

Hospitality: Invention No. 1 in Two Voices

Hosts, Guests and hospitality in Alan Hollinghurst's The Line of Beauty

Sarah Jones & Simon Pook

🎵 Welcome. Step inside, over the threshold. In this drama of the invitation, I welcome
🎹 The guest in Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004) is aptly named Nick Guest. Among the novel's

🎵 you into my home and offer you my hospitality. You are my reader and my guest.
🎹 dealings with cocaine, sex, the AIDS crisis and the re-elections of Margaret Thatcher, the strange way

🎵 'Yes, yes, you are welcome.' 🎵.¹ Make yourself at home. Try and keep time.
🎹 in which the family persistently treat Nick as a guest could almost go unnoticed. To be a guest is to be

🎵
🎹 both inside the house and apart from the family, and we might suggest that the Feddens re-inscribe Nick's

🎵 The guest is, by definition, out of place. More accurately, to be a guest is to have no-place, to be defined
🎹 status as a guest in order to maintain this distance between them, a straight-laced Conservative family, and

🎵 by absence and by lack, since to be a guest you must fundamentally, at that moment, not be at home, be
🎹 Nick, a queer man. After all, in a move typical of Hollinghurst's love of puns and anagrams, the abject-

🎵 in a state of not-home. The 'question of being', for Derrida, is fundamental to the 'question of hospitality',
🎹 sounding 'Fedden', sounding out 'fed' and 'den', both animalistic, both base, unscrambles to spell 'defend'.

🎵 and so it is crucial to recognise the ways in which being a host or a guest constructs or is intrinsic to
🎹 Though we rarely think of it in these terms, the politeness that one shows toward a guest is defensive; as the

🎵 your being.² There is a certain strangeness at play in the experience of being a guest, your difference is
🎹 Feddens welcome Nick into the home, they inscribe him as an 'other' in need of permission. Thus, when

🎵 marked doubly: by the ways in which you fit in, and the ways in which you do not. To be a guest is to
🎹 Gerald invites Nick to 'dine with us [the family]', Nick is thrust into 'new uncertainty about his status'

submit to having your difference marked in this way, in the moments in which you feel yourself to fit within the home – he has, after all, been living and eating there for weeks.³ Should he have not? Must

in, to be in sync, you are simultaneously aware that this is unusual, and in the moments in which you he now wait for permission to eat all meals, go upstairs, speak? Badger, though a visitor, is not a guest in

feel yourself not to fit in, you feel the pressure that you should do so. In this way, to be a guest is to be this sense, he ‘roam[s]’ around the table, ‘picking up a spoon and putting it down again, then the garlic

caught continually inside and outside of your host family. From ‘host’ the metaphor of the parasite opens press, without noticing’, challenging Nick in the ‘free and easy way’ he moves through the space.⁴ Nick’s

itself up, as being a guest is often framed in terms of the parasitic: as Serres notes ‘[t]he parasite is [...] ‘guestiness’ (as we might call it) is bound up with his sexuality – the rhetoric of contagion has plagued

a guest, who exchanges his talk, praise, and flattery for food’.⁵ To be a guest is, therefore, to be extra, an Hollinghurst’s queer characters since the poems that began his writing career; in ‘Confidential Chats with

addition, to be too much, to be unable to properly inhabit a space because of the presence of another. Boys’ (1982) he describes the ‘germs’ of the ‘things in trousers’, who must be beaten off if necessary, hit to

be ‘scarred’ with a ‘candlestick’ or ‘jug’.⁶ Though this is more subtly rendered in *The Line of Beauty*, we hear

this same anxiety in the way the Feddens brandish Toby’s ‘good looking [...] thick as a jug’ girlfriend at

Nick.⁷ This essay will briefly examine the ways in which Nick’s status as a guest is maintained in the novel.



♫ This question of the guest is not simply a philosophical problem. Rather, the problems of hosting and guesting

♭: What is at stake in Nick's guestiness is perhaps more than some contemporary readers might realise. Nick's

♫ (and how we might do both ethically) are of fundamental importance to all writing that we attempt, since

♭: narrative does little to alert the modern reader to the conditions in the 1980s; his desire to own, or belong,

♫ writing is intrinsically a balancing act that mirrors the experience of the guest. We are all interlopers, playing

♭: to the Feddens' house is naively described as a 'fantasy', a childish wish which implies little consequence.⁸

♫ parasitically in a style that does not belong to us (or, at least, a style that we feel belongs to *someone else*). We

♭: This is far from the case: though the 1967 Sexual Offences Act largely decriminalised 'acts' of homosexuality

♫ write using stolen language and borrowed phrases. This might be most acutely felt when writing academically,

♭: in 'private', what was considered 'private' was contentious.⁹ According to gay rights activist Peter Tatchell,

♫ but it goes for all writing, too. The condition for all writing is to step over the threshold into someone else's

♭: in the 1980s privacy was only found in a closed off house, 'behind locked doors and windows and with

♫ house, whether we are invited in or not (and to write in a style into which we are not invited is a political act

♭: no other person present on the premises'.¹⁰ Gay sex in hotels, hostels or guest bedrooms was considered

♫ in itself). By stepping over this threshold, by using language which is always already established and fixed in

♭: illegal on this basis. As a guest, Nick is never entirely in private, and neither are the Feddens – the doors

♫ its meanings and contexts, we are forced to let the weight of that which has gone before play host to our own

♭: to the Feddens' 'white bedrooms' are almost always 'half open', and even when Nick is in the house alone

🎵 writings. We cannot write without acknowledging styles and forms that have already been written, and so to
🎹 he still notes the ‘reflections’ which watch him from the ‘polished wood’ of the expensive furniture.¹¹

🎵 write is always to leave yourself open to having your differences marked, both in the ways in which you might
🎹:

🎵 *fit in* to the history of the language that you are using (whether that is the sonnet form or the newspaper
🎹:

🎵 column or queer literature), and in the ways in which you do not fit, the ways in which you are outside.
🎹:



🎵 This ethical problem of the guest is, then, one that is fundamental to our understanding of our own
🎹: Somewhat paradoxically, the only place which is explicitly described as ‘private’ by Nick is the ‘densely

🎵 relationship with our writing. What Derrida offers us, in his thinking on hospitality, is a way of reframing
🎹: ‘hedged’ space of the communal garden.¹² In many ways, the garden forms an extension of the Fedden

🎵 the distinction between host and guest. Drawing on the French word *hôte*, which means both guest and
🎹: home, Nick often notes the ‘windows’ and ‘balcony’ overlooking the space, and it is similarly regulated by

🎵 host, Derrida blurs the line that separates this supposed dichotomy, offering us a glimpse of the ‘equivocal,
🎹: ‘keyholders’ who adhere to certain social rules.¹³ For example, when Nick invites his black lover, Leo, into

🎵 paradoxical plurality of the meaning of “host” and “guest”.¹⁴ He outlines certain paradoxes that open up the
🎹: the garden, other keyholders approach the pair to remind Nick that ‘this is a private garden’, thus enforcing

question of hospitality, firstly that the host, ‘who offers hospitality, must be the master in his house’,¹⁵ and a level of racial exclusion, a strict social code.¹⁶ However, gardens are strangely liminal spaces: in a study of

that any expression or invitation of hospitality always reaffirms the host’s own mastery.¹⁷ As I open up my garden theory, Hunt describes them as ‘places where both social convention and its unlooked-for or secretly

home to you, as I invite you to cross the threshold, I affirm my own status as master, my own mastery over plotted transgression are equally at home’, and the garden in *The Line of Beauty* is no exception.¹⁸ Marked up

my own text. And yet, by inviting you inside, by offering you my hospitality, I become ‘the hostage of the as ‘pleasure grounds’ in the original plan for the Ladbroke estate, the communal garden which runs behind

one invited, of the guest [...], the one who keeps him at home’.¹⁹ This sense of a hostage comes in part from Kensington Park Gardens is susceptible to queering.²⁰ We might even suggest that the strict social rules which

the simple fact that a host must, by the binds of law or the institution of hospitality, be *nice* to their guest, govern the garden space form a part of this sexualisation – the more Leo is forbidden to Nick, the greater the

must offer them their kindness, their hospitality. It seems ‘I owe you as my hosts an explanation’, and it is temptation: Leo, aptly, becomes a forbidden ‘fruit’.²¹ Indeed, *pleasure* is the only thing on Nick’s mind when

precisely this sense of an obligation that binds the host(age) to the guest, with the direction of movement of he leads his lover down the ‘curled’ path toward the ‘shadowy area’ behind the gardener’s hut, their footsteps

this obligation always fluid and indiscernible.²² The host, who must give their hospitality freely, must also sketching a curved line through the garden, representing the ‘swerve from the heterosexual norm’.²³ This part

in this same motion reaffirm their own property *as their own* in order to retain their status as master, and of the garden becomes the scene of Nick’s first homosexual encounter, and the transgression of the social

the guest, who seems at first to be powerless and only able to step over the threshold and passively accept conventions seem to make this even more pleasurable for Nick: '[h]e loved the scandalous idea of what he

the gift of hospitality, simultaneously has all the power, as it is the guest who holds the host to their word was doing [...] it was so bad, and it was so much the best thing he'd ever done'.²⁴ Aside from this Eden-like

and must accept the hospitality graciously. If they do not, the hospitality falls apart in 'the final reversal of mechanism of prohibition and transgression, the garden also takes on a strange resonance with parts of *Alice*

the roles of host and guest', and the host is stripped of their power.²⁵ In terms of the problem of hospitality in *Wonderland*, a quote from which is used as the novel's epigraph. In a novel full of precise geographical

in writing, then, we must ask the question of the relationship between our writing and the writing which allusions, this garden, surely the 2.82 hectare Ladbroke Square, remains unnamed, creating the same sense

has gone before: which is the host, and which is the guest? Is our writing condemned to be a parasite of dislocation central to Carroll's narrative. Curiously, Alice finds herself, like Nick, in possession of a 'little

on the language which has gone before, or does our own writing play host to this language, graciously golden key' to a 'beautiful garden' of a power-crazed King and Queen.²⁶ Here, we might draw an unfavourable

allowing it new meanings and new contexts? It is impossible to say for sure. This is to collapse the boundary correspondence to Gerald and Rachel, even comparing the Cheshire Cat with Catherine, nicknamed 'Cat',

between inside and outside, to write and live (and writing is, of course, a kind of living) from the threshold. 'Puss', 'The Cat that Walks by Herself' – with the painfully 'big smile'.²⁷ It is through the strange space of the

garden that Hollinghurst demonstrates the marginalised position of the homosexual community in the 1980s.



♩ I am bound by polite conversation; I cannot ignore what is happening downstairs. I work to find common ground

♭: In *The Line of Beauty*, architecture is twinned with music. Home sings, families live in harmony, and the

♩ as I shuffle through your notes. I turn to the works of Alan Hollinghurst, whose novels can be seen as an example of

♭: Feddens are repeatedly described as having a song. Nick hears the ‘family note’ in the speeches at Toby’s

♩ this kind of threshold writing. In a 1998 interview, Hollinghurst described his own work as an ‘insidious inside

♭: birthday party, a note described as ‘strong and sentimental’, words which not only imply Conservative values,

♩ job’, mobilising parasitic rhetoric to elaborate his own guest-like relation to the mainstream (‘straight’) canon.²⁸

♭: but phonetically perform the sound for the reader.²⁹ Both begin with seductive, sibilant phonemes, before

♩ The heavily intertextual nature of Hollinghurst’s novels works to emphasise and exaggerate the reader’s

♭: rounding out into echoing, brassy vowels which, like the ‘au sound’ Catherine ‘can’t bear’, would ring with

♩ guestiness (this is your word, I am ‘accommodating’ you in this higher linguistic space) within the text.³⁰

♭: Received Pronunciation.³¹ It is also worth noting that both words end on less attractive phonemes – the glottal

♩ Hollinghurst has always been interested in intertextual links, puns and allusions; before his first novel

♭: stop at the end of ‘strong’ is particularly displeasing – and we might read the discordant (and somewhat ugly)

♩ was published he worked as an editor for the *Times Literary Supplement* weekly competition and *Nemo’s*

♭: end to the narrative into this *lump-in-the-throat* sound. Furthermore, the architecture of the house amplifies

♩ *Almanac*, which were both fiendishly difficult literary quizzes that featured ‘bookish puzzles, teasing

♭: this rhythm – if the Feddens sing out a ‘note’, the house accompanies on the bass. At the start of the narrative

♫ citations and [...] anagrams'.³² In the middle of *The Line of Beauty* nestles an allusion to 'Denis Beckwith',
♭ this is quite subtle, as Nick walks through the garden with Leo he notes the 'intermitted rhythm of the glowing

♫ an important character in another of Hollinghurst's books, *The Swimming-Pool Library*. Denis does not
♭ windows' of the home from which he and his queer lover are excluded.³³ However, as the narrative progresses,

♫ actually appear in *The Line of Beauty*, but is mentioned in a passing comment about Gerald's birthday party:
♭ and Nick's status as a guest becomes increasingly strange and discordant, the architecture more literally speaks:

♫
♭

♫ [Nick] knew he could do quite a funny sketch about Gerald's growing preoccupation with the
♭ Funny how sound travelled through an old house – through blocked-off chimney

♫ concert idea, which had come to a peak of competitive angst when Denis Beckwith, a handsome
♭ spaces, along joists. A rhythm almost inaudible to the cautious couple or the

♫ old saurian of the right enjoying fresh acclaim these days had hired Kiri te Kanawa to sing
♭ unsuspecting soloist who made it relayed like a workmanlike thump through

♫ Mozart and Strauss at his eighty-fifth birthday party. But something made him tread carefully.³⁴
♭ the ceiling below, or, as in this case, a busy squeak from the couple next door.³⁵

♫
♭

♫ To the reader of *The Line of Beauty*, the ambiguous 'something' which makes Nick cautious could (merely)
♭ In this scene, Nick and Wani, who have snuck away from a concert to have sex in Nick's room, can hear

♫ be his impulse to be polite – he is, in this moment, heart-wrenchingly protective of the Feddens’ reputations.
♭ Jasper and Catherine ‘at it’ in the adjoining bedroom, and the house is literally amplifying their ‘act’ of

♫ To a reader of *The Swimming-Pool Library*, however, this ‘something’ is something else entirely: to read that
♭ heterosexuality.³⁶ Unlike Nick, Wani spends much of the novel pretending to be straight, and here he

♫ Gerald is in any way aligned with Denis Beckwith, let alone in competition with him, sets up a horrifying
♭ quickly mimics its heterosexual rhythm in the ‘little thrusts against his [Nick’s] face’.³⁷ However, this is a

♫ structure of dramatic irony. What we know from *The Swimming-Pool Library* is that the Beckwiths’ upper-class
♭ straight ‘fantasy’ which Nick ‘can’t quite share’ – Nick’s ‘dick’ remains ‘buttoned away in a hard diagonal’,

♫ status and wealth was built on Denis’ ‘*crusade to eradicate the male vice*’, a campaign in the 1950s which saw
♭ aesthetically and sexually at odds with the heterosexual rhythms of the house and Fedden family.³⁸

♫ hundreds of men jailed for homosexuality.³⁹ Not only does the mention of Denis’ ‘fresh acclaim’ here hint of
♭

♫ rising hostility to queer men at the start of the AIDS crisis, but Gerald’s association with Denis foreshadows
♭

♫ the homophobic reaction of the Feddens at the end of *The Line of Beauty*. By using dramatic irony in this
♭

♫ way, Hollinghurst is emphasising the reader’s position outside of the text, keeping us at bay, on the doorstep.
♭



Similarly, we might find resonances with *The Line of Beauty* in *The Swimming-Pool Library*, despite the 20 year gap between the publication of the two novels. In his study on Hollinghurst's influences, Allan Johnson notes the writer's reaction against the 'less dynamic experience of "historical precedence"' and engagement with the 'affective value of pastness' and the 'forward momentum' of influence – here, we find evidence of and Heathcote see them as the twinned spaces of the cellars, both spaces are 'bastions of the sinister, the

room is in the attic space, a part of the house designated as the 'children's zone', set apart from the more serious, adult space below.⁴⁰ Architects and writers have noted that attics are strange places. Both Bachelard

Hollinghurst realising this in the relationships between his own works.⁴¹ In *The Swimming-Pool Library*, deliberately buried or forgotten', home only to the 'unwanted'.⁴² When Nick descends into the basement

Will Beckwith visits the swimming pool and notes the PA system cutting through the 'continuous relay of music'.⁴³ Though the PA system is used to remind patrons of pool policy, or to call members to the phone

at the end of the novel (he is looking for old wine boxes in which to pack his belongings), he feels himself enter the 'subconscious of the house', a 'dim museum' of things wilfully ignored by the Feddens, such as

or reception, the 'camp voice' queers these messages, 'wringing the wildest insinuations out of words such as guest or occupant'.⁴⁵ This 'camp voice' may as well be Hollinghurst's own – *The Line of Beauty* is wholly

the traces of previous tenants and the 'toolboxes' of the domestic help.⁴⁴ Aside from Nick's descent beneath the floor at the end, the basement is only mentioned one other time in the narrative; at the very beginning,

concerned with wringing insinuations from the word 'guest' to the extent that it becomes personified – enter Gerald refers to the basement as the '*trou de glorie*', the 'glory hole', denoting a room in which 'things are

♫ Nick Guest. ‘Camp’ as a sensibility is described by Sontag as ‘a certain mode of aestheticism’ which responds to
♭ heaped together without any attempt at order’.⁴⁶ However, this name carries alternate meanings, a ‘glory

♫ things in terms of their artifice or stylisation, it is, in short, concerned with ‘wringing insinuations’ out of the
♭ hole’ can be a ‘cavernous opening or pit into a mine’, thus literally placing a Conservative MP above a

♫ artificial objects it takes as its touchpoints.⁴⁷ Its hallmark is the ‘spirit of extravagance’, and we see ‘the curved
♭ miner pit in the topography of the house, creating a political microcosm which anticipates the miner strikes

♫ line, the extravagant gesture’ resonating and vibrating throughout Hollinghurst’s novel.⁴⁸ Though this self-
♭ of 1984-5.⁴⁹ Less officially, but perhaps more commonly, ‘glory hole’ is a term of sexual slang, normally

♫ reflexive movement may seem a stretch, *The Line of Beauty* is, in so many ways, a book that exists between the
♭ associated with gay men cruising for sex in public bathrooms. The slang term’s literal and literary ‘lowness’

♫ lines of *The Swimming-Pool Library*; to read one is to set the other humming, as Hollinghurst himself sees the
♭ in the house emphasises the repression of Nick’s sexuality, and emphasises his peripheral position in the

♫ intertextual links between his novels as inherently musical, describing the first four books as a ‘symphony’.⁵⁰
♭ home – he is consciously held above or below, never permitted to occupy the same line as the Fedden family.



♫ The question of hospitality is bound up with questions of the institution. Hospitality always appeals to a
♭ Throughout the novel, Nick is concerned with finding or experiencing beauty, and the terms on which

♫ law or an institution for its ratification, as Derrida suggests, ‘it is a human right, this right to hospitality’,
♭ he negotiates this are explicitly bound up with his homosexuality. At a party, Nick notes that Leo, even

♫ ‘hospitality arises from an obligation, a right, and a duty all regulated by law’.⁵¹ Another paradox, then:
♮ in his absence, becomes ‘the element, the invisible context’ for how Nick perceives the world, he cannot

♫ hospitality, which seems in theory to be a fundamental right, an intrinsic and unassailable condition of
♮ look at paintings without thinking how he might ‘[explain] them to Leo, his grateful pupil’.⁵² This is a

♫ our individual existence in society, a concept which trumps all institutions and laws, which comes from
♮ more radical move than Hollinghurst is often credited for: examining beauty in terms of homosexual desire

♫ *outside*, is, at the same time, reliant on many institutions and laws to affirm its existence, ‘the law of the
♮ strikes a discord with the rhetorical tradition of beauty. When Nick trails his hands over his lover’s back, he

♫ household,’ ‘of a place,’ ‘of identity,’ of proper names, languages and borders.⁵³ This paradoxical, confused
♮ asserts that it is time for a ‘new *Analysis of Beauty*’, pointedly dropping the definitive ‘The’ from Hogarth’s

♫ relationship with an institution is the space in which this essay makes its presence known and finds its
♮ title. Nick’s problem is with Hogarth’s examples – they’re ‘wrong’ – ‘harps and branches, bones rather than

♫ precarious home. This essay, this text, seems, like hospitality, to be something which might threaten or
♮ flesh’.⁵⁴ However, if we return to Hogarth’s texts, we find that the examples are not only not ‘flesh’, but

♫ trouble the boundaries of the institution. Having two signatures, in this institution in which the signature
♮ are overtly concerned with the sexualised *female* body. The ‘bones’ Nick mentions are ‘whale bones’ used

♫ is the ultimate affirmation: yes, yes, this work is my own, I am its sole creator, is a marker of a relationship
♮ in a woman’s stay – the precursor to the corset – and, according to Hogarth, ‘truly a shell of well-varied

♫ which must always be in tension. Similarly, having a text made up of two (or possibly more, infinite – this
♮ contents’.⁵⁵ The line of beauty thus becomes the ideal female line and, furthermore, ‘prove[s] at the same

♫ is always possible) voices puts us at risk, given the University institution's own guidance on plagiarism and
♭: time how much the form of a woman's body surpasses that of a man'.⁵⁶ This heteronormative rhetoric is

♫ collusion, which emphasises the idea of keeping to your own voice or tone. We can again look to Hollinghurst
♭: not just confined to Hogarth's work, but is still pertinent in writings on architectural beauty. This year,

♫ here, comparing Nick's relationship to the institutions he encounters, which would be a certain kind of
♭: the work of the late architect Zaha Hadid, hailed 'Queen of the Curve', was described in terms of the

♫ wealthy Conservative government, a class system, sexuality – in all of these ways Nick is kept outside of these
♭: modern feminine ideal: 'seductive, voluptuous, speaking of an uncorseted ease'.⁵⁷ Valuing women neither

♫ institutions, and yet at the same time he exists inside of them, on their borders or edges, on the threshold.
♭: aesthetically nor sexually, Nick sees the line of beauty in the 'double curve' of the 'lower back[s] and muscular

♫
♭: bottoms' of the men he desires.⁵⁸ In this way, Nick is queering the tradition of the aesthetic curved line by

♫
♭: associating it with the homosexual masculine form, as opposed to its traditional link with the feminine form.



♫ Something has happened. I'm sitting here, at my computer, typing into this document, and something's
♭: Something has happened. My computer pinged to tell me you'd been working, changing, editing something

♫ happened. An initialled pop-up box has told me that you're looking at this document, right now, in this
♭: that technically belongs to both of us. I wasn't going to look (yet) but you began this by welcoming me

♫ moment of writing (every moment of writing imagines this reader, this future reader, who is of course
♭ in – brought me in over the threshold and into this space. I can't tell if this is overstepping the mark

♫ always already present, but this is not just or not simply imagination). My computer has welcomed you,
♭ – am I treading on your toes? If not now, then what if I start writing solely about myself? My own

♫ welcomed you in, over the threshold which exists both digitally and physically, into my home, my text,
♭ interests? Vampires? We might recall how Dracula teeters on the threshold of a house, bound by 'nature's

♫ my words. We can work collaboratively here, in this space, we each type for the other and for ourselves.
♭ laws' of hospitality, unable to cross without an invitation.⁵⁹ He's the worst guest, a nightmare of a guest,

♫ We are here, together, here 'at the heart of a hospitality that always leaves something to be desired.'⁶⁰
♭ embodying the fear that you've accidentally let in a parasite, a monster, and, worst of all, that you're

♫
♭ now responsible for his actions, you're to blame for whatever happens now, because you invited him in.



Simon: So which of us in the monster?

Sarah: Well, do you think one of us has taken over?

Simon: I don't think so. We've written in response to each other, allowing the treble and the bass lines to take on aspects of the other's writing styles, converging in moments of agreement, diverting to create a discord.

Sarah: And that's at the crux of Hollinghurst's novel – Nick can cohere with the Feddens but at the expense of his identity: his difference is silenced.

Simon: And that's exactly our conceit, isn't it? We allow the guest to speak, we let Nick talk back, and yet at the same time we're troubling the idea that you could be simply a guest or a host, because our boundaries are always shifting and in dialogue with the other.

Sarah: Yes, there's two of us on the same page, reading from the same song sheet.

Simon: And the metaphor of music is important, too.

Sarah: We take our cue there from Hollinghurst, from the family resonances and from the love chord, that's 'high and low at once, an abysmal pizzicato [...] and above it a hair raising sheen of strings'⁶¹ –

Simon: So one of us abysmal and the other is hair raising? But while we're talking of cues, it's worth marking another tradition that we're inhabiting and that is offering us hospitality.

Sarah: Yes, there's a vast history, too many to mention – from Plato to Vivienne Westwood.⁶²

Simon: And into Clare and Stephen's introduction.

Sarah: But not all dialogues are the same. In the tradition of dialogues there's rarely actually two people talking. Peter Womack makes a point about the 'differentiated speakers' of a dialogue as a 'literary device, a way of writing an essay so it appears to "enquire", to "investigate", and to "discuss"'.⁶³ The people are made up. The whole thing's a hoax. I'm not even sure which one of us is writing this.

Simon: Dialogue is a way for two voices to co-exist in a text without being forced into agreement; dialogue and hospitality cohere. Derrida's *Of Hospitality* is framed as a two-column dialogue in which Anne Dufourmantelle 'invites' Derrida to 'respond', and yet the text which is called the 'invitation' is actually a commentary on a transcript of a seminar Derrida had already given, which is framed as his 'response'.⁶⁴ Both sides of the conversation are constructed, aware of their own artifice, and therefore vulnerable.

Sarah: Well, for us, post-Kristeva, Bakhtin and Barthes, no text ever really has one voice, with each word it's humming with contexts, allusions, quotation - voices that aren't our own. Aren't we always vulnerable in that sense? There's been a quote in my head the whole time we've been writing, it's from the Bible, or Barthes' 'From Work to Text'. A single man is being possessed by many demons and, when asked his name, he says '*My name is legion, for we are many*'.⁶⁵ Even then the idea of having more than one voice seems to be inherently demonic – something to be exorcised, rid of, regulated by –

Simon: An exam board? Our tutors are taught to look for places in which our voice slips into someone else's, where we sound like we're hosting things we shouldn't be.

Sarah: And we live in an age of collaborative writing, we're all writing together on Wikipedia and Google Docs.

Simon: And so is technology somehow more hospitable, does it offer more opportunity for hospitality?

Sarah: But that's too optimistic, isn't it? We're in an age where politicians fight over who has to accept refugees, we're having what you might call a crisis of hospitality.

Simon: And is this a response or a reaction to the openness or collaborative work that we've identified? Are people resisting hospitality, closing in on themselves, shutting the borders and raising the walls?

Sarah and Simon (together): And we're about to hit another kind of wall – the word count.

Endnotes

- ¹ Inviting (ימזח, neemzh) comes from the etymological root time (נמז, namz), the root נמז can also be found in making-time and keeping-time, implying at least an etymologically shared root. Clumsy transliterations are my own, and are provided simply to make things easier for the English speaking author. This would certainly give a link between the idea of inviting someone in, and both the sense of making time (for them), and making time or keeping time in terms of being *on time*. 'invite, 1.' and 'time, 1.' in *The Oxford English-Hebrew Dictionary* (Oxford & NY: OUP, 1996), p.471 and p.971
- ² Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), p.9
- ³ Alan Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty* (London: Picador, 2005), p.25
- ⁴ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.119
- ⁵ Lawrence Schehr, Introduction to Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence Schehr (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1982), p.x
- ⁶ Alan Hollinghurst, 'Confidential Chats with Boys', in: *Confidential Chats with Boys* (Oxford: Sycamore Press, 1982), p.1-7. The lines 'Keep your eye on that jug, / that candlestick, and when he moves, / hit him to leave him scarred: / scar the skunk and coward for life' ventriloquize the advice given to Hollinghurst as a child. In an interview with Christopher Bigsby, Hollinghurst explains the origins of the poem: 'I think my parents found it rather hard to actually sort of broach the question of the facts of life [...] they'd been leant a book by a well-meaning aunt called *Confidential Chats with Boys* by Doctor [William Lee Howard] which was sort of left around for me to find. [...] I knew already it was complete nonsense. It was full of the most terrifying advice. [...] If you have to share a bed with another boy, I remember [it saying], don't fall asleep. Keep your eyes fixed on some heavy object such as a jug or a candlestick and if he makes any move hit him with it. Hit him, it said, to leave him scarred for life.' See Alan Hollinghurst, 'The UEA Literary Festival', interview by Christopher Bigsby, November 11, 2011, British Archive for Contemporary Writing, University of East Anglia.
- ⁷ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.64
- ⁸ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.31
- ⁹ 'Sexual Offences Act 1967: Chapter 60: An Act to amend the law of England and Wales relating to homosexual acts', *Legislation.gov.uk*, accessed May 1, 2016, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/60/pdfs/ukpga_19670060_en.pdf
- ¹⁰ Geraldine Bedell, 'Coming out of the dark ages', *The Guardian*, June 24, 2007, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2007/jun/24/communities.gayrights>
- ¹¹ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.5
- ¹² Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.15
- ¹³ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.37
- ¹⁴ Gregory L. Ulmer, 'The Object of Post-Criticism in ed. Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (New York: The New Press, 1983), p.100
- ¹⁵ Derrida uses 'he' to refer to the host to mark briefly the gender politics that are at work in the notion of host: it is inseparable from the notion that the man would be the master of the house. As he notes, the host is 'male in the first instance' (Jacques Derrida, 'Hostipitality', trans. Barry Stocker with Forbes Morlock, in *Angelaki*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2000))
- ¹⁶ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.41
- ¹⁷ Derrida, 'Hostipitality', p. 14
- ¹⁸ John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p.176
- ¹⁹ Derrida, 'Hostipitality', p. 9
- ²⁰ The Ladbroke Association, 'Communal Gardens of the Ladbroke Estate', March 9, 2016, accessed April 20, 2016, http://www.ladbrokeassociation.info/CommunalgardensoftheLadbrokeestate_000.htm#LadbrokeSquare
- ²¹ The emphasis here is mine. 'Fruit', like 'bender' and 'whatsit', appear as alternatives for 'homosexual' in the novel. See Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.59, p.176 and p.280
- ²² Derrida, 'Hostipitality', p.6
- ²³ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.15; and Georges Letissier, 'Queer, Quaint and Camp: Alan Hollinghurst's own return to the English tradition', *Études anglaises*, 60.2 (2007), p.199
- ²⁴ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.39-40
- ²⁵ Derrida, 'Hostipitality', p. 9
- ²⁶ Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (London: Macmillan, 1959), p.100-1
- ²⁷ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.7, p.21, p.135, p.149
- ²⁸ Alan Hollinghurst, 'The UEA Literary Festival', interview by Andrew Motion, February 24, 1998, British Archive for Contemporary Writing, University of East Anglia. Interestingly, Hollinghurst and Motion shared a house in Oxford as students.
- ²⁹ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.71
- ³⁰ David Crystal has done interesting studies on dialectical variation, examining what happens when two people with different dialects (markers of their differing backgrounds, social status, education, etc.) engage in conversation. He found that, in positive exchanges, they often began mimicking each other in a process called 'accommodation', where the participants mirrored the other's accent, register, or lexical choice in order to make the other feel at home in the exchange. Borrowing from this interesting branch of linguistics, we might wonder how this can be dramatized in a *written* dialogue, whether we could similarly pick up another's dialect, or mimic another's *writerly* practice in order to welcome another voice, for or instance, mirroring sentence structure, punctuation habits, or, indeed, the voracity with which another references other works. See: David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of The English Language*, 2nd Edition, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.298

- ³¹ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.135
- ³² Clare Connors, 'Alan Hollinghurst' in *British Writers*, ed. J. Parini (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005), pp.122-3
- ³³ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.37
- ³⁴ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.246
- ³⁵ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.257
- ³⁶ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.258
- ³⁷ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.258
- ³⁸ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.258
- ³⁹ Alan Hollinghurst, *The Swimming-Pool Library* (London: Vintage, 2006), p.260
- ⁴⁰ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.4
- ⁴¹ Allan Johnson, *Alan Hollinghurst and the Vitality of Influence* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp.3-5
- ⁴² Edwin Heathcote, 'Cellars & Attics', *The Meaning of Home* (London: Francis Lincoln, 2012), pp.67-71; and Gaston Bachelard, 'The House. From Cellar to Garret. The Significance of the Hut', *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at how We Experience Intimate Places*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1994), pp.3-38
- ⁴³ Hollinghurst, *The Swimming-Pool Library*, p.12
- ⁴⁴ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.492
- ⁴⁵ Hollinghurst, *The Swimming-Pool Library*, p.12
- ⁴⁶ 'glory-hole, n.', OED Online, last modified March, 2016, accessed April 3, 2016
- ⁴⁷ Susan Sontag, 'Notes on "Camp"' in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Picador, 1966) p.277
- ⁴⁸ Susan Sontag, 'Notes on "Camp"', p.283, p.284
- ⁴⁹ 'glory-hole, n.', OED Online, last modified March, 2016, accessed April 3, 2016
- ⁵⁰ Alan Hollinghurst, 'The UEA Literary Festival', interview by Andrew Motion, February 24, 1998, British Archive for Contemporary Writing, University of East Anglia
- ⁵¹ Derrida, 'Hostipitality', p. 4
- ⁵² Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.134
- ⁵³ Derrida, 'Hostipitality', p. 4
- ⁵⁴ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.200
- ⁵⁵ William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, ed. Ronald Paulson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), p.49
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ Editorial, 'The Guardian view on Zaha Hadid: reluctant queen of the 3D curve', *The Guardian*, April 1, 2016, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/01/the-guardian-view-on-zaha-hadid-reluctant-queen-of-the-3d-curve>
- ⁵⁸ This happens most obviously with Leo, Toby and Wani. See Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.200, p.326 and p.423
- ⁵⁹ The representation of the codes or rules of hospitality as 'natural laws' in Stoker's narrative would give a sense that hospitality was somehow innate, or existing outside of social construction. This is given an additional political dimension if we consider that the speaker here, Van Helsing, is also a guest in England, a migrant invited by the 'Crew of Light'. See Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, ed. Maurice Hindle (London: Penguin, 2003), p.255
- ⁶⁰ Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p.127
- ⁶¹ Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, p.138
- ⁶² Vivienne Westwood, 'Active Resistance to Propaganda', *The Guardian*, May 12, 2007, accessed May 6, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2007/may/12/fashion.features4>
- ⁶³ Peter Womack, *Dialogue* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2011), p.9
- ⁶⁴ Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, n/p
- ⁶⁵ Mark 5:9, quoted in: Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in: *The Rustle of Language*, trans. R. Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), p.60