive and flourish without having to fear encroachments from hostile whites (Perry 6).

¹⁷⁰ Zitkala-Ša herself refers to alcohol as "the European liquid fire" ("Side by Side" 223).

¹⁷¹ "It appeared to me to be a race of people very poor in everything. They go as naked as when their mothers bore them . . . The people are very docile, and for the longing to possess our things, and not having anything to give in return, they take what they can get, and presently swim away. Still, they give what all they have got, for whatever may be given to them, down to broken bits of crockery and glass" (Columbus 110-11, 113)

¹⁷² A devout Christian himself, Columbus was insistent that indigenous peoples in the New World would eventually "all turn Christians" (142). Accordingly, he urged Ferdinand and Isabella to "resolve upon" the conversion of Indians to Christianity and "to bring so many great nations within the Church" (142).

¹⁷³ "The first European to encounter Native Americans, Christopher Columbus, noted how freely Native people shared among themselves, but he was not the last non-Indian to dismiss this behavior as simplistic and childlike, an indictator of cultural inferiority" (Stremlau 268)

¹⁷⁴ Ginny Carney offers a succinct description of the changing meaning of the phrase "Indian gift" over time: "*Indian gift*, originally an expression signifying a present for which an equivalent is expected, was corrupted to mean (as it does today), a gift that is taken back" (195).

¹⁷⁵ According to Bartlett, "This term is applied by children in New York and the vicinity to a child who, after having given away a thing, wishes to have it back again" (189).

¹⁷⁶ "If they take your gifts, they will prove like Indian gifts, for which you will exact, in return, much more in amount" (Woodbury 200).

¹⁷⁷ ". . . one must remember that Andrew Jackson not only refused to honor the obligations contained in treaties negotiated by his predecessors, but also ignored treaty promises made by his own administration" (Cave 1341).

¹⁷⁸ As Cohen notes, "Although tribes were not parties to the Constitution, the Constitution recognizes their existence, and in the commerce clause treats them as sovereigns along with the states and foreign nations. The Constitution also authorizes the United States to enter into treaties with Indian nations" (1). The Appropriations Act of 1871, however, reversed this principle: "*Provided*, That hereafter no Indian nation or

tribe within the territory of the United States shall be acknowledged or recognized as an independent nation, tribe or power . . .” (qtd. in Cohen 75).

¹⁷⁹ “. . . all Indians within the Territorial limits of the United States, are considered subject to its sovereignty, and have only a possessory right to the soil, for the purpose of hunting and not the right of domain, hence I conclude that Congress has full power, by law, to regulate all the concerns of the Indians” (II 280).

¹⁸⁰ Jackson returns to the subject of Indian avarice in an 1837 letter to Joel Poinsett: “In respect to the suggestions you make concerning the management of our Indian relations, allow me to remark that long experience satisfies me that they are only to be well governed by their fears. If we feed their avarice we accelerate the causes of their destruction” (V 507).

¹⁸¹ See, for example, Zitkala-Ša’s reference to Justice Marshall’s terminology in “America’s Indian Problem”: “History tells us that it was from the English and the Spanish our government inherited its legal victims, the American Indians, whom to this day we hold as wards and not as citizens of their own freedom loving land. . . . Wardship is no substitute for American citizenship . . .” (155-56).

¹⁸² Motivated by the Gold Rush, the first Indian reservations were created in California in 1853 (Cohen 65; Phillips 6). By 1858, federal policy had shifted entirely from exclusion to confinement. As Charles E. Mix noted in his 1858 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, “Our present policy . . . is to permanently locate the different tribes on reservations embracing only sufficient land for their actual occupancy; to divide this among them in severalty, and require them to live upon and cultivate the tracts assigned to them” (7).

¹⁸³ The compulsory nature of boarding school education for Native Americans was not enforced legally until 1891: “On March 3, 1891, Congress authorized the Commissioner of Indian Affairs ‘to make and enforce by proper means such rules and regulations as will secure the attendance of Indian children of suitable age and health at schools established and maintained for their benefit.’ Two years later Congress addressed the issue of enforcement again, this time authorizing the Indian Office to ‘withhold rations, clothing and other annuities from Indian parents or guardians who refuse to neglect to send and keep their children of proper school age in some school a reasonable portion of each year’” (Adams 63-4)

¹⁸⁴ In “Iktomi and the Fawn,” for example, the trickster is told on numerous occasions that he must accept “one condition” in order to receive his share of an exchange but, nevertheless, still fails to comply, even after receiving what he has been promised (23-4).

¹⁸⁵ For accounts of the historical convergence of Euro-American and indigenous cultures of exchange, see Mallios, Murray, Newquist, and Williams. For a history of the commodification of Indian land during the Jackson administration, see Rogin 12-3, 79, and 212.

¹⁸⁶ See Butler’s *Bodies That Matter* and Muñoz’s *Disidentifications* for useful theorizations of disidentification.

¹⁸⁷ For a detailed discussion of “Iktomi and the Ducks” from an ecological perspective, see Myers 123-25.

¹⁸⁸ Of course, Zitkala-Ša is clear to point out that De Soto and his men abuse the hospitality they receive from Lady Cofitachequi by entering the ancestral tombs of the tribe, to say nothing of kidnapping her (155).

¹⁸⁹ For historical accounts of complementarity in Sioux cultures, see Albers 117-18; Wingred 13-4, 42-3; Gibbon 74-5; and Stremlau 266-67.

¹⁹⁰ Charles Eastman, Ella Deloria, and James Walker have all composed versions of this popular legend. For a history of the tale and comparative analyses of these different versions, see Hafen, *Dreams* 41 and Jahner “Stone Boy: Persistent Hero.”

¹⁹¹ Zitkala-Ša also uses her descriptions of her childhood invitations to establish a clear opposition between her mother’s hospitality and the hospitality of the United States federal government. In the opening scene of “Impressions,” wherein Taté I Yóhin Win instructs her daughter to avoid “intruding [her]self upon others,” she also recounts for Zitkala-Ša the history of her ancestors’ “forced” relocation to the Yankton Sioux Reservation three decades earlier (69). In her retelling, Taté I Yóhin Win denounces Americans as intruders who invaded Indian lands and then “defrauded” Indians of those lands by promising to provide them with hospitality on reservations (69-70).

¹⁹² Zitkala-Ša’s deceased uncle, who was apparently famous for his bravery on the battlefield, was an important figure during her childhood, but his absence, like Zitkala-Ša’s father’s, is his defining characteristic in “Impressions.” See 70-1.

¹⁹³ Zitkala-Ša never identifies her aunt’s name in “Impressions.”

¹⁹⁴ In place of existing Native American kinship systems, which relied on extended, multifamily households and communal resource ownership, allotment advocates insisted on the vital importance of requiring Indians to embrace the single family home as the centerpiece of civilized life. As Merrill Gates, President of the Board of Indian Commissioners, argued in 1885, “There is no way of reaching the Indian so good as to show him that he is working for a home. Experience shows that there is no incentive so strong as the confidence that by long, untiring labor, a man may secure a home for himself and his family” (51). Forcing Native Americans to accept a new conception of the home and a new culture of social exchange would, Gates realized, first require dismantling the Indian “tribal organization” model and the values it espoused (52). This, Gates also realized, could be done only through “force” (52).

Chapter Four

¹⁹⁵ “The epic of America is, once more, sharply focused on the individual being and the power or ability to recognize and accept oneself and the other as sites of a never-ending dialogue that may bring about, if only for brief fleeting moments the experience of plenitude it craves for without every completely achieving it” (347).

¹⁹⁶ Likewise, Diane Quantic has concluded that the “radical change” we witness in Erdrich and Dorris’s characters toward the end of *The Crown of Columbus* suggests that “there is hope for us all” (370). The overriding message of the novel, Quantic submits, is that we, too, can “be saved” if we but embrace the liberal multicultural politics that the novel seems to espouse (370).

¹⁹⁷ Bartholomé de las Casas, a Dominican friar, historian of the West Indies, and friend of the Columbus family, made his transcription in the 1530s (Dunn & Kelley 4-5). The transcription claims to be a partly summarized and partly quoted version of Columbus’s original diary. The Las Casas transcription “disappeared for about 250 years but was found around 1790 by Martín Fernández de Navarrete in the library of the Duke of

Infantado. It is now in the National Library, Madrid. As far as is known, the manuscript is unique. There are no other ‘original’ versions” (Dunn & Kelley 4-5).

¹⁹⁸ Erdrich and Dorris excerpt passages of *The Diario of Christopher Columbus’s First Voyage to America, 1492-1493* from Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley, Jr.’s translation (63-9).

¹⁹⁹ Later in the novel, Vivian notes the emphasis that Columbus puts on the written records taken at the scene of discovery when she points out that the Admiral insists in his letters that “the secretary carefully recorded and the comptroller duly witnessed what fell from his lips” (186).

²⁰⁰ For more on Columbus’s letters, see Cachey, Jr. 28-9, Greenblatt 52-72, and Zamora.

²⁰¹ In his letters to Ferdinand and Isabella, discovered in 1989, Columbus writes that his proclamation “was not contradicted” (Zamora 3).

²⁰² Aside from the language of violence, of course, which might have been the only language that Columbus and his crew would have accepted as representing opposition.

²⁰³ “It enables him, as we have seen, to stage a legal ritual that depends upon the formal possibility of contradiction without actually permitting such contradiction; that is, it enables him to empty out the existence of the natives, while at the same time officially acknowledging that they exist. . . . Columbus’s founding speech act in the New World is spectacularly ‘infelicitous’ in virtually every one of the senses detailed by Austin in *How To Do Things With Words*: it is a misfire, a misinvocation, a misapplication, and a misexecution. And it is difficult to believe that Columbus is unaware of these infelicities, for he knows very well that these are *not* uninhabited territories; indeed he notes that they have an immense population . . .” (Greenblatt 65)

²⁰⁴ Since Columbus, settler colonial discourse in the New World has rationalized the dispossession and exploitation of indigenous peoples by treating Christianity as an “incommensurable” gift. See Murray 18.

²⁰⁵ The editor’s exact words are “from the Indian, uh, Native American Indian, perspective” (12).

²⁰⁶ For more on the commodification and ghettoization of indigenous scholarship, see Kuokannen 274-83.

²⁰⁷ For a discussion about Vivian’s contingent status and the editor’s exploitation of it, see Quantic 370.

²⁰⁸ Vivian is particularly “hooked” by two titles: *The Secret of Columbus* and *Colón: First Ambassador to the Heathens* (19). As far as I can tell, both of these titles are invented by Erdrich and Dorris.

²⁰⁹ Along with his telegram, Cobb includes a money order for one thousand dollars (128).

²¹⁰ Cobb is not simply a false host. He is an invasive one. He advises Vivian and Roger and their two children to take a day trip on the island so that he may, without their knowledge, “thoroughly search the beach house” where they are staying (268). This invasion of Vivian and Roger’s privacy is figured in the novel as a violation of the laws of hospitality. As Roger informs us earlier in the novel, “The place one sleeps, where one lies unconscious and vulnerable, must above all else be secure from invasion or unwelcome intrusion . . .” (61).

²¹¹ Cobb explains to Vivian that his uncle Harrison purchased the land where his beach cottage sits because he was “convinced that the crown mentioned in the Diary” was “hidden somewhere” on the island (190).

²¹² As Roger's "mistress," Vivian is, like Beatrice before her, a woman claimed by a man out of the bonds of marriage. For a history of Columbus's relationship with Beatrice de Peraza y Bobadilla, see Hume 21.

²¹³ In Chapters 2 and 3 of *The Crown of Columbus*, Erdrich and Dorris present us with two different accounts of Vivian and Roger's first encounter. Vivian narrates the first account, Roger the second. On the surface, the two passages simply describe the original meeting between future lovers from two different points of view. Yet, taken together, the passages also double as symbolic critiques of settler colonial narratives of hospitality.

The meeting between Vivian and Roger takes place in the Dartmouth library where, having been assigned adjacent study carrels, the two are "next-door neighbor[s]" (44). Roger spends his days in his carrel writing an unrhymed Columbus monologue, speaking aloud to himself while experimenting with different poetic choices (43). Meanwhile, Vivian is hard at work on her first book, a study of pan-Indian religions (35). On the day when the two first meet, Roger is afflicted with a violent "hacking" cough, and Vivian knocks on his door to give him a packet of lozenges (34-5). In her retelling of the encounter, Vivian portrays Roger as an "arrogant" and "thoughtless" man so absorbed by his own ego that he has no problem "impos[ing]" his "afflictions" on others (34). Insensible to those around him, Vivian's Roger "hacks" away in his carrel, disturbing the peace and quiet of the library, not bothering to take any steps to alleviate his "irritating" and "distracting" behavior (34-5). Unable to get any work done, Vivian eventually yells at Roger from her carrel: "For God's sake, shut up!" (35). Immediately feeling "contrite," "small," and "foolish" for having yelled at a man whom she has never met, Vivian hurries over to Roger's carrel, knocks on the door, apologizes to him, and offers him a packet of lozenges (35). In Vivian's account, the lozenges clearly represent an act of contrition, a kind of peace offering. They function both as an act of apology and as a gift. In her capacity as gift giver, Vivian plays the role of host. By receiving Vivian's hospitality, Roger plays the role of needy guest.

However, in his account of the encounter, Roger completely reverses the symbolism of the scene. In his retelling, Roger figures Vivian as an uninvited and unwelcome guest who invades his sovereign space. After screaming for Roger to "SHUT UP" (in Roger's retelling, Vivian's command is capitalized), the Vivian of Roger's story "pound[s]" on his door and then "rude[ly]" forces his way into his carrel (42-3). Roger's first impression of Vivian is that she is a "lunatic" with "wild" eyes (43). To him, Vivian's sudden and unsolicited entrance into the "small space" of his carrel feels like an "invasion" (43). Yet, despite Vivian's "rude" behavior, Roger reports that he shows his uninvited guest "no resistance" (43). He allows her to enter and to speak her mind without offering any opposition. He is her hospitable host.

By presenting us with two different accounts of Vivian and Roger's first encounter, Erdrich and Dorris take an expository scene and give it far-reaching symbolic implications. In addition, by framing the first encounter between Vivian and Roger as a scene of hospitality, Erdrich and Dorris also help prepare their readers to read future encounters between the novel's two main characters through a theoretical lens of hospitality. From this point forward in the novel, Roger figures himself as a host in his relationship with Vivian. Roger concludes his account of his first meeting with Vivian by informing us that he is unable to concentrate for the rest of the afternoon because he is

“subject to a persistent fantasy” (45). In his fantasy, Roger imagines what he “should have done” and “said” to Vivian:

In this scenario, there Vivian was, her head bent against the wall, her shoulders shaking. I sought to comfort her, to tell her that she need not castigate herself, and I gently touched her arm. But then, the turn of my imagination surprised me. The plot changed. It was not humiliation that inhabited her body, not suppressed tears. She buried her face in my chest and laughed. What could I do? I put my arms around her, embraced the soft knit of her sweater, drew her to me. Her hair brushed my chin, our bodies elided at every crucial juncture, and I felt myself irresistibly infected, incapable of not joining in. (45)

²¹⁴ For Kuokannen, “academic hospitality” takes place when “the academy” or a representative of the academy “recognize[s] and accept[s] its [or their] responsibility toward the other” (267). Kuokannen advises that the academy “revive an understanding of hospitality grounded on a sense of social responsibility and reciprocity” (285).

²¹⁵ *The Crown of Columbus* is a “trauma narrative,” Madsen tells us, inasmuch as its writers “engage, whether deliberately or not, in the representation of historical trauma” and do so “as a consequence” of their “self-identified” status as Native American writers (62).

²¹⁶ Vizenor outlines his theory of survivance in a number of critical works, most notably *Fugitive Poses: Native American Scenes of Absence and Presence* (1998), *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (1999), and “Aesthetics of Survivance: Literary Theory and Practice” (2008).

²¹⁷ For a brief description of Vizenor’s notion of manifest manners, see Manuel 49.

²¹⁸ This passage appears in the Las Casas *Diario* on Monday, December 3, 1492 (Dunn & Kelley 197).

²¹⁹ For example, the novel’s opening scene, which takes place on Christmas Eve in 1990, reimagines a contemporary scene as a parallel to the moment of discovery, and it does so from the perspective of a young Native woman named Valerie Clock. For more on the novel’s opening scene, see Freccero et al. (18).

²²⁰ For more on the mural and its history at Dartmouth College, visit <http://hoodmuseum.dartmouth.edu/objects/p.934.13.3>.

²²¹ Cobb offers Vivian two hundred and then three hundred thousand dollars for the pages . . . (193-94).

²²² A number of critics have suggested that *The Crown of Columbus* contains counternarrative forces that secretly undermine the novel’s seeming endorsement of liberal multiculturalism. In their collaborative review of the novel, for example, Carla Freccero, Marianne Hirsch, Ivy Schweitzer, and Susanne Zantop write that Erdrich and Dorris’s novel “might border on the trite or the sentimental were it not for voices of resistance that undermine and open up the neat closure of a paradise regained” (17). To Freccero et al., authorial choices by Erdrich and Dorris that at first glance appear to be “overly conciliatory moves” suggestive of an assimilationist politics (Roger’s “transformation” into a responsible father and husband, Roger’s acceptance of Vivian’s alternative “version of the discoverer and the Discovery,” Nash’s sudden embrace of Roger as a father figure) are all ultimately undercut by dissenting voices in the text (17). Birgid Däwes likewise draws attention to the novel’s internal contradictions and resistances. Like Freccero et al., she concludes that “subversive” elements in the text

produce contradictory “interpretations” and prevent any sense of narrative “closure” (255). According to Däwes, the counternarrative forces in *The Crown of Columbus* are ultimately designed to teach us “to listen closely and not to content ourselves with preconceived illusions of fixity” (255).

²²³ “The novel itself, after all, treats marriage and collaboration as central issues in American history, and it does cast collaboration—be it between Vivian and Roger, between Vivian and Cobb, between native and colonizer, or between woman and man—as fierce, life-threatening competition. But Vivian and Roger, like, one imagines, Erdrich and Dorris, work through competition to an (albeit imperfect) cooperation” (18).

²²⁴ Erdrich and Dorris met at Dartmouth in 1972 when Erdrich was an undergraduate and Dorris was a first-year professor (Trueheart 117). Dorris left his job at Dartmouth in 1989 to become a full-time writer.

²²⁵ For more on the resemblances between the novel’s authors and the novel’s two main characters, see Wood 01E.

²²⁶ “And the overall thematic conflict of the book—the question Dorris posed as ‘What do you do when you discover something you didn’t expect to discover?’—flips back in an intriguing way on *The Broken Cord*, which is a narrative about Dorris’s discovery of his son’s problems, a discovery that ran counter to his expectations and that he strongly resisted. The issue of Dorris and Erdrich’s relationship with their son is symbolically reconstructed in *The Crown of Columbus* in the person of Nash, Vivian’s 16-year-old son by an earlier marriage. Roger’s rage at Nash, a difficult and unkempt boy who exposes Roger in surprising ways, forms a subtle parallel with the father-son relationship Dorris described in *The Broken Cord*. Their union at the end of the novel is a fictional working out of a problem that in the earlier book was never fully resolved” (Passaro 165-66).

²²⁷ Interestingly, Erdrich appeared in *People* magazine in May 1990.

²²⁸ Mark Anthony Rolo went on to become a correspondent for Indian Country Today, director of the Native American Journalists Association (NAJA), and author of the memoir *My Mother Is Now Earth* (progressive.org).

²²⁹ Despite his accusations of self-promotion, McNab is clear to acknowledge the important role that *The Broken Chord*, both the book and the film, played in exposing the dangers of fetal alcohol syndrome: “There is no doubt that the publication of this book was a significant even in drawing national recognition of the syndrome and we have much to thank Dorris for the writing of it” (109). On the other hand, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn famously decried *The Broken Chord*, declaring it “a dangerous book for those of us still committed to ideas inherent in the tiospaye concept of reciprocity which the Dakotapi devised as a way to live” (42).

²³⁰ For a historical account of Roger Williams’s relations with Native Americans, see Davis.

²³¹ See, for example, Wood 1E and Schumacher 177. See also Dorris’s interviews with Stokes and Huey, where he once again claims that he and Erdrich “agree on every word” (Stokes 56; Huey 125). Critics have often reiterated Dorris’s claim that they reached consensus on every word. Allan Chavkin and Nancy Feyl Chavkin report that “Erdrich and Dorris together do the research, develop the plot and characters, discuss all other aspects of the work, and ultimately agree on every word before it is submitted for publication” (ix-x). Linda Karell, likewise, writes that Erdrich and Dorris’s “writing process is densely mutual and eventually requires that each agree on every word before

publication” (32). For the number of joint interviews that Erdrich and Dorris gave during their collaboration, see Seema Kurup, who calculates that the two authors participated in “more than one hundred” joint interviews (5).

²³² “I started out being very way of collaboration and working together, but I trusted it and trusted it, and when I would have trouble with it, I would really look at the work and I’d realize it was better for the efforts” (Schumacher 178). See also Coltelli 26.

²³³ See Schumacher 177. Dorris says that wasn’t always the case. It became more so over time.

²³⁴ In the newly revised edition of *Love Medicine*, published by HarperPerennial in 2009, Erdrich replaced the dedication to Dorris with a dedication to her brothers.

²³⁵ For further discussion on the dedications in Erdrich and Dorris’s books, see Karell 41-2 and Washburn 51-2.

²³⁶ In their book *Intimate Creativity: Partners in Love and Art*, Irving and Suzanne Sarnoff interpret Erdrich’s sacrifice of her ego as an “intimate” act, one in which she “give[s]” her “sel[f] over” to the collaboration (103). Determining that Erdrich and Dorris, more than any other collaborating writers, “exemplify” the ideals of “intimate creativity,” the Sarnoffs identify the Erdrich-Dorris partnership as the “most complete form of collaboration” possible in literature (103).

²³⁷ What’s more, Erdrich and Dorris benefited from associating their collaboration with storytelling traditions that many regard as “democratic” in principle and practice (Nabokov 47). See Nabokov, who argues the following: “It is the innately democratic virtue of much oral tradition that its multiple versions ‘enrich the listener’s experience,’ in Tapahonso’s words, and do so by providing cross-referencing native glosses and commentaries that are themselves underlain with complementary fragments or competing claims that usually require an intimate awareness of the community’s different, perhaps contradictory microhistories to interpret” (Nabokov 47-8).

²³⁸ “It is the innately democratic virtue of much oral tradition that its multiple versions ‘enrich the listener’s experience,’ in Tapahonso’s words, and do so by providing cross-referencing native glosses and commentaries that are themselves underlain with complementary fragments or competing claims that usually require an intimate awareness of the community’s different, perhaps contradictory microhistories to interpret” (Nabokov 47-8).

²³⁹ For accounts of North American Indian notions and practices of shared sovereignty, see Biolsi 246-47, Macklem 1346-57, and Chartrand 12-15.

²⁴⁰ See also Hollander; Hull, Stornaiuolo, and Sterponi; and Völz

²⁴¹ Looking back, we can see that the signs of this parasitism were present all along. Interviewers, for example, often qualified their characterizations of the collaboration. Schumacher sensed enough to note that the answers to his questions only “seemed” to indicate consensus between Erdrich and Dorris (173-74). Likewise, when remarking that the “ease of agreement” between Erdrich and Dorris “seem[ed]” as “natural” as “apple pie,” interviewer Geoffrey Stokes could not help but add that it also appeared just as “fragile” (57).

²⁴² This quotation is from an interview that Terry Tazioli conducted while Erdrich was promoting *The Round House*.

²⁴³ For an overview of theories on “we” narration and examples in literature, see Richardson *Unnatural* 46-56.

²⁴⁴ “Probably most compelling is the large and diverse group of postcolonial authors who have used ‘we’ narration to articulate collective struggles against colonialism: Raja Rao (*Kanthapura*), Ngugi wa Thiong’o (*A Grain of Wheat*), Ayi Kwei Armah (*Two Thousand Seasons*), Edouard Glissant (*La Case du commandeur*), Patriack Chamoiseau (*Texaco*), and Zakes Mda (*Ways of Dying*). These authors come from a broad range of places, from Indian to the Caribbean to East, West, and South Africa; all have found ‘we’ narration to be a crucial strategy in forging a post-colonial narrative voice” (Richardson *Analyzing World* 4). For other analyses of postcolonial “we” narration, see Fasselt and Marcus.

²⁴⁵ For an overview of theories on “we” narration and examples in literature, see Richardson *Unnatural* 46-56.

²⁴⁶ Interestingly, Dorris has also been singled out as a Native “feminist” for his use of first-person-plural narration in his novel *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*. In *A Yellow Raft*, Adelaide Morris argues, Dorris creates a feminist “ethics of coalition” by joining together three female voices to create one “plural protagonist” (22-3). In doing so, Morris suggests, Dorris produces a “field of reciprocal subjects, all crucial to the story but none exclusively privileged or central” (23). Ultimately, Morris concludes, “Dorris uses the plural point of view to correct for the ‘egotistical warp’ of the ‘I’” (23).

²⁴⁷ For recent critics who read “we” narration as an oppressive narrative strategy utilized by colonial regimes, see Fasselt and Marcus.

²⁴⁸ “For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, ‘us’) and the strange (the Orient, the East, ‘them’). This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived. Orientals lived in their world, ‘we’ lived in ours” (3, 43-4).

²⁴⁹ “Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (*Orientalism* 3). In his book *Colonial Encounters*, Peter Hulme reiterates Said’s point when he writes that “colonial discourse” relies on the binary distinction between “we” and “them” in structuring its accounts of “colonial relationships” (2).

²⁵⁰ See also Bhabha, who describes colonial discourse as an “apparatus of power” that “turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences” (23)

²⁵¹ See an interview that Terry Tazioli conducted while Erdrich was promoting *The Round House* (qtd. in Kurup 5).

²⁵² In an interview with Shelby Grantham, Erdrich recalled the details of her composition of “The World’s Greatest Fisherman”: “I hate having to block off a quiet part of the house, but I barricaded myself at the kitchen table behind closed doors. It seemed very depressing. But as soon as I got the first section down, I knew I couldn’t stop writing. It was upsetting, and I had to go on” (Grantham 13).

²⁵³ In his essay “The Critic as Host” (1977), J. Hillis Miller famously disparages the “deconstructive” reader as a “parasite” who “invades” the text and ultimately “kills” it (439-40). In Hillis Miller’s formulation, the text is a “host” that is “broken,” “divided,” “passed around,” and “consumed” by deconstructive readers (446). In addition to parasiting the text, Hillis Miller declares, the deconstructive reader parasites the “obvious or univocal reading” of the text (444). “Both readings,” Hillis Miller tells us, “the ‘univocal’ one and the ‘deconstructive’ one, are fellow guests ‘beside the grain,’ host and guest, host and host, host and parasite, parasite and parasite” (444). The text plays host to both the univocal reading and the deconstructive reading. The univocal reading serves as

guest to the text and then as host to the deconstructive reading. And, finally, the deconstructive reading parasites both. In figuring the univocal reading as host and the deconstructive reading as parasite, Hillis Miller draws an analogy of sexual difference: the univocal reading, he tells us, is a “mighty, masculine oak or ash, rooted in the solid ground,” and the deconstructive reading is “feminine, secondary, defective, or dependent, a clinging vine, able to live in no other way but by drawing the life sap of its host, cutting off its light and air” (440).

²⁵⁴ That being said, Erdrich and Dorris did also project an ethos of openness to the public that could be seen as a form of hospitality to their readers. In their joint interviews and book dedications, the couple created the appearance of being extremely open to their reading audience. By sharing candid stories about the inner workings of their collaboration and openly expressing appreciation for one another publicly, the two authors appeared to welcome their readers into the interior spaces of their private lives. Erdrich and Dorris enhanced this impression in their fiction through their regular use of self-referential metaphors. Employing undisguised references to themselves and to their collaboration, Erdrich and Dorris invited their readers to read their fiction as intimate meditations on their own private thoughts, feelings, and experiences. As Johannas Voelz has recently pointed out, the kinds of self-referentiality often featured in Erdrich and Dorris’s fiction produce a “sincerity effect” whose function is to make readers believe that what they say about themselves in the guise of their characters “correspond[s]” to what they feel and believe in “private” (212-15).²⁵⁴ In this way, Erdrich and Dorris used moments of self-referentiality in their fiction as sites of hospitality through which they appeared to offer their readers sincere welcome.

²⁵⁵ *The Crown of Columbus* was not Erdrich and Dorris’s first attempt at collaborative writing. The couple published a number of short stories together during the early years of their marriage under the pseudonym “Milou North.” These stories were in the tradition of romance fiction. “Milou” represented a combination of their first names, and “North” was apparently a reference to the location of their New Hampshire home (Stookey 4; Washburn 31). For more on the Milou North stories, see Matchie 148, Stookey 4-6, and Trueheart 115-17.

²⁵⁶ In his wife’s absence, Dorris reportedly turned to alcohol and prescription drugs (Washburn 55). Faced with an imminent divorce and additional legal troubles, Dorris committed suicide in a New Hampshire motel in April of 1997 (Washburn 54-5).

²⁵⁷ Although clearly inspired by the *potlatch* traditions of Northwestern Indian tribes, Vivian’s modern-day potluck is mostly devoid of the competitive and antagonistic tendencies that Marcell Mauss and others have associated with the Tlingit and Haida tribes of Alaska and the Tsimshian and Kwakiutl tribes of British Columbia. See Mauss 31-37.

²⁵⁸ In this, Erdrich and Dorris echo and anticipate several theorists who treat the female body as the original site of hospitality. See, for example, Irigaray xi-xiv, 2; McNulty xxv-xxviii; and Still “Hospitality” 151-52.

²⁵⁹ “Thus, Vivian finally conquers the right to speak regardless of circumscribed boundaries, while Roger, the owner of the authoritative voice, learns how to relent his exclusive grip on language, starting to listen for the first time” (Cid 347).

²⁶⁰ “In the novel *The Crown of Columbus* (1991) co-written with Louise Erdrich, a novel of multiple narrators, [Dorris’s] narrator was ‘Roger Williams’” (McNab 112).

CONCLUSION

²⁶¹ “Immigrated, trained, prepared for their act in the United States by the United States, these *hijackers* incorporate, so to speak, two suicides in one: their own (and one will remain forever defenseless in the face of a suicidal, autoimmunitary aggression—and that is what terrorizes most) but also the suicide of those who welcomed, armed, and trained them” (“A” 95).

²⁶² Derrida’s interview with Giovanna Borradori took place on October 22, 2001, four days before President George W. Bush signed the USA PATRIOT Act into law. Yet, Derrida was already able to draw attention to what he calls “the precursory signs of what threatens to happen” (“A” 96-7).

²⁶³ Derrida characterizes this combination of American hospitality and inhospitality as a “doubly suicidal” form of “autoimmunity”: hospitality to others leaves the U.S. “*exposed* to aggression,” whereas inhospitality in response to aggression threatens to “destroy” the nation by undermining the principles of democracy upon which the U.S. was founded (94-5).

²⁶⁴ Scenes of interracial hospitality are a constant in Wright’s work. They occur with regularity in both his early short fiction and late short fiction, both his major novels and lesser known novels, both his autobiographical writings and cultural criticism. Aside from their regularity, what is most striking about scenes of interracial hospitality in Wright’s work is the emphasis that Wright places on describing the feelings of fear experienced by black characters in these scenes. Consider, for example, the “Fear” that “grip[s]” Reverend Dan Taylor and his family in “Fire and Cloud” when Mayor Bolton and Chief of Police Bruden arrive unexpectedly at Taylor’s home and take up residence in the parlor (162-72). Likewise, consider the “fear” that “grip[s]” Sue in “Bright and Morning Star” when Booker, a white party member, makes an unannounced visit to her home (242). Consider, also, the “fear” felt by Fishbelly in *The Long Dream* when he welcomes Harvey McWilliams, the first “white visitor” he has ever “received,” into his home (333-35). At the same time, consider the “fright” felt by Carl in “Man Of All Work” when he, disguised as Lucy, is invited to assist Anne Fairchild in the bath at the Fairchild home (128-29). Similarly, consider the “fright” that Wright himself feels in *Black Boy* when he first arrives in Memphis and stays at the home of Mrs. Moss and her daughter (217). In each of these examples and many others like them, Wright treats scenes of interracial hospitality as opportunities to explore what it *feels* like for African Americans to experience exchanges of interracial hospitality.

²⁶⁵ See the chart below:

Title	Year	Opening Scene
<i>Love Medicine</i>	1984	Jack Mauser invites June Kashpaw to enter the Rigger Bar, an offering of hospitality that leads to June’s death.
<i>The Beet Queen</i>	1986	The Adare family arrives by train as freeloaders in Argus, Minnesota, in 1932. They are promptly welcomed by a hostile native who sends her dog to attack young Karl.

<i>Tracks</i>	1988	Nanapush narrates the seemingly “impossible” arrival of an uninvited guest (consumption) from the North.
<i>The Bingo Palace</i>	1994	Lulu Lamartin visits the post office to send a letter to her grandson, Lipsha Morrissey, inviting him to return home to the reservation.
<i>Tales of Burning Love</i>	1996	Jack Mauser’s desperate attempt to gain admission to a dentist’s office is followed by a retelling of the fateful opening scene from <i>Love Medicine</i> that refigures Jack as a guest and June as a host: “She’d take him in like a stray . . .”
<i>The Antelope Wife</i>	1998	The United States Army invades a “peaceful” Ojibwe village on the Dakota.
<i>The Master Butcher’s Singing Club</i>	2003	German soldier Fidelis Waldvogel is welcomed home.
<i>Four Souls</i>	2004	Polly Elizabeth naively offers hospitality to a seemingly destitute Fleur Pillager, a dissembling and vengeful guest.
<i>The Plague of Doves</i>	2008	In 1896, a Catholic priest invites his parishioners to gather together with the purpose of driving away unwanted doves.
<i>The Round House</i>	2012	Joe Coutts offers a lengthy description of the small trees that have “penetrated” the foundation of his parents’ home, a symbolic foreshadowing of the horrific rape that his mother experiences and that leads to a complete breakdown of domestic hospitality at the Coutts household.

²⁶⁶ In her Birchbark House series, which now includes four titles (*The Birchbark House*, *The Game of Silence*, *The Porcupine Year*, *Chickadee*), Erdrich tells the story of a band of Ojibwe forced to adapt to the intrusion of whites during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Like *Tracks*, *The Birchbark House* (1999) opens with the arrival of an unwelcome “visitor” in the form of disease (132, 153). Personifying smallpox as an uninvited guest that parasites and kills its hosts, Erdrich asks her readers to weigh the ethical responsibilities that hosts have to diseased guests. After her entire island community is ravaged by a smallpox epidemic in 1847, a young Ojibwe girl named Omayakas is taken in and raised by a nearby clan on Moningwanaykaning, an island in the south of Lake Superior. The clan’s offering of hospitality to Omayakas turns out to be a blessing for both the young girl and her adopted family. Later, when a group of sick white men arrive on the island, they are fed and housed. Responding to the “discomfort” of one of the strangers, one young woman graciously puts “her own bowl, filled with soup, into his hands” (135). But the sick guests infect most of the clan with smallpox, and eighteen members of the community eventually die as a result of their generous hospitality (145). What prevents more Ojibwe from dying is the presence of Omayakas, now eight years old, who can act as a caretaker because she has already had the disease. A prior act of hospitality, it turns out, helps mitigate the negative effects of a subsequent act of hospitality. Hence, rather than treat the offering of hospitality to the sick white men as an imprudent act representative of the clan’s need to be less hospitable, Erdrich instead

uses the character of Omayakas to emphasize the redeeming value of welcoming those in need. Here, Erdrich offers us a model of hospitality premised not on assessing the positive or negative effects of each act of hospitality but, rather, on the belief that repeated acts of hospitality ultimately reward those who provide them. Together, these repeated acts lead to a generalized form of reciprocity, one that Erdrich's Ojibwe characters envision as a kind of "circle" of hospitality (220). In the case of Omayakas, the "circle" that "began" when she was found and taken in is "complete[d]" when she "save[s]" many of her sick hosts during the epidemic (220).

The Game of Silence (2005), the second installment in Erdrich's series, focuses on the forced displacement experienced by the Ojibwe clan in 1849, the role that contrasting forms of communication played in complicating intercultural exchange, and the continuing threat posed by Catholic missionaries intent on converting Indians. The novel opens with the arrival of Ojibwe from nearby islands who announce that a white *ogimaa* (chief) has "issued a removal order" in order to provide space for "white settlers" (21). Forced to move west—away from their "gardens," their "ancestors' graves," their "fishing grounds," and their "lodges"—the Ojibwe find that the U.S. government has robbed them not only of their physical "island home" but also of their previously unquestioned assurance in the very idea of "home" itself: "For that night they knew the threat of a much bigger loss. They would all fear to lose something huge, something so important that they never even knew that they had it in the first place. Who questions the earth, the ground beneath your feet? They had always accepted it—always here, always solid. . . . That something was home" (19). Although the Ojibwe do not believe that they "own" Moningwanaykaning, they do believe that their stewardship of the island and its resources, as well as their long history of habitation, do accord them the right to occupy the land without the violent intrusion of outsiders (21). Paradoxically, then, the federal government's seizure of Moningwanaykaning and other nearby Ojibwe islands violates the most fundamental principles of the Lockean claim to private property rights. It is precisely the labor of the Ojibwe and their use of the island's resources—their gardening, in particular—that should, according to Lockean liberal logic, grant them undisturbed status as hosts on Moningwanaykaning.

However, rather than use Lockean liberalism to claim Ojibwe ownership of the island, Erdrich uses the example of Omayakas and her clan to propose alternative criteria for evaluating both the eligibility and the actions of hosts, criteria that value preservation over parasitism and restraint over gratuitous exploitation. In contrast to the Chimookomanug (white men), who consume the land and its resources with a seemingly "infinite" hunger (*Birchbark* 78), Erdrich's Ojibwe take only what they need and do so while performing tribal rituals that reflect solemn gratitude and remind them of their indebtedness to the island. For example, even as a young child, Omayakas recites a traditional apology when she captures some birds in a nest for her family: "forgive us, forgive us, we have need, we have need" (*Birchbark* 56). The distinction between the Ojibwe ethos of preservation and the American practice of parasitism reaches its climax in *Chickadee* when, in 1866, Omayakas's young son is introduced to the city of St. Paul, Minnesota:

Chickadee could see that they used up forests of trees in making the houses. He could see that they had cut down every tree in sight. He could feel that they were pumping up the river and even using up the animals. He thought of the many

animals whose dead hides were bound and sold in St. Paul in one day. Everything that the Anishinabeg counted on in life, and loved, was going into this hungry city mouth. This mouth, this city, was wide and insatiable. It would never be satisfied, thought Chickadee dizzily, until everything was gone. (155)

Like Faulkner's young Thomas Sutpen, who experiences a life-altering revelation when he descends from the mountains of Appalachia to the more densely populated Virginia coast, Erdrich's young Chickadee is shocked by the sight of a civilization so at odds with his own. Moreover, like Sutpen, Chickadee recognizes the disparity in power created and maintained by a model of hospitality that allows the strong to parasitize at will: "The ones who built and lived in those houses were making an outside world" (155).

Appendix

²⁶⁷ Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, dozens of scholars have presented arguments about the central components of southern identity. For scholarship on the centrality of honor to southern identity, see Wyatt-Brown and Nisbett/Cohen; for chivalry, gallantry, and gentility, see Taylor; for etiquette, see Doyle and Ritterhouse; for agrarianism, see Ransom (ix), Owsley (74), and Lytle (202); for nostalgia, see Cash (x-xi), Donaldson (270), and Wilson (30); and for passion, see Starr (xi-xii).

²⁶⁸ Concerning the pre-colonial origins of southern hospitality, Malcolm Gladwell has recently argued that the traditions of Appalachian hospitality originate in Scottish and Irish "cultures of honor" (167). Similarly, in his visit to Virginia in 1799, John Bernard noted that the hospitality he found there was "truly Irish" (149). In *The Encyclopedia of Southern History*, Richard W. Lykes writes that southern hospitality "has its roots in the geography and economy of the South" ("Southern hospitality" 607-08). On the other hand, Bertram Wyatt-Brown contends that the sources of southern notions of hospitality and honor "lay deep in mythology, literature, history, and civilization" (13-4).

²⁶⁹ Following Diogenes of Sinope, who famously declared, "I am a citizen of the world (*kosmopolitês*)," proponents of Cynic cosmopolitanism, as opposed to those of Stoic cosmopolitanism, do not allow the ties of family or community to affect their ethical obligations to strangers. See John L. Moles's "Cynic Cosmopolitanism" and Martha Nussbaum's "Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism."

²⁷⁰ "If he was obliged to transform his private life into a perpetual performance for the touring public, surely the performance itself was a public act. Where, then, did the boundary lie? What was public and what was not, or had the two simply flowed together in a formless muddle?" (Dalzell & Dalzell 196-97).

²⁷¹ Fritz Hirschfeld reports that Washington owned 317 slaves in 1799, 201 of whom were productive men and women and 116 of whom were children or disabled. This number increased from 1786 when Washington had only 216 slaves (20).

²⁷² For a comparative study of U.S. slavery and eastern European forms of serfdom, particularly Russian serfdom, see Kolchin.

²⁷³ "This is the difference, the gap, between the hospitality of invitation and the hospitality of visitation. In visitation there is no door. Anyone can come at any time and can come in without need of a key for the door. There are no custom checks with a visitation" (Derrida "Hostipitality" 14).

²⁷⁴ As Richard W. Lykes explains in his entry on southern hospitality in *The Encyclopedia of Southern History*, “the graciousness with which hospitality was extended depended in large measure upon the position of the recipient within that structure. Thus, aristocratic planters would extend unlimited hospitality to persons of a rank equal to themselves from all parts of the United States and abroad. Persons lower in the social structure would be welcomed, but they would receive only limited attention directly from the host. Those of the lowest rank would, quite likely, be provided material assistance outside of the main house. Persons below the planter class would be equally liberal with their peers or those of higher rank, but they carefully maintained a similar reserve toward their ‘lessers’” (607).

²⁷⁵ As Bertram Wyatt-Brown reveals, southern conceptions of honor were inseparable from southern conceptions of hospitality: “. . . hospitality could not be divorced from honor, nor honor separated from the coercions of public opinion” (337).

²⁷⁶ Fox-Genovese astutely describes the antebellum southern economy as a “slave system within a capitalist mode of production” (55). Until emancipation, the South’s economy was “indissolubly linked” with a capitalist “transatlantic market” (55).

²⁷⁷ For more on the distinction between female hostesses and female hosts, see Still (151-52) and McNulty (xxxvii-xlii).

²⁷⁸ In 1755, for example, a Surry County, Virginia, widow named Mrs. Allen so impressed William Byrd II that he described her hospitality as “elegant” (qtd. in Kierner 454).

²⁷⁹ Abbott’s sentiments about the self-destructive nature of southern hospitality mirror those expressed by an anonymous southerner who published his findings in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1834. “To us, who enjoy the credit and the pleasure of entertaining a guest, while the drudgery devolves upon our slaves,” the writer explains, “hospitality is a cheap, easy, and delightful virtue” (166). In his travels to New England, the writer encountered not an absence of hospitality but instead what he described as “much of the *original material* of hospitality” that he found lacking in the South (167). Unaided by slaves, northern hosts bestowed hospitality at the expense “not only of money, but of time” (167). Unlike the hospitality of the South, the hospitality experienced by the writer in the North actually required significant “sacrifices” on the part of hosts (167). The result was a “more *salutary*” hospitality—one that was “better for the guest, better for the host, better for society” (167).

²⁸⁰ “. . . there are relatively few documented instances of black men assaulting white women during these years” (Cardyn 698).

²⁸¹ As Lisa Cardyn explains, “Klansmen punished interracial cohabitation in the absence of marriage with equal vigor, and neither race, sex, professional stature, nor wealth provided certain protection from attack” (768).

²⁸² As Claude Oubre points out, “Sherman’s decision to lend the freedmen horses and mules probably accounted for the inclusion of the animal” in the slogan “Forty Acres and a Mule” that eventually became widespread in the South (183).

²⁸³ “Thousands of acres were allotted to blacks; negro communities grew up; the government was carried on, churches and schools were established and roads made, by the negroes under the supervision of army officials” (Fleming 725-26).

²⁸⁴ Claude Oubre argues that President Johnson “was the one person who controlled the actual destiny of the freedmen. Had he enforced the confiscation legislation and

supported the land program of the Freedmen's Bureau, the history of Negro land ownership could have been drastically changed. Instead of making land available for freedmen to purchase, he chose to ingratiate himself with southerners by restoring their property, regardless of all the promises made to the freedmen" (189).

²⁸⁵ The repeal of the Southern Homestead Act in 1876 left "the public lands in the five southern public-land states subject to the provisions of the Homestead Act of 1862, thus making the land available for purchase and homesteading" (Canaday et al. 5).

²⁸⁶ "The reasons for the failure to establish the freedmen as land owners by 1870 are varied, yet the responsibility must be shared by Congress, the president, the military, the federal land offices, white apathy and opposition, the Freedmen's Bureau, and the freedmen themselves" (Oubre 185).

²⁸⁷ A recent study on the Southern Homestead Act, conducted by Neil Canaday and others, concurs with Oubre's claims and concludes that "the primary reason for the act's failure was the overall poor quality of land available" (13).

²⁸⁸ "Although one cannot say that freed blacks accepted the attitudes of paternalism or deny that in sharecropping they had achieved a kind of compromise with whites, sharecropping enabled planters to perpetuate their paternalistic sense of themselves, and it helped them redevelop their wealth and maintain their power . . ." (Railey 9).

²⁸⁹ The Fourteenth Amendment established all "persons born or naturalized in the United States" as citizens and declared that no state shall "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

²⁹⁰ Despite the due process and equal protections allowed for by the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1875, local and state officials in the South regularly "refused to enforce the antidiscrimination laws, and even when charges were filed, judges and juries declined to convict white proprietors" (Sandoval-Strausz 288).

²⁹¹ The *Civil Rights Cases* of 1883 involved five similar cases that were brought before the Supreme Court on the basis of the Civil Rights Act of 1875. All five of the defendants had been indicted for denying to persons of color or of unknown color equal access to public accommodations. Two were innkeeper cases, two were theater cases, and one was a railroad case.

²⁹² As Leigh Anne Duck points out, the *Plessy* decision "enfolded" segregation into national law and codified a vision of the South as a region "impervious to governmental intervention" and politically, culturally, and temporally isolated from the rest of the nation (22-5).

²⁹³ "There was no apparent tendency toward abatement or relaxation of the Jim Crow code of discrimination and segregation in the 1920's, and none in the 'thirties until well along in the depression years. In fact the Jim Crow laws were elaborated and further expanded in those years" (Woodward 116).

²⁹⁴ C. Vann Woodward describes the shift from the Black Codes to Jim Crow laws as a shift from ostracism to segregation: "Exploitation there was in that period, as in other periods and in other regions, but it did not follow then that the exploited had to be ostracized. Subordination there was also, unmistakable subordination; but it was not yet an accepted corollary that the subordinates had to be totally segregated and needlessly humiliated by a thousand daily reminders of their subordination" (44). For a detailed

legal history of this shift from “access” to “exclusion” to “segregation,” see Joseph William Singer 1351-52.

²⁹⁵ “Hotels were more than just private businesses that functioned according to the rules of the market. They were also public institutions that were subject to extensive regulation” (Sandoval-Strausz 186).

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