

**Welcome Nowhere:
Hospitality and The Feminine in Derrida**

by

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Introduction

In *Of Hospitality* Derrida examines the situation of hospitality and the question of the foreigner. Hospitality is the act of inviting and welcoming which operates between a host and a foreigner, stranger, or guest. For example, having a private guest over to one's home, or allowing an immigrant into a country are situations of hospitality. I aim to explain Derrida's analysis of hospitality and the foreigner, focusing on the reciprocal questioning relationship, blindness and madness, and the question of non-being. Derrida uses *Oedipus at Colonus* to examine and explain some of the ways hospitality operates. After explaining Derrida's conception of hospitality, I aim to provide a fuller reading of Sophocles that acknowledges the relationships and complications of hospitality. Then, I will turn towards his reading of Antigone in *Oedipus at Colonus* to examine the question of the female foreigner. I will argue that the idea of the female foreigner, on which the whole theory of hospitality rests, relies on an undertheorized notion of the maternal. Examining feminist critiques in Luce Irigaray and Irina Aristarkhova, I will show the problems that come from Derrida's undertheorized and de-materialized notion of the feminine, equation of having with having legal property, and objectifying association of the feminine with the maternal. Derrida claims that pure hospitality is impossible; It will become clear that hospitality is only impossible as long as these problems remain unthought, and the feminine remains de-materialized and objectified.

Paradoxes of Hospitality

The first lecture in *Of Hospitality*, “Foreigner Question: Coming from Abroad/from the Foreigner,” opens by addressing the question of the foreigner, introducing the themes of identity, alterity, space, and truth.

Isn't the question of the foreigner [*Le 'étranger*] a foreigner's question? Coming from the foreigner, from abroad [*Le 'étranger*]?... The question of the foreigner is a question of the foreigner, addressed to the foreigner. As though the foreigner were first of all *the one who* puts the first question or *the one to whom* you address the first question. As though the foreigner were being-in-question, the question-being, or being-in-question of the question. But also the one who, putting the first question, puts me in question (OH, 3).

The foreigner comes from somewhere else, with a different set of knowledge, truth, laws, languages, and customs. Here, Derrida's use of the word *le' étranger*, becomes important in its meaning as both “foreigner” and “abroad.” Through the foreigner, the abroad itself is brought close. The existence of a place outside of the host's control questions the host's authority and claim to truth. This claim to truth might look like laws or rules that imply moral truths, or an official language, which implies a correct logic and grammar. In this way, the foreigner is the one who puts the first question. But, in the dynamic between host and foreigner, the host has the power to question the foreigner (Who are you? What is your name? Why are you here?). The foreigner, by showing up in the host's land, subjects themselves to questioning. The foreigner questions the host, but simultaneously must explain themselves. The foreigner and host exist in a reciprocal situation of questioning and confronting.

Derrida uses Plato's *Sophist* as an example of this confrontation and the struggle over the host's claim to truth. “The Foreigner here resembles someone who basically has to account for the possibility of sophistry. It is as though the Foreigner were appearing under some aspect that makes you think of a sophist, of someone whom the city or state is going to treat as a sophist: someone who doesn't speak like the rest, someone who speaks an odd language” (OH, 5). In

Plato's dialogue, the foreigner is figured as a sophist, someone who uses tricks of grammar and logic to conceal the truth or win an argument against the truth. Derrida writes that under the logic of the host, the foreigner must account for the possibility of sophistry. This is because as part of their maintenance of power, the host claims to possess the ultimate truth. If there is one totalizing logic, the only way to undermine is through sophistry; There is a real truth that the foreigner will try to hide. In their new and "odd language," sophists are able to make bad faith arguments, or make false claims appear true, through a manipulation of words or concepts. An "odd language" is not necessarily its own formal language, though the foreigner may have one, but a new way of speaking. This is part of what Derrida refers to as "a language within a language" (OH, 158). Because of accents, dialects, cultural references, or slang, even within the same language, there are substantial differences in ways of communicating a "single" language. If the foreigner's primary language is not that of the host, they might not fall into the assumptions of common language usage, codes, or idioms. Explicitly, they might question the concepts hidden in the grammar and words: what does this mean? why do you say it like this? They might have an accent which points to the possibility of speaking another language. Having a language different from the host as one's primary language foregrounds the possibility of another grammar and another logic. If the foreigner is someone who speaks the host's language as a primary language, or who blends in through perfect accent and grammar, this also works to further the accusation that the foreigner is a possible sophist. They sneak into conversation, deceptively hiding their foreignness. Of course, this is only taken as an act of deception when one believes the host's claim to total truth, and the foreigner's goal to be disruption.¹ The foreigner embodying the

¹ Though generally assigning ill-will to foreigners and reading all of their linguistic possibilities as disruptive can have extremely negative effects for foreigners or immigrants, there is also a radical possibility for the type of destruction the host fears. Fanon writes about how he was able to hide his association with Algerian liberation movements through speaking perfect French with a perfect accent, gaining the trust of French soldiers.

possibility for sophistry plays out in the interactions between the foreigner, the host, and the people under the host's rule.

In the *Sophist*, the foreigner brings up the question of being and non-being. Derrida writes that the foreigner “contests the thesis of Parmenides, puts into question the *logos* of our father Parmenides, *ton tou patros Parmenidou logon*...as though the Foreigner had to begin by contesting the authority of the chief, the father, the master of the family, the “master of the house,” the power of hospitality” (OH, 5). As someone with the power to invite or give, and hold authority over a house, city, or country, and its truth, Derrida writes that the host is a male figure, specifically a father. Parmenides is the father of a school of thought, his ideas influence and hold power over his children, and are explicitly called into question by the foreigner. The foreigner, as a guest, is supposed to be subordinate to the host and his ways. They are expected to be thankful and commit to the ways of the host. But, through their foreign ways and odd language, or through an argument or dialogue, they call the host and his logic into question. Without getting to the foreigner's critique of the content of Parmenides' thought, that he questions Parmenides' logic in anyway is already considered an abuse of hospitality. This contests the authority of the host. “The foreigner shakes up the threatening dogmatism of the paternal *logos*: the being that is, and the non-being that is not” (OH, 5). The threatening dogmatism is one that insists on its claim to authority and possession of the truth, and like the claim “being is and non-being is not,” carries the violence of ontology. Derrida acknowledges that his theory is indebted to Levinas, and here, similar to Levinas, Derrida emphasizes the violence of reducing the foreigner or Other into a known concept. Parmenides' logic seeks to know and place being within a totalizing structure. The foreigner, in questioning Parmenides, questions not only the authority of the father figure, but the ability to reduce things into concepts or totalizing structures. “To say ‘non-being

is' remains a challenge to Parmenides' paternal logic, a challenge coming from a foreigner [someone of non-being]"(OH, 7). Parmenides' ontology seeks to place non-being in a totalizing structure that claims, "being is and non-being is not." This reduces non-being to a simple negation of being, stripping it of the depths of its meaning, and reducing it to a known concept. In interrogating the foreigner, assuming to know anything about them, assuming that they are the same as the host, or even assuming that in their "non-being" they are simply a negation of being (that somewhere else is a negation of here) the host seeks to place the foreigner into their own totalizing structure, violently reducing them to a concept, and disarming them of the disruptive nature of non-being. The question of the foreigner is how non-being can be. But because the relationship of interrogation goes both ways, the foreigner is always calling the host into question by virtue of their existence. In threatening the truth of the father, the foreigner risks being and being seen as a parricide.

The foreigner of the *Sophist* insists, "I beg one more thing of you...which is to not think of me as a parricide" (OH, 5). In questioning Parmenides, the foreigner is afraid of being seen as a murderer, of using his strange language to abuse the hospitality afforded to him. As a guest in the host's territory, the foreigner occupies the position of a son. He is subject to the rule of the father, but also taken in and protected by the father. Thus, any violence towards the host would be parricide. In simply arriving, the foreigner already questions the paternal *logos*, which means that they are already guilty of a kind of parricide. Derrida writes that the foreigner of the *Sophist* only insists on his innocence because he already knows this. He "would not dream of defending himself against it if he did not feel deep down that really he is one, a parricide, virtually a parricide, and that to say "non-being is" remains a challenge to Parmenides' paternal logic, a challenge coming from the foreigner" (OH 7). In their non-being, in their rejection of the norms

and language of the host, and in their being from somewhere else, the foreigner has already destabilized the host's claim to truth and logic. Parricide really is at work in the situation of hospitality, though the foreigner fears being dismissed as malicious or deceptive because of it.

The foreigner says “we will necessarily have to put to the test the thesis (*logon*) of our father Parmenides and, forcibly, establish that non-being somehow is, and that being, in turn, in a certain way is not.’ This is the fearful question, the revolutionary hypothesis of the Foreigner” (OH 7). The foreigner has already non-verbally posed this question, which is why he insists on his innocence, and why he is scared to explicitly question. Theaetetus’ response to the foreigner is that the ideas must be debated. Derrida writes that a common translation of Theaetetus’ response, “*Phainetai to toutouton diamacheteon en tois logois*” into “There, obviously, is where we must debate” is too peaceful. After all, the paternal *logos* is threatening, not only in the violence of its content but also in defense of itself. The host has a hold over his children which enforces itself violently. Derrida writes “it is obvious, it certainly appears obvious that that is where one has to fight, *diamacheteon*, engage in heated combat, *or*, where one has to carry war into the *logoi*, into arguments, into discourses, into the *logos*” (OH, 9). The debate takes on a violent character. The logic, discourse, and truth of the father must be fought over and defended. Because the father ultimately does not have the sole claim to truth, his *logos* will be invaded. “The war internal to the *logos*, that is the foreigner’s question, the double question, the altercation of father and parricide. It is also the place where the question of the foreigner is articulated as a question of hospitality with the question of being” (OH, 9).

But the host will not readily accept the question of the foreigner. Derrida writes that the next sequence in the dialogue “evokes at once *blindness* and *madness*, a strange alliance of blindness with madness” (OH, 9). The foreigner replies to Theaetetus how ‘non-being is’, is

obvious “even to a blind person” (OH, 9). He also says he is too weak to fight this war-debate. “He does not have the necessary confidence in himself. How could he have, a parricide Foreigner, so a *foreign son*?... In truth, with the question he is getting ready to put, on the being of non-being, the foreigner fears he will be treated as mad. He is afraid of being taken for a son-foreigner-madman” (OH, 9)². The foreigner is worried that if he defends such an obvious, yet seemingly paradoxical, claim through warlike debate, he will appear mad. He will not be believed, and worse, he will appear as a deranged son attempting to kill the father who has taken him in. Not only does he represent the possibility of sophistry, he represents an attempt on the life of the father; He threatens to sneak inside of the father’s *logos* through sophistry in order to murder the truth and replace it with madness.

The host attempts to assimilate the foreigner into being, rather than accept that “non-being is.” In rejecting the host’s logic, the foreigner will either be seen as a madman or a sophist. “The paternal *logos* gets ready to disarm him, treat him as mad, and this at the very moment when his question, the question *of* the foreigner, only seems to contest in order then to remind people of what ought to be obvious even to the blind” (OH, 11). This appearance, as deranged ungrateful parricide, is thrown on him at the moment he defends non-being.

The foreigner of the Sophist is a *xenos*. The Greek word translates to visitor, stranger, or foreigner, but also operates as a specific legal term.

Xenos indicates relations of the same type between men linked by a pact which implies precise obligations also extending to their descendants...This pact, this contract of hospitality that links *to* the foreigner and which *reciprocally* links the foreigner, it’s a question of knowing whether it counts beyond the individual and if it also extends to the family, the generation, to the genealogy...It is not only a question of the link between birth and nationality; it is not only a question of the citizenship offered to someone who

² Derrida brings up the question of paternity, which is an important theme throughout discussions of hospitality, but unfortunately there is not space in this essay to fully address the extent to which father-son relations effect theories on hospitality and the ethical.

had none previously, but of the right granted to the foreigner as such, to the foreigner remaining a foreigner, and to his or her relative, to the family, to the descendants (OH 21).

Xenos implies a specific type of foreigner. They are from a line of foreigners. They are entered by birth into a relationship of hospitality, retaining an old nationality and a status as foreign regardless of where they have been born. The *xenos* is not just anyone, they are known and hold a particular legal status which implies that the nation, the host, is on good terms with them. They show a particular respect to the host and its/his laws, which allows them to retain their foreignness on the basis of “foreign blood” rather than geography. The *xenos*, though foreign and embodying a type of foreignness, does not pose the same threat to the host because of their legal pact. Not only is the *xenos* someone in a particular legal arraignment of residency with rules and allowances which are known to the host, but underlying that, is that the *xenos* is someone who respects the type of legal system and hierarchy that allows for the host in the first place. Not only do they respect the system which allows for their status, there is some certainty in their adherence to laws, as the reciprocal pact entails. This status as *xenos* relies on the laws of hospitality: the written, explicit legal codes which govern the relationships between host and guest.

The *xenos* stands on one end as a known other, while the Absolute Other, the unknown, unnamed foreigner, who has no legal bearing, stands at the other. While the *xenos* is taken in and governed by the laws of hospitality, the Absolute Other is taken in because of the unconditional Law of hospitality.

Absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names. The law of absolute

hospitality commands a break with hospitality by right, with law or justice as rights. (OH, 25)

Absolute hospitality breaks with the laws of hospitality because the foreigner is welcomed completely unknown and unassimilated. The foreigner is accepted without interrogation, without rules, and without a care for the threat they pose in their foreignness. The Law of hospitality demands that regardless of the threat to the power of the host, which allowed for hospitality in the first place, the foreigner be accepted in their unknownness or non-being and on their own terms. The *xenos* is stripped of unknownness when they enter into the legal agreement which defines them. The status of *xenos* is passed down through a family name, which allows someone to say, "I know who and what you are." When absolutely accepted, there is a break with this reciprocal pact because the foreigner owes the host nothing, not even, and especially not, their name. There is no expectation of them, and there is no expectation of whatever country they may come from. Absolute hospitality requires a break from the laws of hospitality, not only because of their differences, but because they stand in contradiction.

The Law of hospitality requires that the laws be ignored, and that the structure which upholds, creates, and gives authority to the laws be put off. "The law is above the laws. It is thus illegal, transgressive, outside the law, like a lawless law, *nomos anomos*, law above the laws and law outside the law" (OH 79). However, the Law would be meaningless if it did not stand against the laws. Without the particulars, the universal law would be hollow. "It wouldn't be effectively unconditional, the law, if it didn't have to become effective, concrete, determined, if that were not its being as having-to-be. It would risk being abstract, utopian, illusory, and so turning over into its opposite. In order to be what it is, the law thus needs the laws, which, however, deny it, or at any rate threaten it, sometimes corrupt or pervert it" (OH 79). Though the

laws of hospitality and the Law of hospitality are opposed, they are also indissociable and reliant on each other. The universal Law of hospitality has to risk being perverted through the particular laws governing hospitality in order to maintain itself as a concrete demand. Without having to become effective and meaningful in the face of the laws, the Law would become abstract and illusory.

It is as though hospitality were the impossible: as though the law of hospitality defined this very impossibility, as if it were only possible to transgress it, as though *the* law of absolute, unconditional, hyperbolic hospitality, as though the categorical imperative of hospitality commanded that we transgress all the laws (in the plural) of hospitality, namely, the conditions, the norms, the rights and the duties that are imposed on hosts and hostesses, on the men or women who give a welcome as well as the men or women who receive it. And vice versa, it is as though the laws (plural) of hospitality, in marking limits, powers, rights, and duties, consisted in challenging and transgressing *the* law of hospitality, the one that would command that the “new arrival” be offered unconditional welcome... this marks the collision between two laws, at the frontier between two regimes of law.

The interplay of the Law and laws render them “both more and less hospitable, hospitable and inhospitable, hospitable inasmuch as inhospitable” (OH 81).

Though the impossibility of pure hospitality may seem regulated to a particular type of public hospitality where the state and its laws are directly involved, like the acceptance of immigrants into a country or an official adoption, Derrida writes that the *aporia* extends into all situations. Hospitality relies on the host having something or somewhere of their own to share with the guest. However, the authority of the host is always challenged by the presence of the state. Under the Law of hospitality, the host has a right to extend hospitality however they can in order to welcome the guest. “But since this right, whether private or familial, can only be exercised and guaranteed by the mediation of a public right or State right, the perversion is unleashed from the inside. For the State cannot guarantee or claim to guarantee the private

domain (for it is a domain), other than by controlling it and trying to penetrate it to be sure of it” (OH 55). The domain of the private realm is always in some ways delineated by the public, and thus always invaded and obscured. In order to invite a guest into a private home, the host must consider the home their property. Through official ownership, and the assurance or threat of police intervention, the state already pervades the private act of hospitality in order to assure that the property of the host is protected, thus stifling the authority of the host to offer hospitality in the first place.

From the moment when a public authority, a State, this or that State power, gives itself or is recognized as having the right to control, monitor, ban exchanges that those doing the exchanging deem private, but that the State can intercept since these private exchanges cross public space and become available there, then every element of hospitality gets disrupted. (OH 51)

Derrida writes that increasingly developed technology blurs the lines between private and public even further, changing and challenging the conditions for hospitality. A computer in the home attempts to operate in private (guests come in the form of emails, facetime, or even pornography), yet the host runs up against constant surveillance and government control. Not only is the sovereignty of the home challenged by state or corporate power through technology in, it is increasingly possible that a parricide may enter under the guise of a guest, for example, meeting a catfish or clicking a virus. Derrida writes, “that, once again, is not absolutely new: in order to constitute the space of a habitable house and a home, you also need an opening, a door and windows, you have to give up a passage to the outside world [*l'etranger*]. There is no house or interior without a door or windows” (OH 61). Again, using “*l'etranger*,” Derrida complicates the notion of the guest or foreigner. The foreigner comes to embody being “outside” of everything belonging to the host.

II. King of Thebes

Before the events of *Oedipus The King*, Oedipus was born to the royal family of Thebes, King Laius and Queen Jocasta. Hearing a prophecy that their son would murder his father and marry his mother, the pair decided to kill the child. After binding his ankles and leaving him on a mountain to die, they disregarded the prophecy. However, the child was saved by herdsmen and given to King Polybus and Queen Merope of Corinth. They raised the child, Oedipus, as their own. Many years later, Oedipus, unaware of his adoption, was startled by a guest at a dinner party who told Oedipus that he was not his father's son. Though Polybus and Merope denied the adoption, Oedipus was jarred enough that he sought out the Oracle at Delphi. The god Apollo told him that he was fated to "couple with [his] mother, bring a breed of children into the light that no man can bear to see- [and] kill [his] father" (TTP 205)³. Attempting to run from the prophecy, Oedipus fled Corinth. After fighting and killing some strangers on the road, Oedipus arrives in Thebes, where a sphinx is tormenting the city. Oedipus is able to solve the sphinx's riddle and win the favor of the recently widowed queen, Jocasta. As King, Oedipus is loved by the people, though they still mourn Laius- who was murdered right before Oedipus arrived.

Oedipus The King begins with a group of old men asking Oedipus to help with the plague that has been ravishing Thebes. Jocasta's brother, Creon, advises Oedipus that the plague is a result of King Laius' murderer living in Thebes undetected. In order to cleanse the city, they must "banish the man, or pay back blood with blood." (TTP 164). Oedipus vows to find the murderer and lift the plague. He is instructed to call on the prophet Tiresias for help.

³ Sophocles quotes appear from Robert Fagles' *The Three Theban Plays* and are cited with page numbers rather than line numbers.

The blind hermaphroditic prophet Tiresias, who “sees with the eyes of Apollo” (TTP 174), is brought to Oedipus in order to give hints about Laius’ murder. When Tiresias approaches Oedipus, he asks, “just send me home...it’s better that way, please believe me”(TTP 177). Oedipus replies, “strange response...unlawful and unfriendly too to the state that bred and reared you” (TTP 177). In *Crito*, Socrates is in prison awaiting execution when his friend Crito offers an escape. Simultaneously positioning himself as a foreigner and a child of the laws of Athens, Socrates allows the laws to speak through him and make an argument. The laws say to him, “Now then, what charge are you bringing against us and the state, to be trying to destroy us? Did we not give you life in the first place?” (OH 33). In order to assert that Socrates has an obligation to stay put and face the consequences, the laws assert their paternal position. For Socrates, wanting to leave or to escape the hospitality offered by the state to its citizens is an abuse of the hospitality. Both the laws, through Socrates, and the embodiment of the paternal power of laws, through Oedipus as King of Thebes, accuse the child who wants to escape. As soon as Tiresias is welcomed into Oedipus’ home, he asks to leave. He is met with hostility and accused of being an ungrateful guest and a bad child to the laws. Derrida writes that “anyone who encroaches on my “at home,” on my ipseity, on my power of hospitality, on my sovereignty as host, I start to regard as an undesirable foreigner, and virtually as an enemy. This other becomes a hostile subject, and I risk becoming their hostage” (OH 55). Because the foreigner questions the host’s power over their territory, and through the foreigner the host becomes aware of all the ways their territory was not secure in the first place, the host risks becoming hostage to the guest. The foreigner threatens to reverse the power dynamic between themselves and the host. In order to cling to power, the host might preemptively take the foreigner hostage, so as to

mitigate their foreignness while completely controlling the terms of their stay. This is why the laws in *Crito* and the king in *Oedipus the King*, claim the foreigner as a type of child-hostage.

Oedipus pushes him to stay and help and is met with Tiresias' anger. Tiresias says to Oedipus, "How terrible- to see the truth when the truth is only pain to him who sees!" (TTP 176). Oedipus becomes defensive and accuses Tiresias of colluding with Creon in a plot to take the throne. Tiresias then blatantly tells Oedipus that he is one who has brought the plague to Thebes by killing Laius: "I say you are the murderer you hunt" (TTP 180).

Tiresias: You cannot imagine...I tell you,
you and your loved ones will live together in infamy
you cannot see how far you've gone in guilt.

Oedipus: You think you can keep this up and never suffer?

Tiresias: Indeed, if the truth has any power.

Oedipus: It does but not for you, old man. You've lost your power,
stone-blind, stone-deaf, - senses, eyes as blind as stone!...
you've lost your power
you can't hurt me or anyone else who sees the light- you can never touch me.

Tiresias: I pity you, flinging at me the very insults
each man here will fling at you so soon.

Oedipus: Blind, lost in the night, endless night that nursed you!
You can't hurt me or anyone else who sees the light-
you can never touch me. (TTP 181)... If I thought you would blurt out such absurdities,
you'd have died before I'd had you summoned (TTP 184).

Here, the collusion of blindness with madness that Derrida writes about is at the forefront. As King of Thebes, who brought down the sphinx with his wit, Oedipus is a virile figure of knowledge and the power of the host. Oedipus' knowledge is intelligible, he follows a strict code and logic which is clear to everyone and works in accordance with the laws. No knowledge that Oedipus can display would question any structures of power. In complete

opposition, Tiresias' knowledge is sterile and ambiguous. He speaks in riddles that Oedipus cannot solve; His odd language of prophecy, of seemingly parricidal sophistry, serves an authority and truth above the written laws of the state.

Tiresias, the guest in his home brought to help Oedipus, turned out to be a parricide. He accuses in some strange and vague language of prophecy something that would have Oedipus killed, or at least removed from his position as host/king. When threats of violence aren't enough to silence Tiresias, when the paternal *logos* cannot be defended because it has already been invaded and corroded from the inside out, Oedipus writes him off as absurd. The truth, obvious to blind Tiresias, is assimilated into madness. ("If I thought you would blurt out such *absurdities*, you'd have died before I'd had you summoned") Because the blind madness of the guest stands in opposition to the supposed rational sight of the host, blindness and madness are emasculated qualities. Fittingly, the threat to the paternal power of the king, Tiresias, has already been literally castrated by the gods, solidifying his role as feminine, and opposite to the paternal powers of the king.

Oedipus considers his masculinity to be at stake. Oedipus is threatened by the idea that he does not have true sight or knowledge- what's worse, the person who possesses this knowledge over him, is not fully a man. Oedipus says that no one who can see can be hurt by the blind. To extend this, no man could be taken down by a woman; No host could be taken down by his guest. Tiresias leaves Oedipus with a final riddle prophecy: "This day will bring your birth and your destruction" (TTP 184).

When Jocasta finds out that she has been a part of an unholy marriage, she kills herself. A messenger recounts how Oedipus found her body and blinded himself.

"And there we saw the woman hanging by the neck
cradled high in a woven noose, spinning,

swinging back and forth. And when he saw her,
 giving a low, wrenching sob that broke our hearts,
 slipping the halter from her throat, he eased her down...
 He rips off her brooches, the long gold pins
 holding her robes- and lifting them high,
 looking straight up into the points,
 he digs them down into the sockets of his eyes, crying, "You,
 you'll see no more the pain I suffered, all the pain I caused!
 Too long you looked on the ones you never should have seen,
 blind to the ones you longed to see, to know! Blind
 from this hour on! Blind in the darkness- blind! (TTP 237).

Oedipus says that he has been blind to the situation, blind to justice, and blind to himself. The rationality of sight which he defended so vehemently has failed him. Tiresias' prophecy comes true in two important ways. First, Oedipus found his birth, he found out who really gave birth to him, which lead to his destruction in the form of vacating the throne and disfiguring himself. But, the day brings his birth in another way. Further linking sight to the masculine and blindness to the feminine, Oedipus blinds himself with Jocasta's jewelry. He becomes blind with tools taken from his mother and wife and is re-born. Though this might be the beginning of the new Oedipus, the temporal and spatial relationship to the beginning of a person is blurred, as will continuously be shown. This is because origin always refers to another origin, infinitely regressing away from any solid footing of when or where a person begins (MO 29/85-88). Sophocles flips the standard imagery of procreation on its head, when Oedipus takes the sharp phallic needles from his mother's broach, and penetrates himself with them. The prophesized destruction he faces is the destruction of the old Oedipus, abandoning his old life and identity in order to grow as the re-born Oedipus.

Oedipus blinds himself in order to become reborn because he cannot utilize sight or its claims to rationality anymore. He once knew himself as a respected king, husband, and father, an image of virility, who tamed the sphinx with his superior logic. His paternal power was shattered

by the realization that he was not the authority on truth, and so he destroyed his identity in search of a new one. Tiresias' claims brought up the specific ways that Oedipus' laws and logic failed to be totalizing, as well as the general way a stranger can easily disrupt the system of power. There was something outside of the realm of knowledge and logic that Oedipus thought to be all encompassing, and the realization that such a way of thinking or being existed, was brought forward in Tiresias, the stranger who put the first question.

The chorus is shocked, screaming "better to die than to be alive blind" (TTP 242). Still under the logic of the host, who was not only Oedipus the individual king, but Thebes the kingdom, they cannot understand Oedipus' turn to blindness and re-birth. They maintain the logic of the kingdom, disgusted at the display of mad blindness, and wait for a new king to lead them. He responds to them: "What good were eyes to me? Nothing I could see could bring me joy...How could I look my father in the eyes when I go down to death? Worse yet, the sight of my children, born as they were born, how could I long to look into their eyes? No, not with these eyes of mine, never (TTP 243). Not only did Oedipus' eyes fail to provide the truth, giving into the totalizing logic that proclaims vision to be rational is what hindered him from listening to help. Oedipus cannot look his father in the eyes when dies, because, not only has he killed him, he has also realized that he needs to break from the paternal ties that uphold the rule of the father in the first place. The sight of his children, 'the breed of children which no man can bear to see' is a constant reminder of his old life under the rule of totalizing paternal logic. Oedipus, who once said "to see one's parents and look into their eyes is the greatest joy I know" (TTP 216), can no longer bare the sight of his father. He cannot bare sight. In gauging out his eyes, he takes away his own sight, and he also takes away his children's ability to locate and look into the eyes of their own father, robbing them of the greatest joy he knew.

Oedipus begs Creon to take care of his children, knowing that he will either be executed or exiled. He says that he doesn't worry for his sons, but he'd like to hold his daughters for the last time before his death. The girls "approach their father cautiously, then embrace him" (TTP 248). The girls cling to Oedipus, and Creon demands that he let go. He ushers for guards to take them away and Oedipus screams, "No- don't take them away from me, not now! No no no!" (TTP 250). As Oedipus holds his daughters for the first time in his new life, he forms a bond with them unlike the paternal bond he had as father-king. He screams like a mother losing her children when Creon tries to take them.

III. Oedipus the Stranger

Oedipus at Colonus begins several years after Oedipus is exiled from Thebes. He wanders around, “a broken, blind old man, in filthy rags, led by a young woman, his daughter Antigone” (283). Oedipus is given all of his visual information through Antigone’s words and his understanding of the space around him from Antigone’s descriptions and physical guidance. His orientation is marked by a new type of blind sight, given to him through Antigone’s eyes. When they wander into a rocky grove, he asks, “Child, look, do you see a place to rest?” Antigone responds, “this is holy ground, you can see that clearly. Why, it’s bursting with laurel, olives, grapes, and deep in its heart. Listen...nightingales, the rustle of the wings- they’re breaking into song. Here, bend a knee and sit. It’s a rough rock father, but then for an old man you have come a long way from home (TTP 284). Antigone recognizes the holiness of the area, describing it to her father as beautiful, fertile, and a place which welcomes a stranger in need of rest.

A man comes over to see what’s going on and Oedipus tells him, “Friend, my daughter sees for the both of us” (TTP 285). The man is shocked to see them in the grove, saying “Get up- it’s holy grounds. You must not walk upon it...It’s untouchable, forbidden- no one lives here” (TTP 285). He tells Oedipus that he is in the grove of the Eumenides and surrounded by holy grounds on the outskirts of Athens. Oedipus responds, “Let them receive their suppliant with kindness! I shall never leave my place in this new land, this is my refuge!” (TTP 288). Oedipus asks if he can visit with the leader, King Theseus. When the man leaves to alert the King and gather the citizens, Oedipus confides in Antigone.

When the god cried out those lifelong prophecies of doom
 he spoke of this as well, my promised rest
 after hard years weathered-
 I will reach my goal, he said, my haven

where I find the grounds of the Awesome Goddesses
 and make their home my home....
 And now I know it, not some omen from you, my queens,
 some bird on the wing that fills my heart with faith
 has led my slow steps home to your green grove.
 Yes, how else could you be the first I've met
 in the roads I've traveled...
 Now, goddesses, just as Apollo's voice foretold,
 grant my life some final passage,
 some great consummation at the end.
 Unless- who knows? -I am beneath your dignity,
 slave as I am to the relentless pains
 that ever plagued a man. Come, hear my prayer,
 you sweet daughters born of primeval Darkness!
 Pity this harried ghost of a man,
 this Oedipus...Oedipus of *no more*
the flesh and blood of old (289).

Oedipus' prophecy was to find rest and refuge after his suffering. He praises the Eumenides, asking to make their home his own. He calls to them to hear his prayers and fulfill his destiny. Though Oedipus was re-born from his mother's broach, and again re-oriented through Antigone's sight, this might also be the beginning of the new Oedipus. Oedipus (no more the flesh and blood of old) is calling on goddesses of motherhood to transform him again. He calls on the Eumenides to welcome their home to him, reversing the standard relationship of hospitality between gods and humans. Derrida writes that absolute hospitality would welcome and "say yes to who or what comes up" regardless of, and without asking whether they are a citizen from somewhere else, human, animal, divine creature, male or female, or even alive (OH 77). Derrida looks at the treatment of the stranger in Sodom to explain the reoccurring theme of offering hospitality to God or gods. In Lot's case, when two angels arrive in Sodom, he welcomes them into his home and protects them. Many classic stories of hospitality depict a god being welcomed into a home, especially when the god's status is unknown, teaching that one should always be hospitable, since one never knows if they are interacting with a god: Philemon

and Zeus, Athena and Telemachus, God and Abraham, etc. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Sophocles uses this trope with a complication. Oedipus asks the gods for hospitality, reversing their roles in order to “make their home his home.” In doing so, in accordance with his fate, Oedipus is transformed, taken in by the Eumenides and transfigured.

Antigone warns him that a crowd is coming to remove him from the grove, and he hides in a bush. The chorus comes looking for Oedipus singing, “No native- a stranger, else he’d never set foot where none may walk, this grove of the Furies, irresistible, overwhelming-....But now one’s come, the rumors say, who fears the Furies not at all- the man we look for, scanning round and round this holy precinct, cannot find him, cannot find his hiding (TTP 291). Oedipus is known as a stranger not only because no one knows him, but because no one living in Athens would dare to step in the grove. His strange ways have exposed him, calling into question the interaction from earlier. In addition, Oedipus has been transfigured; The men of the chorus cannot find Oedipus because he is no longer the man they left in the grove. Oedipus “[emerges] from the grove with Antigone, [and] the chorus draws back in horror.” They cry, “oh dreadful-dreadful to see him, dreadful to hear-” (TTP 291). After praying to the Eumenides, Oedipus seems to glow a blinding light on the men of the chorus. This symbolizes another transformation or re-birth; Oedipus has been taken in by the Eumenides. With his new rebirth into blindness, his rebirth in the grove, and his life taking visual and spatial cues from Antigone, Oedipus has taken on a more feminine orientation.

The chorus had a different relationship to the Furies than Oedipus and Antigone. Upon reaching the grove, Antigone was able to guide Oedipus through the grove as if it were a beautiful place, they felt the holy ground as welcoming, safe, and hopeful. The grove was introduced to them as belonging to the Eumenides, The Kindly Ones, goddesses of protection.

When the chorus comes, they reveal another way of relating to the goddesses. They call them by their old name, “the Furies”, and refer to them as irresistible and overwhelming. This shows that the men of Athens have a different relationship to a type of powerful femininity and chaos which the Furies represent. They see it as something dangerous and tempting to be resisted. Because Oedipus is now part goddess and part man, the chorus cannot bear to look at him.

Now, Oedipus is the stranger who calls them into question by his showing up in the grove. Oedipus does not have to explicitly make their differences of orientation clear. In his behavior and his existence as a foreigner, the men of the chorus are made to account for themselves, for their ways of being, their vision and the logic of sight, and for their relationship to the Eumenides. Oedipus’ being-foreign poses the question, “what would it mean for you to be another way, or even to not be.” This is a scary prospect for the men in the grove, and they fall back on their right to question the stranger.

They ask who he is. The infamous Oedipus tells them that he is just a stranger down on his luck, “leaning his old hulk on weaker shoulders” (TTP 292). Of course, this refers to Oedipus’ age and blindness, but also to the fact that his body is no longer the same. Oedipus is coaxed out of the grove to talk to the men further. They promise, “no one will ever drag you from your place of rest- never old man, not against your will” (TTP 293).

The men persist “who were your parents? - who are you old man? ...What is your lineage, tell us- who was your father?” (TTP 295). Oedipus doesn’t want to experience the shame of explaining himself, and he also doesn’t want to consider himself the same Oedipus when he has been reborn. Facing his duty and obligation to explain himself in order to receive the hospitality of Athens, he reluctantly asks “do you know a son of Laius? Born of the royal blood of Thebes....and the wretched suffering Oedipus? Please don’t be afraid of what I say” (TTP 297).

The men interrupt him with gasps of shock, and “drown his words with cries of horror” (TTP 297). The men call Oedipus treacherous and deceitful and tell him to leave the grove. They believe that in their hospitality, they have let their guard down and allowed an outlaw and parricide to infiltrate their city. The chorus reports that Theseus, when he comes, will have nothing to do with a man named Oedipus. Oedipus asks, pleads, “my name... who’s going to tell him that?” (TTP 300). He begs them to allow him to continue on as an unknown and unnamed stranger. This interaction is interrupted when Antigone spots her sister Ismene coming towards them.

Ismene warns them that her brothers are going to battle for the throne⁴, and Creon is going to come soon to kidnap Oedipus. In order to prevent further pollution in Thebes and a war with Argos, Oedipus has to be buried close to home. Antigone and Ismene leave to offer prayers to the gods in order to help Oedipus. The chorus starts to question him again, but this time Oedipus is prepared to defend himself. They ask with disgusted curiosity if his daughters are also his sisters. Oedipus confirms, and confirms that he had married his mother. Then, they ask if he murdered his father.

Chorus: you, you murdered-
 Oedipus: but not without justice-
 Chorus: What in the world?
 Oedipus: By all rights, I-
 Chorus: What?
 Oedipus: I’ll tell you:
 The man I murdered- he’d have murdered me!
 I am innocent! Pure in the eyes of the law,
 blind, unknowing, I, I came to this! (317)

The chorus is shocked to hear someone announce innocence after killing their father. By claiming that he is an innocent and pure murderer, that his murder was murder with justice, that

⁴ Again, the themes of filiality and paternity are at the forefront of understanding hospitality, and understanding *Oedipus at Colonus*, but the discussion of Oedipus’ sons is beyond the scope of this discussion.

the King of Thebes, his own father, appeared to him as a stranger with no paternal privileges, Oedipus shakes the logic that the men of the chorus cling to. He is fully a murderer and fully innocent. He is pure in the eyes of the law and simultaneously a roaming fugitive. Oedipus' logic seems impossible and crazy to the men. As the innocent parricide stranger, Oedipus embodies not only the possibility of another logic, but to the men of Colonus, the possibility of sophistry. Oedipus might be twisting around justice in order to convince them that something wrong is right. Again, the interaction between Oedipus and the chorus is interrupted.

Theseus arrives to help Oedipus. Theseus was raised in exile and knows how it is to be a foreigner, and how it is to be a foreign king. He says to the chorus, "Oedipus is our ally: by mutual rights we owe him hospitality... I'll never reject the gifts he offers, no, I will settle him in our land, a fellow-citizen with full rights" (TTP 323). Here, the laws and the Law of hospitality are blended by the foreigner king, who tries to offer hospitality regardless of the impossibility he faces. Oedipus, had he not been an outlaw, would have been granted all the rights of hospitality owed to him by the mutual agreement between Athens and Thebes. But, Oedipus is a murderer of the worst variety. He was exiled from Thebes, lost the tie which once bound him to Corinth, and has no homeland from which, or on behalf of which, to enter into a contractual relationship of hospitality. He is not being accepted into Thebes because of the laws: Oedipus is an outlaw. On the other hand, he is also not being absolutely accepted under the demands of the Law of hospitality- on his own terms, unknown, and unnamed as he preferred. He was asked to name himself and account for his crimes, and he was kicked out of the grove when the men found out he was a parricide. Theseus offers Oedipus full citizenship, but Oedipus refuses. His foreignness cannot be assimilated into the legal codes of Athens. Oedipus requests that Theseus help him find a place to die in Athens, and in return, he will offer an invaluable gift.

Theseus agrees to protect Oedipus until his death in Athens just as Creon shows up and tries to kidnap him. When Creon arrives at the grove, he can't convince Oedipus to come back to Thebes. He tells Oedipus, "take leave of Athens... years ago your city gave you birth" (TTP 330). Creon appeals to the same logic of a childlike duty to the state that Oedipus used on Tiresias. Oedipus is deeply offended by this, as he has tried so hard to transform himself from the old Oedipus into a new and better person. He accuses Creon of using oily language to sooth the brutality of his actions. He says, "I have never known an honest man who can plead so well for any plea whatever" (TTP332). Oedipus turns the accusation of sophistry onto Creon, destroying the arguments that he had come prepared with. Creon had been defending the arguments and logic of the kingdom of Thebes that Oedipus fell into when he was king. Now, in his new life as a foreigner, Oedipus is able to see the violent totalizing logic behind the idea that one owes their life to the paternal power of the state.

Once Creon's paternal *logos* has been threatened, he turns to violence to defend it. He steals Antigone away from Oedipus and tries to forcibly kidnap Oedipus back to Thebes. Oedipus cries at Creon, and cries for his daughter. "Would you lay hands on me? ... You, you swine- with my eyes gone, you ripped away the helpless darling of my eyes, my light in the darkness" (TTP 338). Creon doubles down calling Oedipus a "father-killer," "unholy husband of his own mother," and saying that he only took Antigone as an act of self-defense (TTP 343). That kidnapping becomes a self-defense is a testament to the power of the paternal *logos*.

Theseus holds up his promise, sending troops after Creon's men. Oedipus calls on Eumenides to save Antigone. Here, Oedipus is figured as a mother in need of help from the goddesses of wronged mothers. "I cry to those great goddesses, I beg them, I storm them with

my prayers- come to the rescue, fight for me, my champions!” (TTP 346). After Oedipus is united with his daughters, and talks to and curses his son, he decides it is time to die.

Oedipus says to Theseus

Soon, soon I will lead you on myself, no hand to lead my way, to the place where I must die. Never reveal the spot to any mortal man, not even the region, not where it lies hidden. Then it will always form a defense for you.... These are all great mysteries, words will never rouse them from their depths. You will learn them all for yourself once you come to our destination, you alone (TTP 375).

Then, Oedipus springs to his feet, suddenly possessing new strength. “He begins to move with slow, majestic steps, beckoning all to follow his path” (TTP 376). He says to his daughters, “I am your guide as you were once your father’s. No don’t touch me, let me find the sacred grave myself” (TTP 376). He sends them off to gather holy water to bathe him and prepare him for death. A messenger recounts how once everything was in place, Oedipus spoke with his children and then left with Theseus to die.

My children, this is the day that ends your father’s life. All that I was on earth is gone.... And suddenly, a voice, someone crying out to him, startling, terrifying, the hair on our heads bristled- it was calling for him over and over, echoing all around us now- it was some god! “You, you there, Oedipus- What are we waiting for? You hold us back too long! We must move on, move on!” ... And Theseus, noble man, not giving way to grief, swore to carry out the wishes of his friend...Moving away we turned in a moment, looked back, and Oedipus- we couldn’t see the man- he was gone- nowhere! And the king, alone, shielding his eyes, both hands spread out against his face as if- some terrible wonder flashed before his eyes and he, he could not bear to look. And then, quickly, we see him bow and kiss the ground and stretch his arms out to the skies, salute the gods of Olympus and the powers of the Earth in one great prayer, binding both together. (TTP 381)

Oedipus told the children that there would be nothing left of him on the earth. Then the skies opened up, called to Oedipus, and his body was gone. Oedipus, in his death has turned into a Eumenides, taken up by the goddesses themselves, and departing a protection to Athens as one of its new protectors.

VI. Mothers, Foreign and Domestic

In “Step of Hospitality/No Hospitality,” Derrida addresses the question of the foreign woman, using Antigone as his example. After Oedipus’ death, he writes that Antigone and Ismene complain about two things. First, that their father has died, and wanted to die, in a foreign place. Second, that there is no locatable tomb to mourn. They “do not bemoan only the fact of never more seeing their father... [but that] without a fixed [*arrete*] place, without a determinable *topos*, mourning is not allowed” (OH 109-111). Antigone

weeps at not weeping, she weeps a mourning dedicated to saving tears... How can a mourning be wept for? How can one weep at not being able to go through one's mourning? How can one go through the mourning of mourning? But how can one do otherwise, when the mourning has to be finished? And the mourning of mourning has to be infinite? Impossible in its very possibility? That is the question that is being wept through the tears of Antigone. It is more than a question, for a question doesn't cry, but it is perhaps the origin of all questions. And it is the question of the foreigner- of the foreign woman. These tears, who has ever seen them? (TTP 113)

The work of mourning cannot be completed without a tomb, and so Antigone can never, and must forever, mourn the loss of her father and the loss of her mourning. The problem of impossibility in the very possibility for something is the question of the female foreigner. It is also *perhaps* the origin of all questions. When Derrida writes of the origin of questions as a womanly question, he poses that all questions might be born from a mother of questions. Because, for Derrida, the mother is the supposed origin but always a substitute for a non-locatable origin (MO 29/85-88), the origin of all questions should also be a substitute for something or somewhere else. A substituted origin is a contradiction, the conditions for its possibility are impossible, yet real and disclosive of something real. The foreigner is already introduced as someone who embodies the somewhere else. The foreign woman is introduced as the place from which somewhere else originates- non-locatable and impossible. The foreign

woman is not just a somewhere else, she is a nowhere. This is why Derrida asks who has ever seen the tears of a foreign woman: tears which come from nowhere cannot be seen.

Antigone cries out for her father to see her tears anyway. “My eyes are streaming for you father, *you see?* I grieve, I mourn you- cannot quench my grief, can’t wipe from sight the blinding tears of sorrow. Oh you wanted to die on foreign soil, but so alone, so desolate- why not in my arms?” (TTP 384, emphasis added). This is the impossible request Antigone asks of her father. She asks him to see her tears though he is dead and blind. Not only would deadness and blindness pose a problem to seeing her tears, no one can truly see Antigone’s tears because they come from nowhere. “Antigone asks her father to *see*. She asks him to see, and to see the invisible, in other words to do the impossible” (TTP 117).

Antigone asks Theseus to show her the location of Oedipus’ death so that she can kill herself there. Theseus reminds her that the location must be kept secret in order to fulfill Oedipus’ oath and prophecy. Just as well, there would be nowhere for Antigone to lay with him. There is no tomb, and there is also no body. In death, Oedipus takes on a new form, or no form, as the last step in a long process of feminization and re-orientation. Oedipus may have come to Thebes as a foreign man, but by the time he enters and dies in Colonus he has changed.

In his death and disappearance, Oedipus’ status as a foreign woman is solidified. The foreign woman is the embodiment of a nowhere, and the possibility of a nowhere being illogically and paradoxically encountered as such. If before he embodied the possibility of a somewhere else, another way of being or non-being, now, Oedipus embodies/disembodies the possibility of being a nowhere. He vanishes from the earth without a trace. Oedipus is not only the figure of the foreign woman, but the foreign mother. With Jocasta dead and Oedipus re-born,

Antigone is left with one parent- a parent who, through her own help, has become increasingly feminine since the death of her mother. Oedipus' parricide is threefold: He has killed the tie between himself and Polybus, killed Laius on the road, and killed Antigone's father, the old Oedipus King of Thebes.

At Colonus, they arrive together as foreign mother and foreign daughter. A foreign mother because Oedipus is not from Athens, but also because as a mother, Oedipus is strange and foreign to Antigone. He is a prosthetic mother as the replacement of Jocasta, there is a strange biological link and no birth to claim, and the idea of a male mother is illogical. A mother is thought to provide a home country or nationality, or at least a home. Oedipus the foreign mother can provide neither. The impossibility and the impossible questions wept through Antigone's tears are of the non-locatable origin of herself. She cannot locate her mother Oedipus, and she cannot locate a time or place where she became a daughter to this strange mother. If the origin of all questions, mother of all questions, is the question of the foreign woman, then again the origin is displaced for a new one: the question of the foreign mother.

In "Hospitality and The Maternal," by Irina Aristarkhova, Derrida is critiqued for the undeveloped notion of an abstract femininity at the heart of his conception of hospitality. Aristarkhova writes that the "dematerialized feminine" ignores the material reality of women and their roles in hospitality. She argues that hospitality is only an "impossible ethic as long as it undercuts its own promise, does not fully think through its foundation in the maternal, and fails to welcome the mother unconditionally" (HM 163). Aristarkhova argues that "the maternal" must be adequately disentangled from hospitality in order to properly theorize women's autonomous maternal acts of hospitality. She argues that a notion of gifting can work through the *aporia* of which Derrida preposes renders hospitality impossible. In "Love of the Other," Luce

Irigaray writes that “man feeds on and exploits the feminine-maternal in order to live, survive” (ESD 142). She writes that man inhabits the mother in an arrested stage of infancy, unable to live outside of her, or conceive of the feminine as anything other than for him. This accounts for the impossibility of hospitality, because the arrested infancy of man produces the *aporia* in which he has nothing of his own to give. However, a re-conception (or man’s first conception) of the feminine as something desired and autonomous can lead to the possibility of hospitality.

The *aporia* of hospitality revolves around the problem of owning at the same time that one gives up or shares what they own. Aristarkhova writes,

It is possible to argue, however, that the contradiction exists mainly due to the way in which Derrida defines ownership and property, or assumes their definition: one owns a house in order to keep it, claim it, and protect it from others. This idea obscures other possibilities: that having something does not necessarily have to be defined in terms of defending it as a fortress, but could also be seen, without in oppositional gesture, as a possibility of something to be given away. Giving and having, or having and giving, are essentially opposed to each other only if property is assumed. As a relation of private ownership, and all other possibilities of having and giving remain unthought and therefore unacknowledged (HM 170).

Aristarkhova brings up the possibility of having something to give that does not require private ownership, or defensive ownership. The private ownership that Derrida assumes is troubling for his idea of giving and having, as well as for the state’s role in hospitality. Derrida’s thought lends itself to a critique of the state; However, his conception of hospitality cannot imagine hospitality after the state. Though it may be true that a universal always requires particulars, the Law of hospitality is still an absolute universal law, even when the particulars are not laws upheld by state and police violence. Equating having with having property is at the heart of the *aporia*. Not only does it confine hospitality under the state, it also excludes women. “As ancient stories of hospitality tell us, many of which Derrida and others recite, women do not themselves own

anything – nor even own their very selves, for that matter – and therefore they cannot, supposedly, give themselves in any form that could be described as hospitality” (HM 171).

Discussions of the dematerialized “feminine,” rely simultaneously on the feminine being absorbed and internal to the masculine, the feminine as “pure alterity,” and the feminine being regulated to a place of domesticity and maternity.

the feminine provides him, it is asserted, with this “first” hospitality insofar as she (it?) welcomes the (male) owner of the house even before any question of ownership is posed, or welcomes him in his own identity. Thus, the male host is always already welcomed by an “interiority as femininity” that itself remains obscured: ... “The head of the household, the master of the house, is already ... a guest in his own home. This absolute precedence of the welcoming . . . would be precisely the femininity of “Woman,” interiority as femininity - and as “feminine alterity.” (Derrida 1999, 42-43) ... Derrida as well as [his] interpreters are all quick to stress that this “feminine being” or “feminine alterity” has nothing to do with empirical women. That is, the actual presence of a woman in a given house does not determine or undermine the feminine essence of hospitality. (HM 169)

The feminine exists before any hospitality, before any ethical relationships, because the feminine creates the conditions for a household, that one eventually leaves or takes ownership over in order to take part in ethical encounters. As the first one to welcome the subject, to offer him an identity, the feminine is regarded as maternal and other, and simultaneously as an element of the man which exists internally. The feminine is assimilated into sameness, becoming the other-within. This reduction is only possible because male subjectivity (the only subjectivity theorized) considers woman and the feminine to be its origin or source. It is as if there were no way to be feminine without being maternal, and no way to be welcomed without first being born. “Clearly, while Derrida is uncomfortable with certain ways in which Levinas employs the feminine/woman, as well as concepts of fraternity and brotherhood, he too positions the idealized feminine at the center of hospitality, *as if there were no other way of defining hospitality*” (HM 170).

If the masculine subsumes the feminine, and the feminine represents a negation or interiority, or if the feminine is alterity, feminine subjectivity becomes impossible. Derrida forgets Simone De 'Beauvoir's critique of Levinas in *The Second Sex*: "Empirical women" do not experience the feminine as negation or alterity. Thus, even with a de-materialized notion of the feminine, the "feminine essence of hospitality" becomes an off-putting repetition of the idea that only men occupy positions of subjectivity. If the feminine had nothing to do with "empirical women" as Derrida suggests, "one wonders, then, why it is necessary to use the terms of sexual difference at all and to continue to argue that they are "morally and ethically neutral" (HM 171). The argument that the feminine is not linked with women again falters when considering the position of the masculine and of men. Aristarkhova writes, "while femininity and the woman as host is being de-empiricized, the male host is clearly part of the ontological vocabulary: he is in place in the space of his home. He is there not as a dimension of masculinity or masculine being, but as the master of the house" (HM 171). The male, the man and father, are central in every discussion of hospitality. It is not the masculine *logos* that the foreigner challenges, but the *logos* of the father. Even the figure of the foreigner, save for the explicit discussion of a female foreigner, appears as a son or a strange man.

With a de-materialized feminine-maternal passivity at the center of hospitality, the role of women and the real labor of their hospitality, becomes nothing but an "effortless hospitality of [a] passive, ephemeral, welcoming smile" (HM 172). It is as if the theoretical, political, and socio-economic status of women, which relegates them to the role of passive wife, mother, and homemaker, erases the autonomy and labor of specific acts of hospitality. Aristarkhova focuses on the acts of pregnancy and motherhood, but countless other labors are erased under this thinking. Even if the father, the master of the house, extends hospitality to a guest, Derrida writes

that “the master of the house is already a guest in his own home” (HM 169). While Derrida focuses on the meaning of this statement for its description of subjectivity, it also applies to material situations. The master of the house commands another to cook, clean, and prepare for the guest. These are real actions taken by women, which are stripped of their ethical status of hospitality. Taking care of the guest is not just passive busy work, it is a material reality of hospitality.

With maternity and motherhood also figured as passive acts, Derrida forgets the work and power of giving that pregnancy encompasses. “When positioning the mother as a hospitable space, passivity is rendered as another intentional gesture of hospitality, as willingness, readiness to contain and to produce space for the other out of one’s own flesh and blood, or through providing one’s own flesh and blood through acts/ labors of hospitality. It is the possibility of hospitality that the mother delivers” (HM 176). Aristarkhova flips the narrative of passivity in order to show that the mother can actively offer her body as space for another. The radical departure from Derrida’s underdeveloped theory of maternity in *Of Hospitality*, is that Aristarkhova doesn’t reduce women to a concept of ‘the feminine’ which exists in order to become pregnant; Women do not automatically refer to their capability to produce men. Thus, the hospitality of the mother renders her a host rather than a passive and de-materialized site of incubation and housekeeping. The mother gains something from her acts of hospitality. Aristarkhova reminds that hospitality is two-sided, the gifts and possibilities stemming from the relationship between mother as host and child as guest are ripe with potential.

Again, the possibility for working through the *aporias* of hospitality are brought to light with feminist notions of the maternal. In “Love of the Other,” Irigaray writes that man is arrested

in a state of infancy. He “feeds on and exploits the maternal-feminine in order to live, survive, inhabit” (ESD 142). This is the inhabitation which Derrida employs in his assumption of the feminine as internal to man, internal to masculinity, and also as pre-man, pre-masculinity, in its home making. However, the type of life and survival that this allows for, is not one of thriving justice or ethics, as another impossibility of hospitality suggests. “Survival, surviving in many conversations in many places today means hibernating. Waiting. For what?” (ESD 144). Irigaray writes that the survival is hibernation. While hibernating animals are waiting, they are not waiting in the attentive and ready fashion that hospitality requires of the host. The host must always be readily preparing for the possibility of the guest’s arrival. In his hibernation, man “never grows up. He goes back to childhood in order to become maturity. Freely cutting a sort of umbilical cord to the woman-mother, mother nature who was still breathing for him, still fed and warmed him, gave him a home. A nest” (ESD 145). In man’s arrested development of relations to women, he cuts off the mother. He thinks of himself as beyond the mother and her help, beyond needing her, and beyond needing to adequately think through their relationship. The mother is considered to have existed for the sole purpose of bringing him into the world and minding the house. The home, the nest, that the mother prepared in an act of hospitality, is ignored and rendered a passive act necessitated by the son-subject. In this way, the man never grows up. He is still like a baby, who thinks the world, and the mother, exists to pleasure and care for him. The mother’s acts are not seen as hospitality, instead as essential to her femininity, and as what was owed the son or what came naturally to him.

However, Irigaray writes that there is hope. “If man- who claims to be humanity- is to escape from survival, he would thus need to escape from this mixture of old man and *infans* which is still his condition...If man achieves autonomy from a maternal... than perhaps he will

discover that there is something inhering in the female that is not maternal. Another body? Another machine? (at worst?) A machine that uses a different source of energy? Which would oblige man- humanity- to glimpse something Other” (ESD 145-46). Man exists in a state of miserly misogyny and holds the infantile view of women as simply maternal, because he has not realized that this is the case yet. Once man realizes that he has been inhabiting the woman as mother, rather than letting her exist for herself, he can start to change. He can accept woman as Other on her own terms, an act of hospitality. Irigaray writes that the way men have assimilated the world into technologies for their use means that women might first be realized as Other, as machines of a new variety, fueled by and producing something other.

Irigaray writes that once the woman is glimpsed as other, rather than as interiority or as for the man, he can and is obliged to stop assigning the female to reproduction, guardianship of the dead, a role as sex toy, and a mystified fantasy (ESD 146). In his description of Antigone, first, Derrida uncritically assigns the female foreigner both to reproduction and guardianship of the dead. The female foreigner is necessarily a maternal figure. Even in the body of young virginal Antigone, the female foreigner is the mother of all questions- she embodies and brings forth the birth of questions. Without thinking through the implications of maternity, the female foreigner is assigned to the role, as if there were no femininity separated from maternity. Second, Derrida writes that in Antigone’s mourning for mourning, her eyes are revealed as having been made for crying. This positions Antigone as simply a guardian of the dead, rather than an active host to Oedipus in inviting him to inhabit her eyes. Her act of hospitality is ignored by Derrida, in order to figure her as the feminine-maternal who exists to care for the dead men around her.

The underdeveloped notion of the feminine means that acts of hospitality by women are impossible or unseen as such. The man cuts himself off of “the nest,” can be more fully elaborated as man not opening himself to the possibility of receiving hospitality from women, and from mothers. “The nest for the child would be possible if the female had its own nest. If woman had her own territory, her birth, her genesis, her growth. With the female becoming an in self and for self-as Hegel would say-... that always also remains for the other and in a world and a universe that are partway open” (ESD 149). For maternal hospitality to be possible, and for hospitality at all to be possible, it requires that women be free of the naturalized masculine subject position, which requires their femininity to become maternity in service of men. Not only does it require a shift in attitudes towards the mother, it requires a shift in attitudes toward the potential child the mother carries. Irigaray writes, “woman must be born into desire. She must be longed for, loved, valued as daughter” (ESD 150). Derrida’s conception of Antigone is not that of a child loved and valued as a daughter. Oedipus as presented in *Of Hospitality*, is cold to his daughters, denying them mourning, sending them away from the area and confiding only in Theseus. His daughters serve their purpose as mourners, not desired or valued as daughters, let alone as his children. When Oedipus is conceived of as a feminine figure and Antigone is loved and desired as a daughter, acts of hospitality are possible. Antigone can welcome Oedipus into her eyes, her invitation is meaningful and intentional, rather than passive or forced. Without property, Antigone has her body and can offer it as a gift, in a way that does not rely on defensive possession. Antigone’s femininity and her capacity to host do not have to be linked to her capacity to become a mother, being a daughter is enough.

For Derrida, Antigone weeps for an origin, and for a mourning. Any hospitality she had shown him in inviting him into her eyes, is assimilated into a pregnancy. If the female foreigner

brings forth the question of the foreign mother, Antigone must be mother to someone. Since she is to thank for blind Oedipus' survival, Antigone must be figured as his mother. Oedipus did not wander as a blind man, he had Antigone's sight to orient him through her own perspective and relationship to the world as a woman. In this way, not only does Oedipus inhabit Antigone, he has "the feminine" as interiority. Because his femininity is a negation of his life as masculine, Oedipus can consider the feminine to be internal to him and at the same time, through its embodiment in Antigone and other women outside of him, alterity. Using Derrida's writing, Antigone's guidance allows Oedipus to inhabit her eyes. She is much as much the new Oedipus' mother as Jocasta. Oedipus and Antigone both point to each other in their search for an origin, failing to find one. When she weeps for Oedipus, Derrida writes that "[these] tears say that the eyes are not made primarily for seeing but for crying," and that Antigone "can't wipe from sight the blinding tears" (OH 115). If her eyes were made for crying, the tears could not blind her. She would be seeing perfectly in her sorrow. The tears are at once her eyes' purposes and hindering her eyes' purpose. Antigone's eyes were made to see, to see for others, and to block sight, being seen weeping. All of this is impossible and contradictory, disclosing the question of the foreign woman and the question of the foreign mother.

However, Antigone's actions are better understood as acts and labors of hospitality than as underdeveloped links between the feminine and the maternal. Oedipus truly does desire his daughters as daughters. When they are stolen from him, first at the end of *Oedipus the King*, and again during *Oedipus at Colonus*, he screams and cries out for them- not for "the feminine-maternal" on which his personal identity transformations rely. For Oedipus, looking into his father's eyes was the greatest joy he had known; When considering mother-daughter and father-daughter relationships to be as valuable and ethically ripe with potential as those of father-son,

it's clear that Antigone mourns the valuable relationship with her parent, not the act of mourning which Derrida assigns her to. One might object that in *Antigone*, she is proven to be mourning mourning, however, if that is the case then *Antigone* also calls to be re-read in a way that does not essentially tie woman to guardianship of the dead (man).

Antigone opened herself to Oedipus as his host, inviting him in order to help him. Antigone can welcome Oedipus into her eyes, her invitation is meaningful and intentional, rather than passive or forced. Without defensive possession of property, Antigone has her body and can offer it as a space of hospitality. Antigone's femininity and her capacity to host does not have to be linked to her capacity to become a mother. As Irigaray writes, when woman has her own territory and growth, hospitality becomes possible. Antigone can welcome Oedipus into her eyes, not to inhabit them but to be a guest. Antigone's femininity and her capacity to host does not have to be linked to her capacity to become a mother to Oedipus.

As Aristarkhova writes, with the feminine adequately disentangled from the maternal, hospitality becomes possible, and there is a space to think through women's acts of hospitality, and maternal acts of hospitality; For Irigaray, "The nest for the child would be possible if the female had its own nest" (ESD 149). In Sophocles, there are situations of maternal hospitality, none of which Derrida addresses. Jocasta, Merope, and Oedipus, all occupy diverse positions of motherhood, and each of their acts of maternal hospitality look different because of this. Jocasta was cursed with a terrible prophecy about her child, but still opened herself to hosting him. She could have killed Oedipus before he was born, kicking him out like a host who tells the guest it's time to leave. She engaged in a welcoming relationship of having and giving, despite being considered a forced situation which she was cursed with. Jocasta's hospitality doesn't end there;

If the king has the power to invite and hold a fatherly position over his people, then Jocasta should be seen as having a similar power and position. With Laius dead, Jocasta was able to welcome Oedipus into Thebes. Though *Oedipus the King* takes place after this, Jocasta must have welcomed Oedipus the stranger into Thebes and into her castle in the first place. She unknowingly welcomed the stranger parricide, who brought a plague to the city and in death brought the destruction of the city through his oath with Theseus. If a king's similar acts of hospitality are paternal, the queen's are maternal. Reading Jocasta with the freedom and agency that her acts imply, maternal hospitality becomes a rich ethical situation that isn't reduced to the woman as womb. Merope and Oedipus reinforce this, as Merope is an adopted mother to Oedipus, and Oedipus acts more complicatedly as adopted mother, divine goddess mother, and previously masculine mother.

Derrida ends *Of Hospitality* with another discussion of sexual difference. First, he recalls the story of Lot, who in order to save his guests from the Sodomites, offers up his two virgin daughters to be raped in their place. Second, the biblical story of the pilgrim on Mount Ephraim. After welcoming a Levite pilgrim into his house for the night, a man is confronted by the people of his village, who ask for him to send the Levite outside so that they can rape him. Instead, the host offers to send out his virgin daughter, and the Levite man offers his concubine. The men take the concubine, rape her all night, and leave her to die on the doorstep. When the Levite finds her dead in the morning, he chops her body into twelve pieces and sends them across Israel (Derrida 155). "Sodomy and sexual difference: the same law of hospitality gives rise to an analogous bargaining, a sort of hierarchy of the guests and the hostages... In the name of hospitality, all the men are *sent* a woman, to be precise, a concubine.... Are we the heirs to this tradition of hospitality?" (OH 155).

The bargaining that goes on, offering a girl virgin in place of the male guest, is another sort of hostage situation. Earlier, Derrida noted that the host may become a hostage to the guest. Now, Derrida wonders, who else are the hostages of hospitality? In the stories, the hosts' daughters become bargaining chips in order to save the guest, positioning them as hostages which can be used to preserve the safety of another. But, if the daughters were available to be used this way, they must have *always been* hostages. Their protection is not valued or owed to them in the same way that the host values and owes protection to the guest. In the case of the Levite's concubine, hospitality required that the foreigner be saved, even at the cost of the life of the female foreigner. In the stories, xenophobia is enacted as rape, as feminization which threatens to turn the welcomed guest into a female foreigner. Derrida implies that a daughter at home does not have a right to her home in the same way as the father, not only because of the laws, but also the Law of hospitality which requires she be bargained with to protect the guest. He acknowledges the troubling history of hospitality, and how, if sexual difference, and the homophobic misogyny of xenophobia goes unthought, the price of hospitality will continue to be women. Though he notes the roles of Lot's daughters, Derrida writes that it is precisely the concubine who is offered up; Even while addressing the problem of sexism in hospitality, Derrida does not think through the implications this has on daughters and mothers.

If the tradition of hospitality requires the sacrifice of a woman, either a virgin or a concubine, then a theory of hospitality which thinks through the role of sexual difference and the maternal might be able to examine how the sacrifices of hospitality extend to mothers. Derrida ignores that at the end of Lot's night with the guests, his wife is turned into a pillar of salt. The mother pays the price of hospitality. In Sophocles, the price of Oedipus' acceptance into Athens is ultimately Antigone. After Oedipus dies, Antigone and Ismene are sent back to Thebes, where

Oedipus' actions have caused Creon to take power as a tyrant who sends Antigone to her death. Jocasta has also paid the price of hospitality, but there is another maternal figure whose sacrifices and pains are overlooked for the benefit of hospitality towards Oedipus. In order for Oedipus to make his oath to Theseus, Oedipus had to first be transfigured by the Eumenides. The Eumenides, as the men in the grove hint at, used to be known as the Furies, the powerful primordial goddesses who protected mothers. Sophocles' writing hints at the *Oresteia*, Aeschylus' trilogy which ends with the Furies having to give up their chaotic powers in order to support democracy in Athens. The conditions for Oedipus to arrive and be welcomed into Athens already relied on the sacrifice and disempowering of the maternal Eumenides. Derrida does not mention the Eumenides, or how Oedipus' hospitality into Athens relies on the sacrifices of the foreign women and mothers around him. While Derrida is right to end by asking if this is the tradition of hospitality we want to inherit, without disentangling the feminine from the maternal, he cannot fully explain the issues that this tradition, including his own work, present.

Conclusion

Through Derrida's discussion of hospitality, the relationship between host and foreigner is theorized as an ethical encounter and situation of tension. When a foreigner is welcomed in, no matter where they are welcomed, there is a tension between the authority and sovereignty that allowed the host to invite them in, and the fact that there is someone in the host's territory who is, or at one point was, exempt from the type of authority which made this possible. The foreigner points to the problems which arise from claiming ownership or a truth and logic. Because the foreigner is always questioning, and embodying the possibility of questioning, they threaten the ideologies of the host. Using Plato's *Sophist*, Derrida links the question of the foreigner with the question of non-being, claiming that the way a totalizing ontological structure undermines the reality and depth of non-being, in order to incorporate it into being, is similarly violent to the way the host's totalizing logic attempts to strip the foreigner of their strangeness, assimilating them into something known (which can also be placed in a totalizing ontological structure) and thus less threatening. One of the ways the host can undermine the questions of the foreigner is to claim that anything coming from the foreigner which threatens their power is insane. As examined in the *Sophist* and *Oedipus the King*, the link between blindness and madness opens up questions about the role of the host in creating the idea of sanity, and what is available for people under the host's rule to 'see.' Derrida explains the idea of the female foreigner through Antigone in *Oedipus at Colonus*. He offers a model for thinking through alternate experiences of spatiality in his discussion of the female foreigner as a nowhere. Although Derrida's conclusions about the role and status of the female foreigner are taken up and critiqued, he acknowledges that sexual difference is extremely important to any theory of hospitality. This is because the possibilities it offers for thinking through encountering an other has real implications for all women, especially

those who experience foreignness and the price of hospitality in some way, as refugees, immigrants, stateless people, prisoners, or as any type of social/political strangers or outsiders. It also allows for a better understanding of what women can offer and how they can invite in acts of hospitality, when they seem to have nothing.

Hospitality is fundamental to and offers direction for thinking through the way one encounters others and the obligations they have to the other. A theory of hospitality which allows one to adequately think through sexual difference and the ways it colors these encounters is necessary not only for understanding hospitality itself and the ethical encounter, but for understanding the status of foreigners, strangers, or guests.

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