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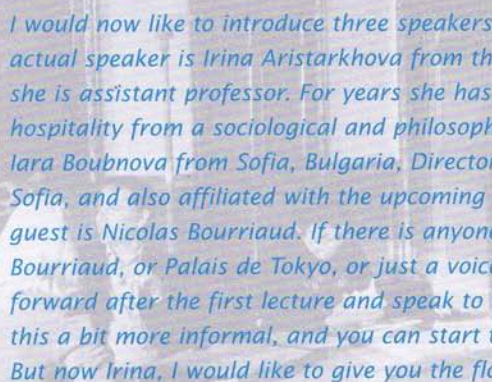
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about spending time together. For instance, you won't have a guest if you are completely ignorant of that guest. You need knowledge, you need perception, you need insight to invite the right people and to invite them in the correct way. So ignorance is an obstacle. Another obstacle, which is obvious, is budget. If you want to be generous to a guest, you need a budget.

But there are also more topical objections. One, for instance, is the culture of narcissism. If that's a true concept – it's old, it's thirty years old, coined by Christopher Lasch in his *Culture of Narcissism*, I think it's still valid in terms of analysing our contemporary culture. It's very hard to engage with your guests if you are a narcissist, because within that concept resides the inability, the incapacity, to engage with the other.

And then, even more topical, the culture of fear. Are we more engaged in defending our borders, as in Holland for instance, or in defending our identities, defending our languages, defending our disciplines, defending our practices? If this whole discourse of protection and the policies of defence is current, how can we think of expanding our ability to host interesting people and interesting ideas? More abstract is the notion of time. We need time to spend time with the other. So if we don't have any time, we cannot spend it with the other. So the time issue is very important, too.



I would now like to introduce three speakers, two actual and one virtual. The first actual speaker is Irina Aristarkhova from the National University of Singapore, where she is assistant professor. For years she has been deeply involved in the discourse on hospitality from a sociological and philosophical perspective. The second speaker is Iara Boubnova from Sofia, Bulgaria, Director of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Sofia, and also affiliated with the upcoming Biennale of Moscow. And then our virtual guest is Nicolas Bourriaud. If there is anyone here who is close to the ideas of Nicolas Bourriaud, or Palais de Tokyo, or just a voice from Paris, you are invited to come forward after the first lecture and speak to the audience today. So we will try to make this a bit more informal, and you can start to think about featuring yourself here. But now Irina, I would like to give you the floor. Thank you.

Exotic Hospitality in the Land of Tolerance

Irina Aristarkhova

Prologue

One of my relatives (let's call him Ivan) was sent to the war in Chechnya during his military service. His unit was abducted and there was a suspicion that they

had been 'sold' by one of their own men. They were beaten up and split into smaller groups. The Chechen abductors 'sold' him, or, probably, passed him as a 'gift' to an old couple living in a remote village. Ivan did various manual jobs and was treated well. Once, while working in the field, he decided to leave. He was not sure where to go, so he just walked towards the mountains. He encountered a Chechen man. The man was happy to meet a Russian soldier as he hoped to sell him, or so he said. Ivan did not care, since he was tired and just wanted to rest and to eat. While having a meal in the Chechen man's house, they chatted (after all, Russian is the *lingua franca* in the former USSR). They discovered that both had a younger sister. After feeding Ivan, his host/owner brought him to a visible footpath and said: 'Just follow this road all the way, it leads to Dagestan, out of here.' And they parted. Ivan was walking for a long time, and then he saw an old man on a donkey crossing the road. It was Dagestan. The Dagestani man asked him: 'Where would you like me to take you?' Ivan replied: 'To a police post.' There he was immediately put on a train with other Russians who were discharged and coming back home. He made a friend on the train and brought him to his house near Moscow for a meal, before his friend left for Siberia. Ivan is now married and has a child.

Europe and Hospitality

Immanuel Kant, who is usually credited with the elaboration of the modern Western conception of ethics and morality, judged nations according to their hospitality: the way they treated strangers in their lands. In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*¹ (a lecture from the 1770s, published posthumously) Kant formulated his opinion on 'The Character of the Nations'. From this text it becomes clear that he was probably rare among philosophers in the European tradition in being preoccupied with hospitality as a concept worth thinking through (albeit in a limited manner compared to his development of other concepts) and even worth using to judge national character. Elsewhere Kant clearly criticises the European inability to treat guests with hospitality, and European abuse of the hospitality of others in colonised lands.² However, what is more important for us here is that Kant positioned hospitality as a universal criterion for judgment of national character, though his own view of hospitality remained, problematically, the 'true' measurement.

According to Kant, the Germans are the most hospitable nation (it's not clear whether this means the most hospitable in Europe, or in the world), defined by the way they relate to strangers, and they have – as a result of that? – the best national character: 'The Germans are more hospitable to strangers than any other nation'.³ The national character of the French is also defined by their relation to foreigners. Unlike the Germans, whose main national trait is 'good character', Kant states that the French are a 'courteous nation', especially to strangers, and they are also 'curious' about others – something that becomes a crucial point in

Derrida's analysis of hospitality: the desire for the Other and his or her difference. For Kant, this curiosity comes from the 'femininity' of the French nobility, who partake in a so-called lady-like way of speaking and behaving: 'the language of ladies has become the language shared by all high society. It cannot be disputed at all that an inclination of such a nature must also have influence on the ready willingness in rendering services, helpful benevolence, and the gradual development of human kindness according to principles'.⁴ Derrida went even further to claim that hospitality is feminine par excellence, as I have discussed critically elsewhere.⁵ To simplify somewhat the words of Kant, we conclude that the French are kind to foreigners because they use 'ladies' language', which makes them, supposedly, want to serve and please. This connection between hospitality and women is lost when one considers the matters of peace and war in Kant and further in Derrida.

With regard to the English people, Kant applies a notion rare in Western philosophy: he judges national character through *kindness*. The English, according to Kant, are not only inhospitable to strangers, but even to their own people, as a result of a fundamental lack of kindness compared to the French:

The English people has a character ... that is more directly contrasted to that of the French people than to any other, because it renounces all kindness to others and even to people of their own; while kindness has been the most prominent social quality of the French. The English merely claim respect for themselves, so that, by the way, everybody can live according to his own will. For his own countrymen the Englishman establishes great benevolent institutions unheard of among all other peoples. But the foreigner who has been driven to England's shores by fate, and has fallen into dire need, will be left to die on the dunghill because he is not an Englishman, that is, not a human being.⁶

It is possible to argue that Kant's views of national characteristics are rather marginal to his overall corpus of works, especially as they were based on secondary sources and friends' opinions (after all, Kant never travelled). However, Kant himself did not seem to consider these notes marginal: this was almost the last text he prepared for publication before his death. It shows that the elderly Kant did not consider this lecture from the 1770s ungrounded and unimportant: on the contrary, he revisited it at the end of his life. Therefore, we might state with at least some certainty that Kant indeed prioritised the ethics of host-guest relations. This European philosopher, who is often heralded as the original reference point for European thought on hospitality, considered national character through a focus on nations' treatment of strangers, foreigners, and their own people.

What is hospitality then as defined by Kant? He did not provide a detailed account. His treatment of hospitality was mostly abstract and sketchy. He did not specify whether it entails bodily behaviour, the hosting of a guest in one's home, giving shelter, food, or special treatment compared to that normally given to

family members. Kant did not elaborate a particular scenario of hospitality: what kind of situation may occur and how one should act. To put it simply, the question is whether it is enough to open the door and provide a glass of water to a thirsty stranger who asks for it – or does hospitality mean a smile, a welcoming to one's home, and an offer before a request is made or even conceived?

Here is the primary Kantian definition, an often cited passage taken from the text 'To Perpetual Peace': '[H]ospitality signifies the claim of a stranger entering foreign territory to be treated by its owner without hostility'. Both Levinas and Derrida take this definition further, and position hospitality as a much more radical notion that includes not only treatment of the Other without hostility, but a gesture of welcome, a smile, in addition to providing him with a refuge in the time of need. Derrida cites the European tradition of 'cities of refuge', and relates it to modern France.⁷ Levinas discusses it in terms of Jewish history in times of persecution, war and exile.⁸ Both of them go back to the primary texts of the Talmud, the Koran and the Bible as the sources for founding stories of hospitality.

Founding Stories of Hospitality

At the end of one of his texts on hospitality, Derrida recites two 'founding scene[s] of Abrahamesque hospitality', one from Genesis, and another one from Judges. In the second story the master of the house went out to people who wanted to 'penetrate' his pilgrim-guest, and told them:

'No, my brothers; I implore you, do not commit this crime. This man has become my guest; do not commit such an infamy. Here is my daughter; she is a virgin; I will give her to you. Possess her, do what you please with her, but do not commit such an infamy against this man.' The men would not listen to him. So the Levite took his concubine and brought her out to them. They had intercourse with her and outraged her all night till morning; when dawn was breaking they let her go.

At daybreak the girl came and fell on the threshold of her husband's host, and she stayed there till it was full day. In the morning her husband got up and opened the door of the house. ... [He] picked up his knife, took hold of his concubine, and limb by limb cut her into twelve pieces; then he sent her all through the land of Israel. He instructed his messengers as follows, 'This is what you are to say to all the Israelites, "Has any man seen such a thing from the day Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, until this very day? Ponder on this, discuss it; then give your verdict."' And all who saw it declared, 'Never has such a thing been done or been seen since the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt.'⁹

At the very end Derrida asks: 'Are we the heirs to this tradition of hospitality? 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.'¹⁰

Here we come across a situation of refusal of hospitality: the host protected his guest at the expense of his woman. She served the role of a substitute or a sacrifice – the notion that Derrida writes on extensively, when analysing hospitality. In that sense, this is not unconditional hospitality – what is asked for is not really provided. What is given out is a substitute. To give out a concubine, a wife or a daughter is to refuse unconditional hospitality, to be a bad host, ultimately. Or is it? It was refused to those who wanted to harm the guest, thus jeopardising the law of hospitality. This situation is not at all abstract for Levinas and Derrida, who both refer it to the Holocaust. European hosts of various nations had the choice of either extending their hospitality to the Jews, communists, Gypsies, and so on – and probably risking their own lives – or abandoning hospitality, leading to the assured suffering and probable death of their guests. Derrida recollects how France disowned its Jewish citizens of Algeria by taking their citizenship away during the Second World War.¹¹ This was done voluntarily, without Germany asking for it. The relation between host and guest is still one of the most politicised and complicated relationships, today in particular for immigrant ‘guests’.¹²

In order to look at stories that consider the whole range of unconditional hospitality, we now turn to an example from a non-Abrahamic culture. For Vedic tradition, hospitality is not a marginal concern or an underground practice, but is central to the formation of culture as a whole. In her excellent work *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual and Hospitality in Ancient India* (1995) Stephanie Jamison carefully traces one particular detail of the complex role that hospitality plays in Indian tradition, specifically Vedic texts.¹³ It is directly related to ‘cultures of hospitality’. According to Jamison, hospitality is not simply an abstract concept, it is one of the central themes of Sanskrit culture, elaborated and developed: ‘Hospitality, the appropriate behavior between host and guest, is a theme that infuses Sanskrit literature and as cultural behavior remains crucial to the present day. The duties of a host are set forth quite extensively in the official dharma and grhya manuals, and this codification of hostly behavior can be traced back to earlier texts... It is also a constantly recurring motif in literary texts in Sanskrit and other Indic languages.’¹⁴

I would like to present here some situations, discussed by Jamison, which can arise from what Derrida would call ‘unconditional hospitality’. Ultimately, in these stories we encounter a localised and non-generalised hospitality, which is always both central to community and excessive, as a norm.

In a founding story of Indian culture the first man Manu is asked by two guests to give away his wife in order to perform a (hospitality) ritual. When he is ready to give her away to be sacrificed, the god Indra appears and tells him to perform the ritual with his two guests instead (as a punishment for demanding his wife, presumably). When Manu hesitates to kill two guests, Indra replies: ‘A lord of guests [host] is master of his guests’.¹⁵ Thus Manu’s wife is set free. Another

version of this story sees the wife actually killed. Jamison explains: 'Manu surrenders his possessions and his wife to strangers because of his obligations to *hospitality* and to the exchange relations on which hospitality depends. The source of the strangers' power and their loss of power is the same: the ambiguous and dangerous qualities intrinsic to the roles of both host and guest. This story expresses succinctly the real *anxieties of hospitality* that must have accompanied the inherited and dharmically enjoined host-guest relation.'¹⁶

Thus, the anxiety of hospitality, as Jamison calls it, is constitutive of the relations between host and guest. It is played out every time guests enter the house, or another 'hospitality situation' occurs. Here woman, just as in the Biblical story, embodies the symbolic nature of hospitality, and her role, though central, is based on her sacrifice. The importance of offering food at any cost, as a matter constitutive of 'pure hospitality' as a centre of community, is presented with utmost clarity and enacted in various scenarios in Vedic literature. One example tells us a fable of a fowler who captures a pigeon. Her pigeon husband is devastated but she insists that he welcome the fowler and ask him the question that sets hospitality in motion: What can I do for you? Though this now sounds to us ironically more appropriate for a situation within a 'hospitality industry', the question is an embodiment of hospitality. It signifies the vulnerability of the guest and the responsibility of the host, and vice versa. In the fable, the pigeon then attempts to supply the fowler's needs. He first makes a fire as a protection from the cold, but when the fowler asks for food, the pigeon must make the humiliating admission that he has none. After some thought and preparation, he ceremonially enters the fire himself, to make of himself the cooked food he needs to offer the fowler. 'Hospitality can hardly exact any higher price than self-immolation.'¹⁷

The question is how far one should go to practise hospitality, and what price hospitality should exact. This fable presents the scenario of Derrida's unconditional hospitality elaborated upon in detail, graphically: the price is anything. Anything should be provided for a guest, otherwise it is not pure hospitality. Hospitality demands everything, or it is not hospitality. This is the point of anxiety: the question 'What can I do for you?' can be read as meaning 'I would do anything for you, O guest!'. Though it is a test of faith too, it is much more a test of hospitality as ethics of everyday life and relations with others.

Another story comes directly to the point of what unconditional hospitality entails, without compromise or substitute:

A Brahman comes to Sibi in search of food and orders Sibi to prepare, cook, and serve his son Brhadgarbha as his meal. He agrees and sets about doing it, while the Brahman occupies the preparation time by burning down Sibi's house and its outbuildings. When Sibi finally catches up with him, Sibi merely says: 'Your food is ready, sir'. But the Brahman refuses it and orders Sibi to eat instead – in other words to eat his own son, whom he has already cooked for the Brahman's meal. Even then Sibi begins to comply, but the Brahman finally relents, snatches

his hand away, and restores the son to life. Again it is Sibi's lack of anger and willingness to obey that impress and please the Brahman.¹⁸

In Vedic tradition hospitality is assumed to be a practice of everyday life of a 'good' member of the community. The relation is not so much sacrificial and religious, since one can never be sure who the guest is. The tradition elaborates various details of what pure hospitality means, and what limitations one needs to be aware of. Again it is important to stress that in both traditions, Abrahamic as well as Vedic, women usually play the role of mediating objects, and rarely appear as receivers of hospitality. It is as though the traditions would crumble if women stopped playing their symbolic roles.

It seems that hospitality is not about generosity but rather scarcity. One receives the most praise when one is hospitable not because of one's wealth or ability, but despite one's inability and poverty. Hospitality is born out of constraint, and not as a result of abundance and excess. Therefore, hospitality should be found independent of one's means, whether financial, in terms of property, or otherwise. Pure hospitality in Indian culture means to put oneself at risk, to put oneself in a difficult situation – to the point of absurdity, from a 'reasonable' point of view. Otherwise it should be normal – to help, welcome, support, give. The position of the guest is precarious too. One should avoid asking for too much, one tries not to inconvenience one's host. But the guest should also allow the host to be hospitable, should allow his or her hospitality. Certainly, hospitality in the Indian tradition is not a matter of individual decision, it is a matter of community and relations within the community. To reiterate once again: hospitality is central to the formation and operation of Indian communities, both through the founding texts and through its integration into everyday life.

Tolerance and Hospitality

After examining Indian tradition and the cultural role of hospitality in the Indian context, we might notice that the Kantian definition of hospitality differs radically from the stories detailed above, both Vedic and Abrahamic. For Kant, universal hospitality is a matter of not being hostile to one's guest, provided the guest follows the rules of 'good behaviour'. The guest can then hope to receive a 'right of temporary visitation' (what today is known to us as a *visa*?). Derrida, though beginning with the Kantian definition, is also dissatisfied with it, especially in its application to the two main 'Others' of contemporary European culture: the Jew and the immigrant. The turn to hospitality is presented as a result of the urgent need to respond to what is happening in Europe, as revealed in the expression 'Fortress Europe'. Tolerance is seen as no longer sufficient, or even as hypocritical. The relation between the two concepts, 'tolerance' and 'hospitality', is not a simple matter of philosophical or political preference. Both have a history and both are part of a particular cultural concern. It would be correct to assume that if

European culture is dissatisfied with the concept and practice of 'tolerance', it is because it has a long tradition of it, and relation to it. It is dissatisfied with its own tradition of treating 'Others' with tolerance. Discussions on assimilation and on the extent to which immigrant 'guests' should follow their host country's customs seem to be an extension of the European culture of tolerance and its measure. The question is what the guest should do to be tolerated and, possibly, accepted as one of 'us'. Since it has been practised and elaborated within legal and political discourses, tolerance has become a culturally recognised concept. Explaining why tolerance is not a sufficient concept for Derrida, Giovanna Borradori argues:

Derrida's treatment of hospitality comes straight from Kant. Hospitality is a more compassionate, and ultimately effective, alternative to tolerance.

Tolerance is according to Derrida a paternalistic concept irremediably tainted by religious, and specifically Christian, implications developed in the Europe of the 1500s. For him, tolerance is a less neutral moral and political concept than it makes itself out to be. Also, he is bothered by the lack of authentic openness to the other that tolerance entails; the phrase 'threshold of tolerance,' which was used in France to indicate the limit beyond which it was no longer decent to ask a national community to welcome any more foreigners and immigrants, reveals this problematic implication.¹⁹

One might question whether Derrida's notion of hospitality comes directly from Kant (after all, I have tried to show here that the Kantian notion of hospitality is very limited); indeed, Derrida saw in hospitality a deconstructive potential. However, it is tolerance, and not hospitality, which is institutionalised in European societies. Hospitality is a much more unusual concept in Europe. A question we are likely to hear is 'How much longer can we tolerate this situation with immigrants?'; the issue of the limits of tolerance is being used in political campaigns across Europe.

It is problematic to appropriate hospitality as 'one's own' on the basis of its universality. That is why I would disagree profoundly with Derrida when he says that '[not] only is there a culture of hospitality, but there is no culture that is not also a culture of hospitality. All cultures compete in this regard and present themselves as more hospitable than the others. Hospitality – this is culture itself.'²⁰ The phrase 'every culture is a culture of hospitality' can also be read as an appropriation of hospitality, through the implication that *my* culture is a culture of hospitality. This seems problematic particularly in relation to those cultures that have championed other ways of relating to their guests – such as the concept of tolerance.

To summarise:

1. When we appropriate a concept of hospitality as ours, when we write about European hospitality no matter how critical we are, just because 'every culture

is a culture of hospitality', we violate important historical, philosophical and cultural differences.

2. After examining the Indian, non-Abrahamic tradition, it becomes clearer that hospitality is an underdeveloped concept in European thought, a marginal concern. Foundational texts in Vedic philosophy are preoccupied with the guest–host relationship, its anxieties, 'extremes' and frameworks. Those scenarios are far from the Kantian idea of the temporary visitor. They can help us further inform the scenarios of 'unconditional hospitality' offered by Derrida.

3. Neither the Abrahamic, the Indian, nor the recent European definitions of hospitality include women within host–guest relations on a symbolic or religious level; rather they position them as mediators or silent providers of 'femininity', of the feeling of 'being at home with oneself'.

4. Finally, European tradition developed a discourse of tolerance, which subsequently spread to other Western countries and is most commonly expressed in the idea of tolerating the differences of guests and immigrants through some unifying basis. This basis usually takes the form of the 'European values' of democracy, fraternity, freedom, equality, and – tolerance. One cannot simply replace tolerance with hospitality, because the former has a much richer meaning both socially and institutionally within Europe. The history of tolerance needs to be examined more carefully while we move towards desiring hospitality – to make sure that one does not collapse into the other, just as it is problematic to conflate cultures of hospitality with cultures of tolerance.

Epilogue

No need for stories, poems and myths that might shock European readers by their 'exotic hospitality' of eating sons, cooking oneself, or being hospitable to one's murderers. Ivan was at war, and he went to kill people – this is why soldiers are sent to war. Two people saved his life, by offering him food, shelter and direction, though they could well have used their host status in the opposite way. Ivan is alive today because of unconditional hospitality. 'Chechens are people. Dagestanis are people. We are bastards.' That is all he has to say today 'on the character of the nations'.

Notes

1. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Mary J. Gregor, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974.

2. See Immanuel Kant, 'To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch' (1795), trans. Ted Humphrey, Hackett Publishing, 2003, available at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/kant/kant1.htm>.

3. Kant, *Anthropology*, pp. 233–34. It is noteworthy that, according to a recent EU report, in the last two decades Germany has taken the highest number of immigrants per capita of any EU nation,

followed by the UK. Source: European Commission, *European Social Statistics: Migration*, Luxembourg: Office for the Official Publications of European Communities,*2002.

4. Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 228.

5. See I. Aristarkhova, 'Hospitality – Chora – Matrix – Cyberspace', *Filozofski Vestnik*, special issue, *The Body* (guest editor: Marina Grzinic Mauhler), 23.2 (2002), pp. 27–42.

6. Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 230.

7. See Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999; Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000; Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. and with an introduction by Gil Anidjar, New York and London: Routledge, 2002.

8. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, The Hague: Nijhoff, 2002 (1961).

9. Judges 19:23-30, cited in Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, pp. 153–54.

10. Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, p. 154.

11. See Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, p. 143; and Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*.

12. See the excellent book on this topic by Mireille Rosello, *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

13. See Stephanie Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual and Hospitality in Ancient India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

14. Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife*, p. 157.

15. Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife*, pp. 22–23.

16. Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife*, p. 25.

17. Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife*, p. 163.

18. Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife*, p. 169.

19. Giovanna Borradori, cited in N. Vossoughian, 'Conversation with Giovanna Borradori: Derrida, Habermas, and Philosophy in a Time of Terror', interview, 20 January 2004; available at <http://www.agglutinations.com/archives/000033.html> (accessed 10 February 2005).

20. Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, pp. 360–61.

21. See Aristarkhova, 'Hospitality'.

Ole Bouman Thank you, Irina. Before we go to the next presentation, may I take the opportunity to ask you a question about your main argument? It's very interesting to see how you shade this whole notion of hospitality according to certain religious, cultural and national differences. You've referred to the French, and the English, and the Germans, and also referred to differences between religions and even between continental mindsets. I think if you continue that argument you could also say that there are even styles of hospitality, there might be fashions of hospitality, and within all these dimensions, we can see many shades exist within this single concept of hospitality. I think that's productive for our debate today, because before we were talking about hospitality as a kind of monolithic thing, and you broke that

immediately. But there is one thing that might be very interesting also for us, which is how this critique of the European version of hospitality informs the European or Western practice, vis à vis culture with a big C. Does it reflect this European version of hospitality which apparently goes no further than tolerance? In Holland, England, Germany, France and maybe even in Mediterranean European states, people talk a lot about the difference between tolerance and indifference, and they are already very proud of defending tolerance and fighting indifference. You take a big step further, saying tolerance is a very poor version of hospitality. It might be a closed kind of world.

*Earlier, I asked the audience to think about dealing with the absence of Nicolas Bourriaud, absent in flesh, but not rhetorically. We have a text here. I did get a proposal, a bold proposal by **Robert Fleck** to give that lecture, and digest it immediately into something like a critique or a cultural, intellectual context of that speech. Is there anybody who would like to make another proposal? No? Then I'm very happy to invite Robert Fleck to give that speech.*

[However, Robert Fleck wants to read through Bourriaud's speech first]

Maybe, Iara Boubnova, you would like to address the audience with your views on the topic, and your recent experiences.

Manifesta: Between Host and Guest Iara Boubnova

I'm in a complicated position here, because what I wanted to do, and what I did in fact, was to put together a collection of notes about different aspects that for me have a connection with the ideas of, firstly, host cities, and, secondly, hospitality. In a way I tend to separate these two things. These notes are about franchising, and they are about domesticity; they are about the advanced intelligence that host cities and the system of hospitality usually strive for.

I won't start my talk with distributing thanks either, because I'm in the position of the guest, and guests usually give the thanks at the end. At the beginning they usually have some expectations. So, being a guest, I'm still in the phase of having expectations. However, the moment I come here I change my status, and I turn into something more powerful than a guest. I say all of that because you can see how fragile is the host-guest opposition. It is shifting all the time, and it is changing all the time more specifically whenever contemporary art is concerned. If I am a guest here, nonetheless I would say that I have pretty good experience of being a host. I'm from Sofia, Bulgaria. It's a small country with a very small artistic community. So, for me and the circle of friends and colleagues of mine, we have the pleasure