ANTHROPOS

103.2008: 405–421

Thinking about Hospitality, with Derrida, Kant, and the Balga Bedouin

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Abstract. – While doing research on hospitality in Jordan, I began to notice odd affinities between Bedouin understandings of this concept and certain trends in metropolitan political philosophy. Why, I wondered, does Derrida sound like a Bedouin when he writes about hospitality? What are "Arab Bedouin" doing in Kant's discussion of universal hospitality? By putting Bedouin stories into conversation with European political thought, I will illustrate the deep, thematic similarities that pervade these traditions. The similarities, I argue, are based on historical relations, but also on a shared desire to locate human interaction in idealized spaces that transcend the political and moral systems in which we live. *[Jordan, hospitality, Bedouin, Derrida, Kant, political theory, oral history]*

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An Exemplary, Moralizing Power

For much of the last decade I have studied hospitality (*karam*) among the Balga tribes of Jordan. My subject matter is feasting, the protection of strangers, generosity, the entertainment of guests, and other practices that define civility and power among Bedouin.[1] Because these practices entail control over space and a local theory of sovereignty, they have been of intense interest to state authorities since 1867, when Ottoman forces invaded the Balga and the "age of government" (*zaman al-hakumah*) began. Members of the Balga tribes have, since that time, used hospitality to resist and refashion Ottoman, British, and Hashemite ideas of *what* a centralized state is, holding politicians and public institutions accountable to a logic of host and guest. Likewise, government authorities have found hospitality a useful tool for the control of tribal subjects. Ottoman and British officials secured Bedouin loyalties through gifts of coin, weaponry, titles, and food, all of which increased a *shaykh*'s ability to dispense hospitality (and his need to do so). King Abdullah I, himself a recipient of British largess, was a frequent guest in the tents of Balgawi *shaykhs*, and he expected these men to entertain foreign dignitaries in high tribal style. In recent years, the Jordanian state has cultivated hospitality as a heritage "all Jordanians can be proud of." Epitomized by the Arab coffee pot and the ample tray of *mansaf* – a feast dish of flatbread, rice, and lamb – "Arab hospitality" has served well as a platform for touristic development, the establishment of charitable associations, *madafa*-s and *diwan*-s (assembly halls or guest houses), and other social institutions.[2]

Against this historical backdrop, hospitality emerges clearly as a kind of politics. Yet when

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[1] See Shryock (2000, 2001, 2004) and Shryock and Howell (2001) for examples of this work.

[2] The importance of *mansaf* in constructing a uniquely Jordanian culture of hospitality is explored in Howell (2003). The growth of charitable and family associations as alternatives to state-funded social welfare networks is analyzed in Baylouny (2006). On Bedouin and tourism, see Chatelard (2005).

I told Balgawis that I wanted to study "the politics of hospitality" (*siyasat al-karam*), many took offense, claiming that "hospitality is not calculated" (*al-karam bidun ghayah*). My political focus, they argued, would distort the meaning of *karam*, a word that signifies not only the provision of food, shelter, and security to guests but also the nobility of character that makes generosity possible. As a virtue, *karam* is both a genealogical endowment – some families have more of it than others – and a moral obligation akin to piety. "The generous one," the proverb tells us, "is beloved of God" (*al-karim habib ullah*). It is a compliment to say of a man who forgets his prayers but treats his guests well, that "hospitality is his religion" (*al-karam din-u*). This alternative "faith" is unapologetically ecumenical. Jordanian Christians are as committed to hospitality as Muslims; they assume, as do Muslims, that *karam* was an Arab virtue long before the advent of Islam. It is "a burning in the skin" inherited "from the father and the grandfathers" (*harara bi-l-ijlud/min al-abb wa-l-ijdud*). Commonly described as a physical compulsion, hospitality can lead to excess. It is "the Arab madness" (*hiblat al-ʿarab*). Like saintly figures overcome by divine spirit, people famed for generosity are often depicted as irrational. They give away what most of us would keep; they squander wealth and ruin their families; and they are widely praised for it.[3]

There is something at once scandalous and suggestive about *karam*'s moral power. Its "sacredness" works as a kind of religion and in place of religion, a quality that explains the seriousness with which Bedouin pose *karam* as a solution to problems more typically addressed to "the law and the prophets": namely, the threat of violence, the redistribution of wealth, the rights of strangers, and the placing and crossing of social boundaries. The priority Jordanians give to *karam* also has uncanny parallels in elite sectors of metropolitan critical theory, where hospitality is now treated as a morality that operates beyond politics, or calls politics into question.[4] In the pages that follow, I try to make sense of these thematic similarities. In cases ranging from Bedouin law to discussions of immigration and the rights of citizenship, hospitality is granted an exemplary, moralizing power that depends on (or is generated by) its peculiar location in time and space. I will describe this location, for now, as "remote." It might also be described as idealized or impossible. It is always ahead of us, or behind us, or beyond our reach.

Because hospitality is conspicuously oriented toward issues of mutual respect, it is important to understand why, in rhetoric and in practice, the best hospitality is so often thought to be elsewhere. In Jordan, Balgawi Bedouin have challenged my ethnographic prejudices by insisting that I find *karam* not in the abundant generosity they show me as their guest, here and now, but in the past (when people were genuinely hospitable) or in areas far away from us (in the eastern desert, perhaps, where Bedouin are still generous). Is it mere coincidence that theorists such as Kant, Mauss, Derrida, and Benhabib, when they invoke hospitality, refer to a concept whose critical appeal is rooted in its apparent distance from the political world in which we live?

Goodness and Blessing

I first met Fawzi al-Khatalin in 1990, at his furniture showroom in Salt, capital of the Balga Governate. An electrical engineer by training and an upstanding member of the Jordanian bourgeoisie, Fawzi is also a proud descendant of Ibn Khatlan, the first paramount *shaykh* of the ʿAbbad tribe. I was encouraged to visit Fawzi by other ʿAbbadis, who told me he owned a trunk filled with Ottoman documents and poems composed in honor of Kayid Ibn Khatlan, the last paramount *shaykh* of ʿAbbad, who died in the 1870s. Fawzi assured me he had none of these things, but he did not want me to leave empty handed. The Khatalin are famous for their generosity, and Fawzi, after taking me to his house and serving me a fine meal, told me a story of hospitality that was clearly intended as a gift to a researcher in need.

Fawzi insisted that I tape his story. We had just finished a long conversation about doing oral history among ʿAbbadis, about what kinds of stories people tell, or conceal, and how to distinguish trustworthy narrators from unreliable ones.[5] The testimony I had recorded by that date (about forty hours worth) dealt mostly with violent conflict. Fawzi's account was a critique of this discourse. In form and content, it was highly peculiar. It took place apart from the political events that had shaped the Balga confederation of tribes. Few of its central characters were Balgawis. Odder still, Fawzi did not use poetry or genealogy to bolster the truth value of his testimony. He offered no *isnad*, no "chain of transmitters" by which he had received the story. This lack of authoritative sourcing would have troubled most narrators, whose stories were lodged in a dense, mnemonic web of pedigrees and verse. When discussing hospitality, my narrators relied on familiar motifs: how tribal wars of the 19th century were sparked by insults and acts of treachery perpetrated at feasts; how ancestors became members of the Balga tribes through specific acts of food sharing and protection; how generous *shaykhs* piled meat high on platters and kept coffee fires burning night and day. Fawzi's story made scant reference to these themes. Its didactic emphasis on moral perfection, gained not by dominance but through modesty and sacrifice, removed it from my archive of local histories and placed it in a realm, familiar to me from childhood, of parables, allegories, and Sunday school lessons.

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[3] For a subtle investigation of this interplay of ir/rationality and generosity, focusing specifically on Arab Muslim societies, see Dresch (1998).

[4] This specific trend belongs to a kind of political theory, very popular at the moment, which constructs highly complex critical discourses out of what appear to be old and simple ideas. Hospitality is one of a related set that includes "the neighbor" (Žižek et al. 2005), "friendship" (Derrida 1997), and "bare life" (Agamben 1998). Issues of sovereignty dominate these experiments, which rely heavily on Schmitt's (1996) analysis of "the political" as a quality rooted in the distinction (again, a deceptively simple one) between enemy and friend. Resort to classical Greek and Roman intellectual capital is common, and Jewish and Christian scriptural traditions predominate. This essay attempts to relax these fixations, which facilitate many insights, yet block many others.

Beyond this awkward association – indeed, because of it – I did not know how to make analytical use of Fawzi's tale. It sat in a box of cassettes for seven years, seldom listened to, never transcribed.

The Hospitality of Ibn Khatlan

The side of our tribe you know about, that the old men talk about, is the side of raiding, and plundering, and war. "This one made war on that one, or raided that one." But the side we, the descendents of Ibn Khatlan, take pride in, that we prize as his family and lineage, is the side of goodness, the side of blessing, the side of generosity.

Has anyone told you anything about this side of us?

Ibn Khatlan said: After the business of raiding and plundering was done, after the time of wars, there rose up a son of Ibn Khatlan, whose name was ʿAbd al-Gadir, and this ʿAbd al-Gadir grew to be a very generous man. He divided all the wealth, all the lands his father had taken, and gave them to his followers and allies: "You take this land. You there, take this land. And you take this land." And so he came to be known as a generous man. This was his fame. If he was wearing a cloak, and there was a man without a cloak, or who needed a cloak, he would take off his cloak and give it to him. So they called him, "The Naked," because he was always without clothes.

His reputation spread into the desert by way of poetry, by way of verse. They would compose poems and sing them on their spike fiddles. The poets began to sing poems in honor of Ibn Khatlan.

And these poems made their way to whom? To Ibn Rashid, of the Rashid tribe who live in the Arabian Peninsula. He heard that this Ibn Khatlan was very generous, and perhaps even rivaled him in generosity, and this Ibn Rashid was also a generous man.

So they were sitting together; they would convene as a council, whenever there was a formal occasion; they would call a meeting of poets, and they would recite verses. About whom? About the generous ones. The horsemen. The courageous ones in all of Arabia. And the name of Ibn Khatlan was mentioned in one of their poems.

Ibn Rashid said: "Who is he, this Ibn Khatlan?"

The poets said: "Ibn Khatlan is a generous man. There's no one more generous."

He said: "By God, I want to send a delegation of you poets to Ibn Khatlan, and you bring me a reliable report. If he's more generous than I am, God will protect you. If he's not more generous, I will kill you all for this talk."

Sure enough, the delegation rode off, on camels, on horseback, and headed where? Toward Syria. Greater Syria. They came to Palestine, to Jordan: "Where is Ibn Khatlan? Where is Ibn Khatlan?"

Finally they found him, and he was not a man of substance. He was a simple man. His house was a goat-hair tent, isolated, standing off by itself. He didn't have many livestock. Just a few goats, a few sheep, a horse tethered up. There was nothing.

The delegation were upset.

They said: "Eh! We've gone to all this trouble, we've come to this country, just to see a man who owns nothing? Well, let's go ahead and enter his house and sit."

So they went into his house, and as you know, the Arabs, through the ages, have hosted a stranger for three days and a third before asking his name. So the delegation entered, and Ibn Khatlan did for them what was expected. He fed them dinner; he fed them supper. The second day, he fed them dinner, he fed them supper. On the third day, the time of hospitality ended, and toward evening a poet from the delegation took up his spike fiddle and recited a poem. I haven't memorized the poem, but the meaning of what he said was:

If only I'd not left my country
Not exhausted myself in this journey
Not defeated myself, and come all this way
I fear it will all end in nothing.

Ibn Khatlan heard this; he heard the poet recite these words. He came to them and said: "Don't weep; don't weep because you've come to my house."

They slept the night with Ibn Khatlan, and in the morning they wanted to leave. One of the poets was without a horse; it had died along the way.

Ibn Khatlan said: "Ride! Ride my horse. Take it!"

He put his saddle on the horse and brought his children, his son and his daughter, and he put his son in the right saddlebag, and he put his daughter in the left saddle bag.

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[5] The results of this research are on display in Shryock (1997).

The poets said: "What's this?"

Ibn Khatlan said: "Take them and go!"

They said: "What do you mean, 'go'?"

Ibn Khatlan drew his sword and said: "If you take them out of the saddlebags, I'll cut off your heads. That's it. Go!"

So they went, and when they went they traveled up to the city of Salt. The Balga region, and all this country, was desert back then, and Bedouin tribes. The poets stopped to eat with a party of Bani Sakhr tribesmen, who saw the children and said: "Who are these children?"

They said: "By God, these are the children of Ibn Khatlan."

The tribesmen said: "What's your story?"

They said: "Our story is this, that, and the other."

The tribesmen said: "We must have those children. What do you want for them?"

They said: "By God, we want their weight in gold. If you take them from us, you'll have to give us their weight in gold."

And indeed they gave them the girl's weight in gold, and left the boy in the saddlebag. Who did this? The Bani Sakhr. The greatest of the Balga tribes.

So they traveled on to another tribe, and the same thing happened, and they traded the boy for his weight in gold. Why did they do this, the tribes? Because they wanted to return Ibn Khatlan's children to him.

They said: "This is a noble and generous man. How can we allow him to lose his children?"

So they bought them and returned them.

And those poets, when they sold the children, they would write up a document. And who would sign it? The tribes, so they could take proof to Ibn Rashid, because Ibn Rashid would not believe that someone would part with his children in this way. So they wrote up the first receipt for the people who bought the girl, and the second receipt for the people who bought the boy.

So they returned to the Najd, and Ibn Rashid convened the same council, the same council of poets who gathered in his diwan.

He said: "Now I will see what my poets have discovered on their journey."

The poets arrived and swore by their right hands that all these things had happened to them, and they showed their documents, and said: "Indeed Ibn Khatlan is more generous, and nobler. This man is so hospitable that he will give his own children to honor his guests."

Ibn Rashid was overcome with jealousy. He said: "I must slay this Ibn Khatlan!"

Do you understand this?

He rallied the horsemen of his tribe and rode to the West. Why? To kill Ibn Khatlan. When they came to the Jordan Valley, Ibn Rashid saw Ibn Khatlan, the way he really was, and said to him: "I came wanting to kill you, but now … you don't deserve to be slain by me."

So they became friends, companions, and allies. All because of the hospitality of Ibn Khatlan.

And we, the sons of Ibn Khatlan, take pride in this more than we take pride in war and raiding and killing. From this story, Ibn Khatlan became famous. This story … its age … is older than 186 years. It comes from the time of ʿAbd al-Gadir, the Naked. To this very day, nothing has ever been written about it in a book. Because the people themselves transmit it and already know it. Every elder in Jordan, in Saudi Arabia, in Syria, in Egypt, in Palestine, if you asked him, he would know it. So no one publishes it in stories and research, even though this story has incredible significance for us. Someone should make a book or a TV series about this, because it shows our good qualities, not our bad ones. We should write stories that do not give a false image, and this story is not a make-believe story. It is the truth.

If historical truth claims were central to my research, why did I find this story problematic? Its hyperbole and neat symmetry are not surprising; Balgawi oral traditions are rich in both. The fact that the story takes place *circa* 1803, when the Ibn Rashid dynasty was not established in Hail until 1836, is even less a concern; chronological dating is a recent and predictably inaccurate addition to these stories. Still, improbability is oddly essential to Fawzi's account; he wants it to be reliable *and* incredible, whereas most narrators want to be reliable. Ibn Rashid's poets, too, insist on veracity – demanding signed documents and sworn oaths – because they know, as Fawzi does, that the events they describe are exceptional and unlikely. Yet these events are perfectly consistent with the value ʿAbbadis ascribe to *karam*. It is good to think that someone (might have) behaved this way.

The story also puzzled me because its truth, which Fawzi saw as positive and uplifting, is manifest in themes that would make Balgawi notions of *karam* seem Other – at best fabulous and folkloric, at worst barbaric – to almost any reader who might encounter the story in English translation. What anti-Arab stereotypes are undermined by a story in which a father gives his children away to strangers, generosity provokes death threats, a host threatens to cut off the heads of guests who refuse an inappropriate gift, humans are bought and sold, and the line between friendship and homicide is so easily crossed?

The profound truth of Fawzi's story – the quality that makes it attractive even to Balgawis who do not believe it – lies not in its exaggerated appeal to "goodness and blessing" but in its close association of those qualities with the risk of death. The demands of hospitality create danger (in the form of jealousy and trespass) and overcome danger (through gestures of welcome and concern). Fawzi's account is neither a "model of" nor a "model for" proper behavior. He gives little attention to the etiquette of hosting, which he refers to in passing as "the expected," nor does he suggest that people should try to emulate Ibn Khatlan today. The story's ultimate goal is to inspire a reverential attitude toward *karam*, a respect for its miraculous potential, to which the Khatalin are heirs. In telling the story as he did, Fawzi al-Khatalin accomplished a subtle historical reenactment. He cast himself in the role of Ibn Khatlan and me in the role of fact-finding poet, whose task now is to tell a faraway audience – you, my readers – something hard to believe.

I will leave Fawzi's story for now. Its significance will emerge more clearly if I comment first on another setting, not as far from the Balga (or the Bedouin) as it might seem, in which the demands of hospitality are now being keenly felt.

Of (French) Hospitality

Since the mid-1990s, the word "hospitality" has figured prominently in European, especially Francophone, social and political theory.[6] Derrida was a leading animator of this trend. His work on hospitality is distinctive (and for many readers frustrating) in the way it jumps from Greek drama, to biblical narrative, to the metaphysics of Heidegger and Lévinas.[7] These interpretive acrobatics are rendered timely by Derrida's provocative allusions to state sovereignty and the recognition of Others. The Others in question are, in France and throughout Europe, mostly Arabs, Turks, and Muslims (most of them Arabs and Turks), who criticize their "host" societies in languages of hospitality that would be familiar to my Balgawi hosts. When undocumented immigrants (*clandestins* and *sans-papiers*) seek sanctuary in churches – a rite of refuge intelligible to Muslims (and to readers of Victor Hugo) everywhere – and when Franco-Arab intellectuals describe the racism and restrictive legislation directed against immigrants as a failure of "hospitality," the language being spoken has, to my ears, distinctly French and North African inflections. In "French Hospitality," a blistering assault on France's relationship to its Maghrebi "guests," Tahar Ben Jelloun embraces Derrida's work as if it were a near dialect of his own critical speech (1999: 3).

> Jacques Derrida may have been thinking of Mediterranean hospitality when he said: "Being a host means going beyond the abilities of the self and giving more than I think I'm giving. My guest is more important than my home." He agrees with and quotes Emmanuel Levinas, who writes in *Totality and Infinity*: "To approach another through discourse is to welcome what he expresses quite apart from any notion of deriving ideas from it. So it means entertaining the Other in a way beyond the abilities of the Self. More precisely, it imparts an idea of infinity. But it also means learning something" ... To give more than one has. How often, in the countries south of the Mediterranean, does a peasant secretly go and borrow the wherewithal to give a guest a worthy welcome!

Like Ben Jelloun, I suspect that Derrida – who was born and raised in Algeria and described himself, (in)famously, as "a little black and very Arab Jew"[8] – shared a way of thinking about hospitality with other North Africans. A study of his writings on hospitality reveals his persistent attraction to themes of welcome, trespass, sacrifice, risk, substitution, lack of calculation, harboring the nameless guest, giving hospitality without reciprocity in mind, as the unexpected act, surprising and selfless, that transcends politics and overcomes the law. With the story of Ibn Khatlan fresh in mind, it hardly requires elaborate exegesis to see how thoroughly these motifs pervade ʿAbd al-Gadir's encounter with the poets, the tribes who ransom his children, and Ibn Rashid, his potential-killer-turned-friend.

Like Fawzi al-Khatalin, Derrida makes claims that seem both impossible and true. In his oddly titled essay, "Hostipitality" (2002), Derrida says the host must be prepared to receive the guest without expecting the guest, without acting out of duty yet feeling obliged to feed and cover the guest: "If I welcome only what I welcome, what I am ready to welcome, and that I recognize in advance because I expect the coming of the *hote* (guest) as invited, there is no hospitality" (2002: 362). Though contradictory, these statements aptly correspond to a wide range of empirical circumstances. They describe apprehensions that race through the mind of a middle-class Parisian couple preparing, but trying not to give the impression of over preparing, or hardly preparing, a dinner party for colleagues. At the same time, Derrida's formulas capture perfectly – indeed, they describe better – Ibn Khatlan's reception of his unexpected, uninvited guests. Upon first reading "Of Hospitality" (2000), I was amazed by the directness with which Derrida spoke to the elemental concerns of Fawzi al-Khatalin's story: (1) the transformative relationship between hospitality as "the expected" and hospitality as the unexpected; and (2) the predominance of the *pater familias* in upholding both forms of welcome by showing his willingness to sacrifice his family (his own house) to meet and exceed the laws of hospitality. These tropes, Derrida argues, are "intermediate schemas" that emerge to resolve the irresolvable tension "between unconditional hospitality and the rights and duties that are the conditions of hospitality" (2000: 147).

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[6] This prominence, as it evolved in the 1990s, is insightfully analyzed by Rosello (2001), who follows the trend into literature and film. More recent accounts of social science research on hospitality, and ongoing contributions to it, can be sampled in volumes written and edited by Anne Gotman (2001, 2004). Work that adapts French scholarship on hospitality to Anglophone intellectual concerns is already diverse. Examples include Dikeç (2002), Kandiyoti (2004), Rundell (2004), Kearney (2002), Barnett (2005), and Hudson (2006).

[7] Derrida catalogs his own work on hospitality in "Rogues" (2005: 172 f.). His most detailed and evocative arguments appear in "Of Hospitality" (2000), "Adieu to Emmanuel Lévinas" (1999), and "On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness" (2001).

[8] To be exact, "un petit Juif noir et très arabe" (quoted in Anidjar 2002: 33).

A threshold – the doorway, the open tent flap, the international boundary – must be crossed before hospitality is possible; hence, the figure of "the outsider" is essential to talk of hospitality. In contemporary Europe, the Arab/Muslim immigrant is spoken to and spoken about in this language, usually in a tone of advocacy or complaint, usually as a commentary on political work that remains to be done. When conceptualized as "guests," immigrants become outsiders who belong to another place, even if they are born "here," a vexed status in which signs of welcome and trespass begin rapidly to merge and disturb each other. Derrida uses hospitality motifs to intensify this situation and play with its contradictions.

"I should try to open my space," he argues, "without trying to include the Other in my space," without insisting that the Other "learn my language, or adopt my religion or become English or become French" (1997).

> [That's] the prevailing left-wing discourse, "we are hospitable to the immigrants to the extent that they become French citizens, respect secularism, that they learn the French language," assimilation. We call this integration ... But that's a double bind, on the one hand I should respect the singularity of the Other and not ask him or her that he respect or keep intact my own space or my own culture ... [but on the other] ... I have to accept if I offer unconditional hospitality that the Other may ruin my own space or impose his or her own culture or his or her own language. That's the problem: hospitality should be neither assimilation, acculturation, nor simply the occupation of my space by the Other. That's why it has to be negotiated at every instant, and the decision for hospitality, the best rule for this negotiation, has to be invented at every second with all the risks involved, and it is very risky. Hospitality, and hospitality is a very general name for all our relations to the Other, has to be re-invented at every second, it is something without a pre-given rule (Derrida 1997).

In its spontaneous, highly negotiated forms, hospitality disrupts the "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) and "stranger publics" (Warner 2002) on which contemporary political society is based. The guest Derrida describes can only be a foreigner (but one who should enjoy open access to "my space"), and the space of hospitality, insofar as it is truly open to insiders and outsiders, cannot be bounded or sovereign in exclusive ways (but should be both in inclusive ways, such that "my space is your space"). This paradoxical representation is standard fare in Derrida's writings and public talks on the subject of hospitality. He used it as a conceptual wedge to separate political constraints from ethical ones, a tactic that, he believed, revealed the possibility of "another international law, another border politics, another humanitarian politics, indeed a humanitarian commitment that *effectively* operates beyond the interests of Nation-States" (Derrida 1999: 101).

There are sound reasons to reject a discussion of immigration that privileges hospitality. A nation-state is not a house, and seldom do immigrants enter national space as guests enter a home. These are formal distinctions many scholars and legislators would insist on. In "Postcolonial Hospitality. The Immigrant as Guest" (2001), Mireille Rosello suggests that metaphors of guest and host can be grossly misapplied to immigrants, obscuring "the fact that the reason they were 'invited' had nothing to do with hospitality ... The unskilled workers who helped build French suburbs, or *banlieues*, in the 1950s and 1960s were not regarded as guests in a house; they were hired" (2001: 9). The legal obligations of the employer/employee relationship and the political protections built into citizen/state relations, Rosello argues, are precisely what host and guest cannot offer one another: "hospitality as a metaphor blurs the distinction between a discourse of rights and a discourse of generosity, the language of social contracts and the language of excess and gift-giving" (2001: 9).

Keeping these reservations in clear view, I would argue that ideas of hospitality can be useful in thinking about and reconfiguring models of "citizenship," precisely because hospitality locates the outsider in a space of welcome – and, by implication, in a zone of trespass – where it is possible to supersede the moral conventions that define *any* form of membership or belonging. Spaces of hospitality, even those filled with *karam*, are not free of contractual obligations, nor are they bound by them. They are, to use Rosello's imagery, morally and politically "blurred." Perhaps this is why political theorists who speculate on the potential of human community beyond (or before or despite) the nation-state are repeatedly drawn to concepts of host, guest, house, and gift. Hospitality was considered an essential aspect of global citizenship when Enlightenment ideologists first dreamt of its modern forms. The "rights of strangers" are a principal theme, for instance, in Immanuel Kant's "Perpetual Peace," a canonical text of European (cosmo)political theory. Bedouin – and their camels – do crucial work in this essay; indeed, the "Bedouin Arab" is as central to Kant's critical agenda as the Arab/Muslim immigrant is to Derrida's.

The Spherical Planet and the Privilege of Foreign Arrivals

Kant wrote "Perpetual Peace" in 1795. During the 1990s, it experienced new popularity,[9] due largely to its subject matter, a future in which humans live without war (and without standing armies) in a world where "the civil constitution of every state should be republican" and "the law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states." Kant's utopian vision fits conveniently into a variety of discourses, celebratory and skeptical, concerning the European Union and other attempts to establish transnational political structures. What I find most striking about Kant's treatise, however, is his final "condition" for perpetual peace, in which he envisions a cosmopolitan political identity shared by all citizens of "free states" and expressed in the right to universal hospitality. Kant's decision to link world citizenship to a very specific form of hospitality is peculiar for the strict – one is tempted to say "unwelcoming" – limitations he places on how foreigners ought to be received and why such a right to hospitality should exist at all. The passage is worth reading in its entirety (1957: 20–23). I urge the reader to be watchful for Bedouin; when they appear, they will not resemble the Bedouin I have been discussing in this essay.

Third Definitive Article for a Perpetual Peace

"The Law of World Citizenship Shall Be Limited to Conditions of Universal Hospitality"

Here, as in the preceding articles, it is not a question of philanthropy but of right. Hospitality means the right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives in the land of another. One may refuse to receive him when this can be done without causing his destruction; but, so long as he peacefully occupies his place, one may not treat him with hostility. It is not the right to be a permanent visitor that one may demand. A special beneficent agreement would be needed in order to give an outsider a right to become a fellow inhabitant for a certain length of time. It is only a right of temporary sojourn, a right to associate, which all men have. They have it by virtue of their common possession of the surface of the earth, where, as a globe, they cannot infinitely disperse and hence must finally tolerate the presence of each other. Originally, no one had more right than another to a particular part of the earth.

Uninhabitable parts of the earth – the sea and the deserts – divide this community of all men, but the ship and the camel (the desert ship) enable them to approach each other across these unruled regions and to establish communication by using the common right to the face of the earth, which belongs to human beings generally. The inhospitality of the inhabitants of coasts (for instance, of the Barbary Coast) in robbing ships in neighboring seas or enslaving stranded travelers, or the inhospitality of the inhabitants of the deserts (for instance, the Bedouin Arabs) who view contact with nomadic tribes as conferring the right to plunder them, is thus opposed to natural law, even though it extends the right of hospitality, i.e., the privilege of foreign arrivals, no further than to conditions of the possibility of seeking to communicate with the prior inhabitants. In this way distant parts of the world can come into peaceable relations with each other, and these are finally publicly established by law. Thus the human race can gradually be brought closer and closer to a constitution establishing world citizenship.

But to this perfection compare the inhospitable actions of the civilized and especially of the commercial states of our part of the world. The injustice which they show to lands and peoples they visit (which is equivalent to conquering them) is carried by them to terrifying lengths. America, the lands inhabited by the Negro, the Spice Islands, the Cape, etc., were at the time of their discovery considered by these civilized intruders as lands without owners, for they counted the inhabitants as nothing. In East India (Hindustan), under the pretense of establishing economic undertakings, they brought in foreign soldiers and used them to oppress the natives, excited widespread wars among the various states, spread famine, rebellion, perfidy, and the whole litany of evils which afflict mankind.

China and Japan (Nippon), who have had experience with such guests, have wisely refused them entry, the

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[9] Typical of this literature are Habermas' essay, "Kant's Idea of Perpetual Peace. At Two Hundred Years' Historical Remove" (1998), and the edited volume, "Perpetual Peace. Essays on Kant's Cosmopolitan Ideal" (Bohman and Lutz-Bachmann 1997).

> former permitting their approach to their shores but not their entry, while the latter permit this approach to only one European people, the Dutch, but treat them like prisoners, not allowing them any communication with the inhabitants. The worst of this (or, to speak with the moralist, the best) is that all these outrages profit them nothing, since all these commercial ventures stand on the verge of collapse, and the Sugar Islands, that place of the most refined and cruel slavery, produces no real revenue except indirectly, only serving a not very praiseworthy purpose of furnishing sailors for war fleets and thus for the conduct of war in Europe. This service is rendered to powers which make a great show of their piety, and, while they drink injustice like water, they regard themselves as the elect in point of orthodoxy.
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> Since the narrower or wider community of the peoples of the earth has developed so far that a violation of rights in one place is felt throughout the world, the idea of a law of world citizenship is no high-flown or exaggerated notion. It is a supplement to the unwritten code of the civil and international law, indispensable for the maintenance of the public human rights and hence also of perpetual peace. One cannot flatter oneself into believing one can approach this peace except under the condition outlined here.

Kant's "third definitive article" unites my themes in a single, *global* framework. His theory of cosmopolitan citizenship is made of hospitality, state boundaries, individuals and populations in constant motion, and even an outer lining of Bedouin tribes. Though obviously antique in its reasoning and phraseology, Kant's treatise is disturbing in its resemblance, across two centuries, to views dominant in metropolitan centers of power. Many philosophers, not to mention state officials, live today in a world where (republican) nation-states and enterprising citizens who travel across their borders are threatened by political fringe dwellers. The latter are no longer Barbary pirates or camel-raiding Bedouin, but they remain, for the most part, Arabs and Muslims, and they still mark the limit of civilization.

The durability of this worldview deserves an essay of its own. What I would like to address instead is the location of universal hospitality in Kant's scheme. It exists in the future, of course; and it exists by virtue of the spherical shape of the earth, which makes interaction (or collision) inevitable, given the continued growth and expansion of human populations, which Kant assumed was inevitable. The round earth he imagined was filled with "unruled regions," with deserts, oceans, and frontiers. These unruled regions were not without people; more to the point, they were without republican government and licit economies; their inhabitants, organized for plunder, lived in defiance of natural law. If hospitality was not to be found in deserts, or on pirate ships, neither did Kant see evidence of it in the policies of Europe's imperial powers, whom he portrayed as brigands of far grander dimensions, whose crimes could be measured on a planetary scale.

Kant's universal hospitality exists in the future – that is, not in his time or ours – but it also exists in empirical contradiction to the conduct of hosts and guests in the "unruled regions" of the earth. European travelers had discovered, even before "Perpetual Peace" saw print, that the deserts of Kant's spherical planet, especially those filled with Bedouin, were indeed without institutions of the state, yet they were governed by hospitality, by gift-giving, feasting, and elaborate procedures of escort and refuge. In the century following "Perpetual Peace," the Bedouin of European travel literature emerged as exemplars of generosity and "the open hand." They were portrayed as a martial society, inveterately opposed to government, inclined toward blood feuds and opportunistic thievery, but their most serious forms of violence – camel raiding and tribal warfare – were portrayed as game-like rituals, often comical to behold, which posed little risk to noncombatants (or to regimented and well-armed Europeans).

Writing in the 1780s, Constantin-François Volney, a French traveler, laid the groundwork for representations of the Bedouin of Greater Syria. Describing the same tribes with whom I have done most of my fieldwork in Jordan, he defended their character against charges of exactly the sort Kant leveled against them, and he builds his defense around notions of hospitality.

> The Arabs have often been reproached with this spirit of rapine; but, without wishing to defend it, we may observe, that one circumstance has not been sufficiently attended to, which is, that it only takes place towards reputed enemies, and is consequently founded on the acknowledged laws of almost all nations. Among themselves they are remarkable for a good faith, a disinterestedness, a generosity which would do honor to the most civilized people. What is there more noble than that right of asylum so respected among all the tribes? A stranger, nay, even an enemy, touches the tent of the Bedouin, and, from that instant, his person becomes inviolable. It would be reckoned a disgraceful meanness, and indelible shame, to satisfy even a just vengeance at the expense of hospitality. Has the Bedouin consented to eat bread and salt with his guest, nothing can induce him to betray him. The power of the Sultan himself would not be able to force a refugee from the protection of a tribe, but by its total extermination. The Bedouin, so rapacious without his camp, has no sooner set his foot within it, than he becomes liberal and generous. What little he possesses,

> he is ever ready to divide. He has even the delicacy not to wait till it is asked: when he takes his repast, he affects to seat himself at the door of his tent, in order to invite the passengers; his generosity is so sincere, that he does not look upon it as a merit, but merely as a duty: and he, therefore, readily takes the same liberty with others. To observe the manner in which the Arabs conduct themselves towards each other, one would imagine that they possessed all their goods in common (Volney 1798: 411–413).

Despite countless individual experiences at odds with it, this way of writing about Bedouin – in the subsequent works of Burckhardt (1822), Conder (1883), Merrill (1881), and many others – became so authoritative that Western travelers who did not receive the gracious treatment they expected would actually cite "the literature" in an attempt to shame their negligent hosts. In 1890, Mrs. Gray Hill, detained for several days by the *shaykhs* of Karak, who wanted more money for escort than her husband was willing to pay, wrote the following speech, which was read aloud for the edification of her captors (Hill 1891: 225):

> We have traveled amongst Beduins before, and have been taught to believe, as those who went before us have believed, that from the time of our father Abraham until now, if anyone came as a guest into their tents their hospitality would be full and true. But we have lived to find ourselves mistaken. We have entered the tent of Sheik Khalil, broken bread, and drunk coffee with him, and been treated outwardly like welcome guests; but we find ourselves robbed and kept as prisoners. Is this well done?

The Karakis hailed the speech as "clever, beautiful, sweet." They swore by their heads that Mr. and Mrs. Hill would come to no harm, but they did not release them until they received their 100 Napoleons.

A Moment of Recognition

If Kant's "unruled regions" were not inhospitable in the way he thought them to be, the hospitality that did prevail there was neither the ideal of the travelers nor the truly impossible generosity of Ibn Khatlan. Kant misrepresented the politics of the unruled regions, but even more telling is the extent to which he misidentified the ultimate location of "unruled regions" on his round earth. The unruled regions of greatest importance to "Perpetual Peace" are not those found among "Bedouin Arabs." They are located in the utopian space of universal hospitality itself. Seyla Benhabib, in her insightful reassessment of "Perpetual Peace," argues that Kant's version of cosmopolitan citizenship is based on an unresolved paradox.

> The right of hospitality entails a moral claim with potential legal consequences in that the obligation of the receiving states to grant temporary residency to foreigners is anchored in a republican cosmopolitical order. Such an order does not have a supreme executive law governing it. In this sense the obligation to show hospitality to foreigners and strangers cannot be enforced; it remains a voluntarily incurred obligation of the political sovereign. *The right of hospitality expresses all the dilemmas of the republican cosmopolitical order in a nutshell: namely how to create quasi-legally binding obligations through voluntary commitments and in the absence of an overwhelming sovereign power with the ultimate right of enforcement* (Benhabib 2004: 29; emphasis added).

When I first read this passage, I was convinced I had encountered it before. In fact, I had encountered Benhabib's paradox many times. First, I knew it as a problematic embedded in the history of social anthropology. Theorists such as Evans-Pritchard, Fortes, and Radcliffe-Brown asked this question long ago, but of societies located on the opposite end of a temporal(ized) scale of political complexity.[10] In paraphrase, their question was put as follows: "how do stateless societies order themselves in the absence of centralized government?" It is telling that Benhabib's ungoverned spaces are not "primitive" or "tribal" but "cosmopolitan" and "international."

Second, I recognized in Benhabib's wording a slightly older and better known question posed in terms so similar to hers that reading them side by side creates a moment of epiphany.

> In primitive or archaic types of society, what is the principle whereby the gift received has to be repaid? What force is there in the thing given which compels the recipient to make a return?

The words belong to Marcel Mauss (1967 [1925]: 1), whose analytical reflections in "The Gift" were focused on societies he was reluctant to call "backward," but which he clearly associated with social forms that predate the modern state and capitalism.

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[10] This approach encompasses most social anthropology of the mid-20th century. Reduced to the genre of collected essays, its best exemplar would be "African Political Systems" (1940), edited by Evans-Pritchard and Fortes, with a preface by Radcliffe-Brown. The climax form appeared eighteen years later, in "Tribes Without Rulers" (1958), edited by Middleton and Tait, with a preface by Evans-Pritchard, now playing the role of "tribal elder." For a decidedly unsympathetic assessment of this tradition, see Kuper's "The Reinvention of Primitive Society" (2005).

A quick hybridization of Mauss and Benhabib, factoring out incompatible notions of time, and factoring in the gift that most directly concerns us, produces the following:

> In the absence of a sovereign power with ultimate rights of enforcement, what is the binding principle that obliges us to offer hospitality to others? What force is there in hospitality given that compels the recipient to make a voluntary return?

Mauss believed that something of the giver is carried in the gift: "whatever it is, food, possessions, women, children, or ritual, it retains a magical and religious hold over the recipient. The thing given is not inert. It is alive and often personified, and strives to bring to its original clan and homeland some equivalent to take its place" (1967 [1925]: 10). The story of Ibn Khatlan is a textbook verification of this argument. Ibn Khatlan's gift was hardly inert; in its personified forms, it squirmed, kicked, and (no doubt) cried in the saddlebags of the mystified poets. These little "gifts" longed to return to their donor, and they soon did, sending their equivalents (in gold) to Ibn Rashid, who was compelled – not by the gold but by the sight of Ibn Khatlan – to respond with friendship. This outcome was never intended by Ibn Khatlan, whose only wish was to protect his guests. The reciprocity was uncalculated and miraculous. It was not ordained by a state, by any formal obligation of law, or even by God. The story's distance from external coercion, and from a knowing manipulation of events, makes it peculiar. It is not a magical narrative, only an excessive and surprising one – qualities Derrida, in his critique of "The Gift," associated with the gift itself, "if there is one" (1991) – and this is the source of my lingering sense that Fawzi's story is true (even if it did not happen) and impossible (even if something like it did).

To amplify these uncanny resonances, one could mix Benhabib with Mauss yet again, this time using terms of modern governance that Kant would accept as given and Derrida would want us to take apart:

> What living thing, what viable aspect of the person, of the person as citizen, of the state as personified host, must be voluntarily given up, or given away, in order for hospitality to function as a right and an obligation of inter/national law?

The obvious answer is that the state must give up a portion of the sovereignty that defines it (and makes such a gesture "official"), while the citizen must relinquish the right to "belong" insofar as that right denies access to nonmembers (which it always will). A sense of paradox remains, and it is intensified when analysts privilege the state – the brute entity "between" the simple past of ethnology and the utopian future of political theory – instead of looking through the state (and its by-product, the citizen) to focus on the continuities that give Bedouin storytelling, German Enlightenment thought, and French deconstruction the "family resemblance" I am trying to draw out in this essay.

What are these continuities? Obviously, they are not discernible in the mechanics of receiving guests. The latter vary greatly across our cases, and we can assume that Kant, Derrida, and Ibn Khatlan would find each other puzzling as hosts. The continuities are recognizable in the way hospitality is framed. In all three cases, hospitality is:

1. *a critical alternative*. Posed as corrective, it is discussed in idealistic terms, suggesting a moral superiority that is apparent but cannot be attained.
2. *a test of sovereignty* (of control over space and boundaries). Failing this test brings danger; violence and death are what acts of hospitality ultimately prevent and sometimes provoke.
3. *an exception*. Although expressible as law, the exercise of hospitality typically requires breaking rules or creating jurisdictions in which a "higher" law prevails.
4. *a voluntary yet obligating commitment*. Hospitality compels action on the part of hosts and guests, often against their will and contrary to their expectations.
5. *a virtue whose best forms are located away from present space and time*. Equating it with extant social forms often comes across as forced, inadequate, or contrary to the "spirit" of hospitality itself.

This final point explains Derrida's rejection of Kant's attempt to "reduce" hospitality to a right guaranteed (and limited) by law. It also explains the ambivalent relationship between the Bedouin, as a social type, and the traditional culture of welcome they are said, on behalf of the Jordanian nation, to represent.

Harmony and Hospitality

In 2004, UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) awarded its first international Harmony Prize to "Bedouin Hospitality." The award was accepted by Princess Basma (sister of the late King Hussein of Jordan) in the name of Bedouin everywhere, but especially those living in Jordan. Winners of the Harmony Prize are described, on UNESCO's website, as "traditional or innovative cultural practices that contribute significantly to improving the quality of life and integrating the cultural dimension in economic and social development" (*UNESCO* 2005b). The award was received on the campus of Jordan University, near a mock-up of a Bedouin tent, with Jordanian soldiers in Bedouin-style garb pouring thimbles of black, cardamom-spice coffee for visiting dignitaries. The elaborate stagecraft was prelude to big dollar investments in development and tourist projects sponsored by Princess Basma, the Jordanian state, and the NGO sector.

According to Harmony Prize selectors, "Bedouin hospitality" consists of enthusiasm for entertaining guests, elaborate coffee rituals, and the protection of travelers in a harsh, arid environment. "Bedouin Hospitality" (*UNESCO* 2005a), a brochure designed to publicize the Harmony Prize, is filled with images that correspond nicely to what Western tourists expect Bedouin to look like.[11] The photographs – we are not told where they were taken, or when – show desert-dwelling nomads preparing coffee over hot coals (not gas stoves) and pouring it from old brass pots (not plastic thermoses made in China). These Bedouin live in goat-hair tents (not houses made of cinderblock or poured cement); they ride camels (not Toyota pickup trucks) and spend their evenings sitting around open fires (not watching satellite TV). Amid the romanticism of the UNESCO brochure, one finds the following advice, which says a great deal (about the Harmony Prize and its principal sponsor, Integral Development Asset Management, a French firm dedicated to sustainable development in the "financial domain"): "Businesses aiming to promote sustainable development have a great deal to learn from this tradition of hospitality. Indeed, welcoming other people, whether employees or clients, is the mainspring of good communication: there are still far too many human deserts in the business world" (*UNESCO* 2005a: 7).

This wisdom is part of a trend – call it "the domestication of tribal virtues" – popular throughout the Arab world. Elsewhere, I have analyzed the moral contradictions that arise when "Bedouin hospitality" is packaged as heritage and commodified in the interests of tourism and development (Shryock 2004). Hosts are reconfigured as proprietors, guests as customers, houses as restaurants and hotels. Bedouin themselves re-appear as actors in folkloric costume. The Harmony Prize is part of a sustained effort to hurry these transformations along. In 2005, UNESCO again honored "Bedouin hospitality," this time declaring it, and the entire "cultural space" of the tribes of Wadi Rum and Petra, to be a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity." According to Farah Daghestani (Director of the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development), the UNESCO declaration will "help local communities to create "living Bedu museums," "heritage houses," and more sophisticated displays, including light and sound, documentary films, and other audio-visual materials," a virtual(ized) arsenal of folkloric materials to be deployed in "festivals of Bedu culture" that "celebrate poetry, rababa, dance, song, storytelling, traditional medicine and the craft of tent making, and will welcome visitors from Jordan and abroad" (*Jordan Times*, 12/1/2005).

This vision of Bedouin culture is at odds with the tradition of hospitality it attempts to promote, for two rather obvious reasons: (1) *karam* is not something that should be exchanged for cash and (2) *karam* should not be confused with treating guests well, pouring coffee for them, or guaranteeing their safety, all of which are *wajib* (duty). Generous people exceed these gestures, and they do so in ways that expose host and house to danger. Without this sense of risk, hospitality loses its moral power. "The guest is prisoner of the host" (*ad-dayf asir al-muʿazzib*), says the proverb: "The host must fear the guest. When he sits [and eats your food] he is company; when he stands [and leaves your house], he is a poet" (*lazim al-muʿazzib yikhaf min ad-dayf. Luma yijlis, howa dayf. Luma yigum, howa shaʿir*). Only by opening one's space in potentially threatening ways is protection for host and guest fundamentally secured. On one occasion, my host surprised me by insisting, after he had fed me well, that I should not make too much of his generosity. "There is no *karam* today," he explained, because "public security" has eliminated the need for it!

The logic of this claim – the logic of the "open house" – figures prominently in a story told to me by Hajj ʿAli Muhammad Badr al-ʿAdwan. The story is well known among ʿAdwanis, but it held special meaning for Hajj ʿAli, whose brother had recently been killed in a drive-by shooting, the climax of several years of conflict between his family and a neighboring ʿAdwani clan. The conventions of tribal law that should have contained the dispute had repeatedly broken down, and "public insecurity" prompted many tellings of this story.

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[11] The photographs are drawn mostly from *Saudi Aramco World*. Some were taken in Jordan, some in the Empty Quarter of Saudi Arabia; others are hard to place. Camels, tents, and sand dunes are the dominant motifs.

Each was an exercise in social criticism. Reliance on law and disrespect for law were the simultaneous objects of critique; *karam* was the tool that could "fix" these problems. Muhammad Hamdan, an ʿAdwani historian (and a party to the conflict), arranged the telling I record below. Muhammad thought Hajj ʿAli's version would help me understand why the violence between the families had spiraled out of control; he also believed that the story would teach me the proper meaning of *karam*, a lesson he feared I might never learn if the example of living ʿAdwanis was the only evidence I had to consider.

Once again, the story is displaced to a remote time ("in the beginning") and a faraway place (the coast of Yemen). In unintended homage to Kant, Hajj ʿAli's story begins with a camel raid.

The Story of Fawwaz al-ʿAdwan

Andrew: OK. First I want to see if my voice is audible …

ʿAli: Go ahead.

Andrew: Good. First, what is your full name?

ʿAli: My name is ʿAli Muhammad Badr al-ʿAdwan.

Andrew: OK.

ʿAli: In the beginning of this story … the ʿAdwan were living in a country called the Tuhamah, along the Red Sea, west of the holy city of Mecca, where our Prophet lived, upon him be prayers and peace. In that time, the Arabs raided one another. The ʿAdwan raided a group called the Sbayh al-ʿAmir, from the country of Taif. And when they seized the livestock of that tribe, the ʿAdwan were very few in number, and the Sbayh al-ʿAmir came back around and recaptured a part of their herd and took one of the ʿAdwan prisoner. This prisoner was a famous man. A brave man, a warrior, and generous. And the custom of the Arabs is that when they take a prisoner, a man of renown like this one, they show him hospitality. They do not abuse him or treat him like an ordinary captive. They treat him like a man worthy of respect.

So they took him prisoner, and everyone invited him to eat with them. Every afternoon he would have dinner with someone. Every evening he would have supper with someone else. And one day, his eye fell on a young woman. When he saw the woman, she pleased him. He wanted to marry her. So whenever he sat down next to someone, he would press his elbow into the other man's arm, hard, and if the man flinched, he wouldn't bring up the topic. He would go sit somewhere else. One day, he sat next to the fiancé of this young woman – and this man was an only son – and the young woman, too, was her father's only child – and this fiancé invited the ʿAdwani, who was named Fawwaz al-ʿAdwan, to eat with him. When he invited him, the ʿAdwani sat next to him and dug his elbow into the man's arm, but the Sbayhi didn't flinch. He pressed harder, and harder, and harder. He didn't flinch.

The ʿAdwani said: "I want something from you."

The Sbayhi said: "Tell me what it is, so I can take care of it for you."

He said: "I want the girl who went into the tent over there."

He said: "Do you know her?"

He said: "I don't know her."

He said: "Is there any relationship between you and her?"

He said: "No."

If he had said there was a relationship between them, they would have killed her.

He said: "No. I've just seen her, and the sight of her pleases me. It pleases me greatly."

He said: "Fine."

He did not say: "She is my fiancé."

Nor did he say: "That's my paternal cousin and we are going to be married in less than a week."

He said: "Fine. You can have exactly what you want."

When night fell, they went to the Sbayhi's father and the son said: "I want to give the girl to the guest. And if you resist me, I will kill myself."

They couldn't refuse him. So they arranged a wedding contract, and set up a small wedding tent for them, and the ʿAdwani entered. When he entered, what did the girl say?

She said: "You, man, why did God bring you to us? I am the cousin of the man who gave me to you. Next week, we were supposed to be married. And then you came along. What are we to make of you?

He said: "That's how the matter stands?"

She said: "Yes."

He said: "Fine. Don't worry about it."

So he slept, and he put his sword between them. He kept the sword between them until morning. In the morning, he got up and left. He divorced her. He did not touch her.

Muhammad Hamdan: Explain to Andrew what the sword means.

ʿAli: There was no sex.

Andrew: Yes. I know. I understand.

ʿAli: The next day they said to him: "Come here. What do you want? Whatever you want from us, ask for it."

He said: "I don't want anything from you but a camel, a water skin, and a rifle."

They said: "Fine."

He said: "My name is Fawwaz al-ʿAdwan, from the country of Tuhama. If you come see me someday, just ask for me. I am a well known man among the people."

So he got his things together and returned to the Tuhama. To his country. And the Sbayhi married his paternal cousin and begot three sons. She bore him three sons.

Twenty years passed.

Then came a great drought – famine; scorching heat – in the region they lived in, near Taif, and they were reduced to nothing. They couldn't even make bread. There was not even bread.

They said: "We have no choice but to go to the men who live with that ʿAdwani. He is well known. God willing, we will find charity with him."

So they went looking for him. They went alone, with two camels, and no supplies. The Sbayhi left the camels, his wife, and his three sons behind a hill, then approached the ʿAdwani's tent. When he saw him, he recognized him.

He said: "What is your problem?"

He said: "This and that happened. And my wife and sons are with me."

Immediately, the ʿAdwani sent his sons out to receive them, and they brought back the Sbayhi's wife and his three sons and their camels.

The ʿAdwani said to his wife (he had two wives): "Move out of this tent, you and whoever else is in it, and give it to our [female] guest."

He wanted to honor them and offer them hospitality. He wanted to do what he said he would do when he lived with the Sbayhi. It was the proper thing to do. So he moved his wife out of the tent. This wife had a son. He was twenty years old, more or less. He would come home in the middle of the night. He was a hunter. He hunted game.

The woman said [to the wife of the Sbayhi]: "O Sister, there's something you should know. My son comes home in the middle of the night. So watch out for him. Don't be afraid of him. Just tell him, Your mother has gone to stay in so-and-so's tent. And this tent is for us now."

They were all exhausted from traveling. Completely worn out. So they fell fast asleep. The boy came home from the hunt and entered the tent and slept next to the Sbayhi's wife, and she was tired, too, so she slept [and did not notice him].

The ʿAdwani and his guest were visiting in the men's chamber of the tent until two o'clock in the morning. The guest rose to go to sleep with his family, and there he saw a strange man sleeping next to his wife. Straight away, he drew his sword and cut the man's head off. He cut off the head of the host's son.

Andrew: That's a disaster!

ʿAli: A disaster, naturally! After he killed the man, he woke up his wife, and she said, "Oh, no! That's our neighbor. Our neighbor's son. His mother told me this and that."

So the Sbayhi went directly to the boy's father and said: "By God, man, this and that happened."

He said to him: "Don't worry. Don't worry. By God, let's carry him, both of us, let's carry his body to the open space where the children play."

In the morning, [when the body was found], the people came together and decided to pay damages, blood money, to the father of the dead boy. The whole tribe would pay.

Muhammad Hamdan: … because the identity of the killer was not known.

ʿAli: Yes. Because they didn't know who the killer was. They paid 80 camels. They said to the father, "These are yours."

Then the ʿAdwani said [to the Sbayhi]: "These are yours."

See how far his hospitality extended?

So they lived together for eight years. For eight years they were neighbors. Then one day …

The Arabs play *seeja*. Seeja is like chess. You move. I move. You move. I move. That's how the game goes.

One of the sons of the Sbayhi began to pester one of the daughters of the ʿAdwani. He began to annoy her with his talk. He wanted her. He wanted to marry her. And the girl put up with this, and didn't tell her father until she couldn't take any more, because she was afraid her father would kill the boy, then she said to her father: "O Father, this and that is happening to me. That boy, the son of the Sbayhi, is harassing me. He follows me down to the stream and pesters me and tries to chat me up."

Her father said: "Never mind."

Later, they began to play *seeja*, and what did the ʿAdwani say to the Sbayhi, as they were playing *seeja*?

He said: "Move, neighbor. By God, we've already moved." He kept saying this. He was very clever. And the Sbayhi understood. He knew there was something wrong. When the ʿAdwani said this two or three times in a row, the Sbayhi understood.

Later, when night fell, the Sbayhi got his family together and moved away. They abandoned everything. They didn't take their livestock, their possessions, or their tents. They left like fugitives. The Sbayhi, his wife, his three sons, and a small flock of sheep. After a day or two, God knows, the Sbayhi wanted to find out which of his sons had offended the ʿAdwani. The first, the second, the third? He didn't know.

He didn't say: "Which one of you three caused this problem with our neighbors and forced us to move away from them?"

So he sent his sons [back to the ʿAdwan], one by one, and to keep them from realizing what was happening, he sent a sheep with each. He said, "Take this sheep to our neighbor." He thought, "If this is the son who did something wrong, they'll kill him. And that will settle the matter."

He sent the oldest son.

He said: "O son, go to our neighbor and say to him, my father sends you this sheep."

And the boy came to the ʿAdwani and said: "My father has sent you this sheep."

The ʿAdwani said: "It's not enough."

He said: "It's not enough."

The boy returned, and the Sbayhi said: "Send two."

So now they were two sons, together.

The ʿAdwani said: "It still is not enough. It still is not enough."

He sent three.

He said: "If the ʿAdwani wants to kill all three, then let him kill them. That will settle the matter."

He sent the three. Each one with a sheep. The three did not know what was going on. If they had known, they would not have gone. They just thought it was sheep being offered for sacrifice.

When the three sons arrived … the ʿAdwani had three daughters.

He said: "Now. This is good. Three."

He brought the judge, who married all three, gave them the sheep, goats, and camels that belonged to them, and their tents, and told them they could return, and pitch their tents together, and God have mercy on them.

And that's the story. From start to finish.

Andrew: Thank you very much.

ʿAli: You're welcome.

Andrew: Great. This is really good.

ʿAli: God protect you.

Muhammad Hamdan: Of course, this is evidence that *karam* is not just a matter of food and drink. Hospitality is from the soul; it's from the blood. It's giving generously of your self.

ʿAli: Yes. Generosity of self. For instance … I love Andrew, so I do all I can for him. I sacrifice. I sacrifice on his behalf. I would sacrifice my own sons, and give up my own wealth, because of Andrew. This is because Andrew and I love each other. There's peace between us. That's the meaning.

Andrew: Thank you very much.

ʿAli: You're welcome.

Andrew: I've been searching everywhere for this story.

ʿAli: By God?

Andrew: I came down to the Jordan Valley just to hear you.

ʿAli: God bless you.

Muhammad Hamdan: Turn off the tape recorder.

The story is appalling and beautiful. It is about "peace," but not a perpetual or binding peace; it is a continually renegotiated peace established in the face of murder, famine, theft, sexual inequality, and harassment, with no promise of anything better, even if individuals are willing to sacrifice what is most precious to them. This willingness to sacrifice corresponds to a morality beyond law, beyond rights (cosmopolitan or local), beyond "the proper thing to do." There is peace between the Sbayhi and the ʿAdwani because they give up what they are under no obligation to surrender. As in the story of Ibn Khatlan, "goodness and blessing" are realized in their proximity to death.

I am quite confident that UNESCO officials had none of this in mind when they singled out "Bedouin hospitality" as an international exemplar of "harmony." ʿAli Muhammad's story is offensive to every model of parenting, gender equality, due process of law, free marital choice, equal justice, and "quality of life" the UN would care to promote. The world depicted in the story seems morally impossible even for Hajj ʿAli to live in, and (for that reason) he judged it a better world than the one he now inhabits, where his family is caught in a cycle of violence they cannot escape. I am not equally attracted to this "ideal" world. I am intrigued, however, by Hajj ʿAli's central idea, "generosity of self" (*karam an-nafs*). It is a costly virtue, and the actions it motivates are exemplary because they are *uncalled for*. The Sbayhi and the ʿAdwani embrace the dangers of hospitality, overcoming them not through recourse to law (which they circumvent and ignore) but through radical, potentially self-destructive acts of forgiveness.

I take pleasure in imagining the UNESCO Harmony Prize crushed to pieces beneath the impolitic truths of ʿAli Muhammad's story, and I wonder if this destructive fantasy is consistent with the story's moral function.

Conclusion

Derrida was also enthralled by horrifying tales of generosity. "Of Hospitality" ends with two biblical narratives – Lot's Guests in Sodom (Genesis) and the Rape and Mutilation of the Levite's Concubine (Judges) – in which men defend the sanctity of their households by offering daughters or female dependents as living sacrifices, as substitutions that will insure the safety of their (male) guests. "Are we heirs to this tradition of hospitality," Derrida asks? "Up to what point? Where should we place the invariant, if it is one, across this logic, and these narratives? They testify without end in our memory" (2000: 155).

In the same volume, Derrida makes French citizenship, in its in/accessibility to certain Algerians, part of this disturbing tradition. Arab Muslims were, to the French, an obstacle to imagined community, just as Arab Bedouin had earlier represented an odd discontinuity in the surface of Kant's globe. This limit to national belonging could be overcome by Arab Muslims only through an act of sacrifice, a renunciation of their standing as Muslims subject to Islamic personal status law: "In short, they were being offered the hospitality of French citizenship on condition that they give up – in a pattern that is now familiar to us – what they thought of as their culture" (Derrida 2000: 145). The singularity of Bedouin tales of hospitality, in contrast to the Algerian case, is that individuals willingly sacrifice what is dearest to them – sons, daughters, wives – in order *to redeem another person*. In both stories told here, the sacrifice is accepted in ways that return the valued object to the donor, accompanied by something more valuable still: marriage, wealth, friendship, peace. The appeal of this vision – this possibility of miraculous, uncalculated, yet abundant reciprocity – is what makes hospitality a gift worth giving, even if this miraculous "pay-off" is seldom experienced in everyday life.

Through imitation and parallelism, one could apply this model of sacrifice to matters of citizenship and statecraft. States (configured as hosts) and persons (configured as guests) exchange rights, services, and loyalties. If we limit our terms in this way, something like a politics of hospitality emerges, and its gestures are predictable. State authorities might, at times, forego the right to name and encapsulate their citizens in return for even larger, mobile populations. Citizens might agree to relinquish certain cultural differences, as proof of belonging, only to have other differences recognized and celebrated by the state. States and citizens might give up their claims to territorial sovereignty and individual rights in order to gain protection or economic advantage. All of these possibilities have, in recent years, been explored by nation-states and citizen-subjects. Dual citizenship, multicultural citizenship, extraterritorial citizenship, imperial patronage and control, privatization, neoliberal devolutions, and population exchanges are consistent with these strategies.

Yet the logic of hospitality fits uncomfortably with these scenarios, even if it can be applied to them (as, say, Mauss applied his findings on the gift to the "generosity" of the social welfare state). The stories told in this essay, some by Jordanian Bedouin, others by metropolitan philosophers, have in common a displacement in time and space that gives them a moral power quite distinct from, and antithetical to, the power of good social policy. The latter must privilege rules and empirical constraints in ways our storytellers cannot. For Kant, the universal right of hospitality transcends the republican order, itself a figment of the theorist's imagination; for Fawzi al-Khatalin, hospitality exceeds the responsibility to keep and protect one's own children; for ʿAli Muhammad Badr al-ʿAdwan, it cancels out the right to take revenge, to marry, to forfeit or save a life. For Derrida, hospitality supersedes any law that might seek to regulate or enforce it.

This excessive, sometimes horrible potential is cultivated not in the public spaces of nation-states, or by regnant forms of "global" morality. The Harmony Prize is more suited to those settings. Rather, this potential flourishes in the "unruled regions" of social life. In the late 18th century, Kant could still locate these places in the remote areas of a "spherical planet" that would someday be covered by republics. Two centuries later, it is obvious that "unruled regions" have proliferated across and within political boundaries of all kinds. The emergence of hospitality as a critical rhetoric in France – or in Jordan, or wherever we hear such criticism in a world of nation-states – is proof that a moral alternative is being sought outside domains controlled by Benhabib's "overwhelming sovereign power with the ultimate right of enforcement." The infrastructure of this proof was laid bare by Kant himself. In the final lines of "Perpetual Peace" (1957: 23), he describes his law of universal citizenship as a "supplement to the unwritten code of the civil and international law." This supplement (*Ergänzung*), he argues, is "indispensable" to the maintenance of "human rights." It must be considered a necessary addition to cosmopolitan citizenship (and not simply a matter of kindness) because international law is itself insufficient to guarantee this status.

Kant's parting insight suggests that welcome can be made – it is made possible – only when sovereignty is given up, or held in abeyance, thereby creating an "unruled region" in which there are no permanent residents. Only guests and hosts can "belong" in this space, and their interactions – as they spend time together, make demands of each other, and try to achieve or prevent greater familiarity – require the constant rearticulation of more "permanent" identities and identity spaces. Welcome resembles trespass; it courts and reconfigures trespass. This quality explains why hospitality is a morally indefinite virtue that exposes us to the hazards (and the delights) of stepping over and overstepping human boundaries. Unlike "peace on earth," the ambivalent coupling of welcome and trespass is already perpetual. It engenders all we dread, and all we desire, as we face each other across the threshold.

I would like to thank helpful readers and listeners at several venues where I have presented this article: the Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania; the Institute for the Humanities, University of Michigan, and at "Giving Space, Taking Time. A Workshop on Hospitality and Generosity," sponsored by the Geography Department of the Open University. Paul Dresch, Humoud Jabali, Sally Howell, Heidrun Friese, Mustafa Dikeç, Fawzi al-Khatalin, Luna Khirfan, Yoav Alon, and ʿAli Muhammad al-ʿAdwan have commented helpfully on the essay or contributed materials essential to it. Support for write-up was provided, in part, by the Institute for the Humanities at the University of Michigan.

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