

*William Morris's Utopia of Strangers: Victorian Medievalism and the Ideal of Hospitality* by Marcus Waithe. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006. xv, 218 pp.+ 11 b/w illus. ISBN 1-84384-088-X. \$85.00; £50.00.

In his *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), a comprehensive defence of philosophy's ethical vocation, the Earl of Shaftesbury referred to "the noble Affection, which, in antient Language, was term'd Hospitality, viz. extensive Love of Mankind, and relief of Strangers." For Shaftesbury, the idea of hospitality and its ideal – the descriptive and normative dimensions of the term – are effectively inseparable. An act of hospitality is, so to speak, actively rather than simply passively receptive. It is *extensive*, to use Shaftesbury's delightful adjective, and in a double sense: the host extends a hand to the guest and so extends or expands Love of Mankind. At the present time, almost three hundred years after this celebration of the "noble Affection," hospitality might be identified as intensive rather than extensive. Like farming or fishing, it has been industrialized. This is the epoch of corporate hospitality – of hospitality drinks, hospitality suites, and the hospitality industry itself. In late capitalist society, hospitality is associated less with Love of Mankind, let alone the relief of Strangers – illegal immigrants, for instance – than with the cold-blooded blandishments employed by corporations to seduce potential investors. The ethical responsibility that both the Romantics and the post-Romantics ascribed to hospitality, even if highly problematic, if not impossible, in practice, has been cleansed from the term's contemporary, compound, corporate forms. The idea of hospitality has been de-idealized, de-ethicized.

In spite of this process of disenchantment, or perhaps partly because of it, the idea of hospitality, even the ideal of hospitality, has become increasingly popular in recent studies in the humanities. Contemporary interest in hospitality is a symptomatic expression of the so-called "ethical turn" taken in the social sciences since the 1990s. This "ethical turn," which has succeeded a "linguistic turn" and a "cultural turn," represents a revival of commitment to the social and political responsibilities of philosophy, at least in its "continental" forms, after the programmatic playfulness characteristic of theoretical discourse in the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, the prominence of ethics in the social sciences at present is a significant aspect of the decline of postmodernism – both cause and effect. And the reappropriation of ancient concepts of hospitality, in so far as it constitutes a challenge to the hedonism of the last three or four decades, has played an important part in this process. Emmanuel Lévinas, whom Jacques Derrida thanked in his funeral speech from 1996 for leaving behind "an immense treatise of hospitality" in the form of *Totality and Infinity* (1961), has been especially influential in this respect. So has Derrida himself, though he is often still blamed for the fact that some post-structuralists triumphantly