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# Hospitality, Subjectivity and Ceremony: Glee Confronts Hetero-normativity

Anne Cranny-Francis

*University of Technology, Sydney*

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# Hospitality, Subjectivity and Ceremony: Glee Confronts Heteronormativity

## **Abstract**

As Matei Candea and Giovanni da Col note in their Preface to a special issue of the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (2012), the last decade has seen a resurgence of interest in the notion of hospitality: From Levinas's phenomenological ethics and Serres's study of parasitic relationships, through to Agamben's musings on 'inclusive exclusion' and Derrida's invention of the neologism 'hostipitality' (ii). They note also that political, literary and legal scholars have approached this topic through studies of the roles of host and guest, which has led to theorizations of related concerns including migration, postcoloniality, sovereignty and international law. This article also approaches the concept of hospitality by analyzing the roles of host and guest in a specific text, namely, an episode of the television series, *Glee* (2009–). My interest is how the characters in the episode articulate and embody these roles, and how their interactions are used to challenge conventional understandings of subjectivity and of hospitality. In particular, I consider their characterization by reference to Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of being as always fundamentally relational (being-with) and as always negotiated in relation to others (being singular plural). (Nancy 2000: 30)

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Anne Cranny-Francis

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## 1 Beginnings

Etymologically, the word 'hospitality'— defined as the 'act of being

hospitable’—derives from the Latin *hospitalitem* (nominative *hospitalitis*) or ‘friendliness to guests’; this term, in turn derives from *hospes* (genitive *hospitis*) or ‘guest’. (Online Etymology Dictionary) Interestingly, and significantly for this study, the word ‘host’ also originally derived from the Latin, *hospes*, and meant ‘the lord of strangers’ (Online Etymology Dictionary), which incorporates a power relationship (‘lord’) into its fundamental meaning. The same word (‘host’) when derived from a different but related Latin word *hostis*, also means ‘enemy, foreigner, stranger’, as in ‘the host outside the door’ or ‘the enemy host’. (Online Etymology Dictionary) The two words, host and guest, are related through their reference to the notion of the stranger/enemy (root, *ghostis*). In other words, ‘host’ can mean the powerful one who offers hospitality and also the ‘enemy, foreigner or stranger’ who requests hospitality.

Thus, the meaning and practice of hospitality is founded in ambivalence: is the host in the sole position of power and able to decide how to wield that power? Or does the stranger who is offered hospitality as a result receive the power to take advantage of the host?

To complicate this derivation further, the word ‘host’ also refers to the consecrated bread in Christian communion, which is (literally, for Catholic and Anglo-Catholic believers) the body of Christ. This word, ‘host’ is derived from the Latin, *hostia* meaning ‘sacrifice’ but also said to be derived ultimately from the original Latin root for host in its meaning as ‘stranger, enemy’. In its meaning as (consecrated) host it can be read as deconstructing the apparently contradictory derivation and meanings of ‘host’ as both patron/provider and stranger/supplicant, which proceeds from a monadic (essentially individualist) reading of the roles of host and stranger. In the process of transubstantiation the host as the ‘body of Christ’ enters the body of the believer, re-creating the believer as a hybrid divine/human being; the believer is in a state of *being-with* the divine. When this process is read onto the relationship of host and guest in the act of hospitality, host and guest are imbricated in a relationship of mutual formation, a *being-with* that includes the other. So the subjectivity of the provider/

host, for example, is constituted in and as a *being-with* that includes the stranger. Accordingly, the host's relationship with the stranger is not an externalized act that is dependent on the host, as more or less hospitable, if you like; rather, the subjectivity of the host is constituted in that interaction or relationship.

This notion of subjectivity can be understood by reference to the work of Jean-Luc Nancy in his study, *Being Singular Plural*. As Nancy defines:

Being is with Being; it does not ever recover itself, but it is near to itself, beside itself, in touch with itself, its very self, in the paradox of that proximity where distancing ... and strangeness are revealed. We are each time an other, each time with others (2000: 5).

For Nancy the notion of a monadic, singular or isolated subject is not viable; subjectivity is created in negotiation with others. We find ourselves in the process of identifying that which is strange or different, which is not us. Accordingly, host and guest not only recognize each other, but also become who they are in the negotiation of their relationship. They cannot choose not to have that relationship because even that choice is a negotiation of the relationship between them.

I am going to explore this further through a consideration of characters and events from the American television series, *Glee*, which focuses on characters who are outside the social mainstream. In particular I will look at the episode 'Furt' (2010) which addresses a range of issues related to sexuality, relationships and personal responsibility.

### **2 *Glee*: a postmodern musical**

Ryan Murphy, *Glee's* producer and writer, describes the series as a 'postmodern musical'. (Wyatt 2009: online) The setting for *Glee* is an American secondary school, McKinley High. The stories revolve around a music (glee) club, mostly composed of students who do not fit in with the mainstream and who are regularly abused by their peers

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as 'Losers'. These students regularly have drinks thrown in their faces and may also be victims of physical assault; gay student, Kurt Hummel (Chris Colfer) is thrown into a large rubbish bin while wheelchair-bound Artie Abrams (Kevin McHale) is locked in the toilet.

The glee club includes students who are 'outsiders' for a variety of reasons: for example, they may be gay, bisexual, Asian, Black, Goth, overweight, or wheelchair-bound. The club also includes some wayward members of the school's football team who have joined for more complex reasons – such as Noah 'Puck' Puckerman (Mark Salling) who joined because of problems with his home-life, or Finn Hudson (Cory Monteith) who was blackmailed into joining by glee club director, teacher William 'Mr Shue' Schuester (Matthew Morrison).

The plot lines focus around the lives of students and staff. The students deal with issues such as disability, teenage pregnancy, as well as sexuality, the meaning of beauty and of ambition. The teachers also have their own issues including thwarted ambition, the meaning of love and of commitment, dealing with difference, working with bureaucracy and coping with limited school funding. Each episode uses music to explore the significance of these issues; students (and occasionally staff) sing (individually and collectively) a variety of well-known pop songs, classics or show tunes which accurately express their inner-lives. The music is used in a distinctly postmodern way to self-reflexively explore their embodied experience of being gay or Asian or Black or confined to a wheelchair or in an unhappy marriage. Thus the issues are not explored as social or cultural abstractions; instead, each individuated experience becomes an instance of qualitative research, an individual ethnographic study of the everyday impact of that issue or concern.

### **3 The Marriage Scene**

One key scene from the series includes a public act of hospitality, performed in a way that confronts mainstream values and attitudes about gender and sexuality. It involves an interaction between two of the main characters (Kurt Hummel and Finn Hudson), though almost all of the other main characters appear in the scene. This scene occurs in

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Season 2, Episode 8, 'Furt' at the marriage reception for Burt Hummel and Carole Hudson, the formerly single-parents of glee club members, Kurt and football team quarterback, Finn. The episode follows a series of stories about gender and sexuality throughout Series 1 and 2, which focus particularly on gay student, Kurt who publicly 'comes out' in Season 1, Episode 4 'Preggers'.

After his coming out Kurt is harassed even more brutally by members of the football team, who are the glee club's most vocal detractors. In many of these episodes Finn is caught between his loyalty to the football team and his friends in the glee club. In Season 1, Episode 20 'Theatricality' Finn learns that his mother, Carole and Kurt's father, Burt are a couple and have decided to move in together. This episode is a learning experience for both Finn and Kurt. When Carole and Finn move into Burt's home, Kurt is at first overjoyed by the prospect of sharing accommodation (a basement bedroom) with his handsome, athletic stepbrother. Using a version of shaming to silence Finn, Kurt creates a home environment that is sexually provocative and disturbing for Finn, and reacts with outrage when Finn accuses him of compromising him sexually. Burt steps in at this point to explain to Kurt that he must show Finn the same respect he requires from other people, acknowledging his sexual specificity. At the same time, however, Finn has to acknowledge that he has known about Kurt's harassment by other members of the football team but has simply avoided being involved, sometimes by staying out on the football field when the abuse was taking place. Burt argues to Finn that this act of avoidance is also a choice: it is an act that is formative of Finn's own character, as well as a betrayal of Kurt. The episode ends with Finn joining the glee club in an *homage* to Lady Gaga and confronting the football team with their prejudice.

The exploration of sexuality and gender continues in Series 2. Kurt's most violent assailant is David Karofsky, whose homophobic taunts and physical intimidation are making Kurt's attendance at the school untenable. In Series 2, Episode 6 ('Never Been Kissed') this abuse is partly explained when Karofsky's physical attack on Kurt becomes a

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reluctant kiss, and Karofsky is revealed as a closeted gay man. Kurt promises not to reveal Karofsky's sexuality under a threat of death by his shamed assailant. Shortly before the wedding scene (and in the same episode) an incident occurs that reveals to Burt Hummel Karofsky's threats against his son. Kurt is using the facilities of the glee club room to teach his father and Finn how to waltz so that they can perform the bridal dance with their partners at the wedding. Kurt takes the 'female' role in order to teach them the corresponding 'male' role. When Kurt is seen in this pose by Karofsky as he passes the room, he mocks Kurt with a 'limp-wrist' gesture. Finn's angry reaction causes Burt to question the two boys; it is soon revealed that not only is Karofsky one of the ring-leaders in the abuse of Kurt, but he also threatened Kurt's life. Burt demands a meeting with the school principal, Karofsky and his father, which results in the abusive student's expulsion from the school.

Thus the marriage between Burt and Carole takes place in the midst of what has been a very confronting series of exchanges. The wedding goes ahead and Finn performs his designated role as best man. At the reception, he begins his speech by celebrating the marriage and his admiration for his mother, and he then talks about his stepbrother, Kurt in terms that confront his earlier hetero-normative behaviours.<sup>1</sup> In particular, Finn says to Kurt that 'quite frankly no-one has shown me as much as you about what it means to be a man', a statement that confronts hetero-normative assumptions about the manliness of gay men. He follows this speech by singing the Bruno Mars song, 'Just the Way You Are', which includes the chorus:

When I see your face, there's not  
a thing that I would change  
Cause you're amazing, just the way you are  
And when you smile, the whole world stops and  
stares for a while  
Cause girl you're amazing, just the way you are.

Finn begins by addressing the song to his girlfriend, Rachel Berry (Lea Michele) but then switches to address his brother, Kurt. As he sings to Kurt, he also dances the bridal waltz with him. This embodied



action signifies Finn's new understanding of and respect for his brother's specificity as well as his self-reflexive understanding that he is himself constituted as a subject in this act of understanding and recognition.

When Finn dances with Kurt and then Kurt dances with his father Burt, they confront hetero-normative expectations about masculine embodiment, as constituted in the US and many other Western countries. The two male couples (Finn/Kurt, Burt/Kurt) dance in a conventional male-female waltz configuration, though without adopting the corresponding masculine and feminine roles. By doing so, they touch in a way that has (until recently) been reserved for male-female couples in Western bodily practice, where it is a bodily enactment, a corporealization, of hetero-normative discourse.

It is especially significant, then, that this non-normative embodied practice takes place at one of the most normative of all heterosexual practices, a marriage ceremony. In this context, the male/male couples reject the limitations of hetero-normativity. They do not reject the specificity of heterosexuality, as they demonstrate through their celebration of the union of Burt and Carole and of many other heterosexual couples at the ceremony including Finn and Rachel. However, they acknowledge also the specificity of homosexuality, as equal and different.

### **4 Furt: being singular plural**

In his best man speech Finn also identifies a new subject-formation, 'Furt', a combination of his name with that of his brother, Kurt in a form of portmanteau nicknaming commonly used by tabloids to refer to celebrity couples (e.g. Brangelina for Brad Pitt and Angelia Jolie). Finn introduces this by noting that he and his girlfriend Rachel are known as Finchel, and that when Rachel was with Puckerman, they were known as Puckleberry. While this may be a fairly commonplace, trite practice, it can also be read quite differently, as deconstructive of the monadic Cartesian subject. As noted earlier, Finn has learned (in Series 1 Episode 20) that he cannot simply be absent when Kurt is attacked and think that he is therefore not involved in the

harassment. As with the subject-formation, Furt, his own subjectivity in that moment of harassment includes Kurt; he cannot simply absent himself from an ethical decision in which he is already implicated. In the moment of his confrontation with homophobic responses to Kurt, he is not simply a separate (monadic) individual who can turn and walk away; he is Furt, and his own subjectivity is constituted in that interaction and negotiation.

Jean-Luc Nancy writes in his book *Being Singular Plural* (2000) that 'Being cannot *be* anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the *with* and as the *with* of this singularly plural existence.' (2000: 3) In a sense, this is not unlike our understanding of how language makes meaning through the relationships between utterances; that is, that there is no specific meaning to any sign or utterance but rather that signs and utterances make their meaning through their relationships with all other signs and utterances (see Bakhtin's *heteroglossia*<sup>2</sup>).

The language Derrida uses to note that *meaning* is a process of constant deferral could equally be applied to the concept of *being*. Nancy uses the notion of 'being singular plural' to specify that being is never simply singular, but is a perception of singularity generated out of a (plural) engagement with all of those surrounding us. As Nancy notes: 'if Being is being-with, then it is, in its being-with, the "with" that constitutes Being; the with is not simply an addition. ... the "with" is at the heart of Being' (2000: 30). Again, by analogy with our understanding of language, it is not that signs and utterances make meaning by the addition of those signs and utterances with which they come into contact; instead, the process of difference and deferral that is set in play by these relationships constitutes the process of meaning-making.

For Finn in the self-reflexive moment of his best man speech, he is not just Finn but Furt; this 'being-with' his brother is central to the negotiation of his being. What makes Finn more or less masculine, manly, ethical, egalitarian, or even human is not some monadic resolution of his individual subjectivity but rather the 'with', namely his relationship with Kurt and all those around them.

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Anne O'Byrne writes that Nancy specifies that this relationship is an embodied practice, realized through touch:

The social, the social institution, indeed any given social institution, recognizes itself in the being-together or being-with of bodies. Bodies, by being together, symbolize the social; between bodies and in the body, the social recognizes itself. Nancy's innovation is to acknowledge this as happening by touch (2002: 174).

When Finn dances with Kurt, their physical touch constitutes the relationship that is their 'being-with' in that moment. She notes further that this cannot be reduced to a kind of physical essentialism because, for Nancy, the experience of touch is constantly deferred, establishing meaning through that deferral and difference. Accordingly the focus of Nancy's analysis is not the individual (and individuated) subject but the relationship: 'rather than beginning with the subject and going on to build up an intersubjectivity by establishing relations between subjects, he first studies relation' (O'Byrne 2002: 178). That is, Nancy does not assume an individuated subject to which he adds the effect of interaction with others; instead he posits the subject as formulated in the relationship. So O'Byrne adds:

It is these relations, the trajectories (touches, glances, movements) across a space that go to constitute the "I" at all. It is never a question of my constituting myself (from the inside, as it were) and then seeking recognition from elsewhere, from outside, because both interiority and exteriority are always in play as the interior exteriority of the community. In the same way, our skin, the surfaces of our bodies, are the interior exteriority of our communities on the model of symbolization; we are fragments laid edge to edge, lip to lip, and those edges will never disappear in an undifferentiated unity. (2002: 178)

O'Byrne here reinforces the argument that there is no individual interiority that exists in isolation from others; rather, she claims that our sense of an interiority is derived from the interplay of self and community. And this is not simply a psychic or intellectual phenomenon. Our bodies too are constituted in and as this relationship with all others in our community, as discrete (fragments) and also part

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of a whole that is multiply differentiated.

Read from this viewpoint, when Burt and Carole dance their bridal waltz, their touch constitutes both of them bodily in a *being-with* that articulates conventional heterosexuality; it could also be read also as a hetero-normative assertion – upholding the belief that heterosexual union is the only valid form of marriage. However, when Kurt dances with Finn and then with his father Burt, the *being-with* that they constitute and that constitutes them confronts hetero-normativity, as noted earlier. In each case their touch, their *being-with*, constitutes a non-hetero-normative relationship and (therefore) non-hetero-normative subjectivity. This subjectivity is not new for Kurt and Burt (who have long since negotiated their own understandings of themselves and each other), but does represent a change in understanding, meaning and being for Finn and Kurt.

## **5 Ceremony**

The role of ceremony in this encounter is as the medium through which the roles of bride and groom, family and guest, are formally or institutionally constituted. Ceremony places the participants in the roles that the society dictates as socially and culturally appropriate, enacting the values of the society at that time. In a sense the individual does not have to think through the encounter and decide on her/his role, relationship and responsibility – the ceremony does that for them. They then enact the ceremony as embodied subjects. In doing so, they realise the relationship, the *being-with*, constituted in the ceremony as well as the values, beliefs and attitudes on which it is based. In this way individuals come to embody and enact mainstream social values. However, as Finn's intervention in the 'Furt' episode of *Glee* demonstrates, the ceremony itself can become the site for change. By embodying the participant roles differently from the way the ceremony conventionally embodies them, Finn effectively changes the ceremony along with the social values out of which it is formed. Touch, as Nancy notes, is the means by which the embodied relationship of *being-with* is realized; in dancing with Kurt, Finn rejects the homophobic barrier

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to sexual equality that is incorporated as the prohibition to certain kinds of touch and of *being-with*.

It is significant that this fictional ceremony took place during controversy over the United States Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). DOMA was a federal law that enabled States to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other States. Introduced in 1996, DOMA (at Section 3) defined marriage as ‘a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word “spouse” refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife’. President Obama declared this definition of marriage unconstitutional in 2011, meaning that the statute would not be defended federally if challenged legally. On 26 June 2013, in a 5-4 vote, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled DOMA’s definition of marriage unconstitutional. So this episode of *Glee*, broadcast in 2010, was part of a public debate in a society still officially regulated by DOMA and its gender-specific definition of marriage.

The value of enacting the marriage ceremony and using the occasion to deconstruct hetero-normative assumptions is that it confronts the role of the ceremony as a sacred rite. Etymologically, ‘ceremony’ derives from a Latin word meaning ‘holiness, sacredness; awe; reverent rite, sacred ceremony’.(Online Etymology Dictionary) Even when a marriage is secular, its ceremonial nature takes it beyond the status of the everyday. The individuals involved in a ceremony thereby participate in a practice that takes the everyday to the status of the sacred, whether that sacredness derives from religious or collective/social beliefs and values. The *Glee* marriage challenges not only hetero-normativity, but also the formal staging and embodied articulation of this discourse in a practice that demonstrates another of the etymological associations of the sacred – with *saq-* meaning to ‘bind, restrict, enclose, protect’. (Online Etymology Dictionary) This association is made because the Latin root, *sacer* of sacred means ‘sacred, dedicated, holy, accursed’ (Online Etymology Dictionary); thus, within itself it contains the notion of both that which is approved of and designated as holy (sacred), and also that which is cast out or rejected (accursed). Ceremony is both

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inclusive and exclusive; it sanctifies those who align with the values it articulates and rejects those who do not.

At the *Glee* wedding, this power of ceremony to exclude as well as to include is revealed through the non-hetero-normative touch of Finn, Burt and Kurt, a touch that explicitly challenges, in this iconic rite, the official state definition of acceptable human intimacy and love. They demonstrate bodily how hetero-normativity, as articulated in the ceremony of marriage, constrains people to not only act, but also be – which is to say, *be with* – in specific ways. By *being with* differently at this ceremony, they demonstrate that sexuality need not be hetero-normative, any more than it was once anti-miscegenationist – when it was a criminal offence in the US for people of different races to marry. Ceremony, therefore, is not a neutral conduit of social attitudes and values but a powerful site for the construction and maintenance of those values – as DOMA has demonstrated, as well as the recent repeal of section 3. In other words, a change in social values (like the repeal of anti-miscegenation laws in 1967) is embedded and embodied in the ways in which ceremonies – as sites of inclusion and exclusion – are enacted.

## **6 Hospitality**

For this study it is significant, too, that Finn's role as best man positioned him as host; it is his role to extend hospitality to all present, bride and groom as well as guests. At a hetero-normative wedding ceremony, such as that prescribed by the now-defunct Section 3 of DOMA, the (heterosexual) bride and groom were clearly welcome; guests were also welcome to the extent that they enacted and embodied the specificities of gender and sexuality assumed by hetero-normative discourse. In other words, the hospitality offered at such a ceremony is delimited by the constraints that characterize that discourse, and the inherently 'binding' nature of ceremony facilitates the enactment of such constraints.

In the *Glee* wedding, however, Finn deploys the same 'binding' quality of the ceremony to enact and embody a different, non-hetero-

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normative marriage. Finn's embodiment of his bond with Kurt, as Furt, sacrilizes a more egalitarian sexuality and gendering that does not constrain all present to an articulation of purely hetero-normative sexuality. Again this embodiment of hospitality and transgressive deployment of ceremony depends on a rejection of a monadic notion of individual subjectivity that suggests that individuals can separate themselves from a relationship or interaction: that is, that an individual can stand apart and make a judgment that is based on factors that don't include (the individual subjectivity of) the other/guest/stranger. Nancy's concepts of *being-with* and of the subject as *singular plural* argue against this conception. For Nancy, the subject is constituted through the relationship with the other, which means that there is no possibility that a host can stand apart from a situation or relationship in order to make a judgment, because the situation or relationship has already constituted the *being-with* of the host.

Accordingly, any ceremony involving multiple participants – including the ceremony through which hospitality is enacted – is not a ritual conducted by monadic subjects, but a weaving together of beings, all of whom are already defined in relationship to one another (as *being-with*). The violence that can be done in such a situation occurs when the subjectivity of one or more participants is not acknowledged or is actively suppressed. In this situation, the host subsumes the other/guest/stranger into his/her being; there is no '*with*' to the being of the subjects involved in this engagement. Yet, there is never not a '*with*' to being, so the '*with*' is here constituted by the violent act performed by one of the parties of denying and suppressing the alternative subjectivity or alterity of the other. The violence is constitutive then of the *being with* of both parties, though one may experience this as perpetrator and the other as victim. So this is not a violence constituted asymptotically by a perpetrator who is otherwise non-violent; rather, that violence defines the very being (or *being-with*) of the perpetrator (and reflexively of the victim).

## 7 Deconstructing subjectivity

This reading of hospitality and subjectivity via Nancy's work on the nature of being accords with Derrida's analysis of hospitality, ethics and subjectivity in the work of Levinas in *Adieu à Emmanuel Lévinas* (1997). As François Raffoul notes, Derrida's analysis locates Levinas's Cartesian-Husserlian heritage in the way that he begins his analysis of the relation between subject and other with the 'I' as an interiority:

We know that Levinas understands the other as exteriority. Exteriority to what, if not, of course, to the ego, the self-enclosed ego of the Cartesian tradition? But is alterity exteriority? Only if it is thought in relation to the interiority of the subject (1997: 13).

As Raffoul demonstrates, Derrida uses this study of Levinas to demonstrate that 'the subject, as such, is a welcome and hospitality of the other, before any self-posed identity.' (p. 5) Beginning with Levinas's etymological reading of the notion of host as either/both host and guest, he argues that Derrida identifies in Levinas a reading of the subject as 'not ... a pre-given substantial identity that would constitute the basis for a capacity to welcome. The welcome of the other defines the subject' (1997: 5), which is analogous to Nancy's understanding of the subject as *singular plural*, and of being as *being-with*.

For Levinas, Derrida and Nancy there is no possibility that the designated host can refuse to engage. As the most senior of the group Levinas's work still engages with a monadic Cartesian model of subjectivity, if only to reject it. Derrida and Nancy, building on Levinas's rejection of this notion of subjectivity, propose a notion of the subject as formed in negotiation with the other, as noted above, with hospitality as a way of envisaging that mutually formative relationship. As we have seen and as noted by Levinas and by Derrida, the etymology of the word hospitality points us to that understanding of individual being – as singular plural, in Nancy's terms, or as Raffoul summarizes: 'The self takes place at the place of the other' (1997: 14, underlined in original). The hospitality that is articulated in this understanding of subject formation cannot be conceptualized as the kind of formal welcome afforded an invited guest, but is rather a more fundamental



relationship that precedes and informs that ceremonial welcome.

### 8 Conclusion

The example of hospitality articulated in the 'Furt' episode of *Glee* locates a number of key issues that determine the practice of hospitality. Firstly, that hospitality cannot be conceived as a relationship entered into by an interior 'I' locating an external 'other'. Instead, an examination of hospitality reveals that the 'I' is always formed in negotiation with all the 'others' with whom the 'I' comes into contact – just as Kurt and his brother, Finn are mutually formed through their relationship as Furt. So there is no possibility of a refusal to engage in a meeting with the other, because the being of the subject is already dependent on that engagement.

Secondly, Finn's self-reflexive description of the ethics of his behaviour towards Kurt articulates the fundamental relationship between hospitality, subjectivity and ethics. As Finn argues, removing himself from the site of Kurt's harassment does not free him of responsibility. Finn's being is still a *being with* – in relation to Kurt and his tormenters – even if he does not act positively or decisively. By ignoring the homophobic harassment of Kurt, Finn has been complicit with it, and this defines him as a subject: 'some stuff's gone down and I haven't manned up as I should have'. Finn acknowledges that this non-action is yet a negotiation; that it constitutes him as a subject; and that it is ethically wanting. And the reason that this is an ethical choice for Finn, rather than an avoidance of an ethical choice, is that his relationship with Kurt means he is always already positioned to make a choice; his being is always already negotiated as a *being-with* Kurt and his attackers.

Thirdly, as Finn demonstrates in his role as host/best man, ceremony formalizes the reciprocal, mutually formative relationship of hospitality. At the same time, however, every social or cultural ceremony enacts and embodies discourses that are specific to that society and culture at a particular time and place. These discourses, too, contribute to the individual's negotiation of embodied subjectivity and affect the

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negotiation of *being-with* at that site. The wedding ceremony could have been an occasion for the statement and reinforcement of hetero-normative values, as championed by the supporters of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) Section 3 definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman. However, Finn discursively re-defined the ceremony, and hence modified the negotiation of subjectivity by all participants, by configuring his own subjectivity and the discursive identity of the ceremony as non-hetero-normative. And he did this by addressing and touching Kurt in ways that contradict hetero-normative assumptions about masculinity. This resolution argues that ceremony, which has the potential to be socially and culturally delimiting and to operate as a boundary between people, also has the potential to bind people together in new and different ways and to ‘sanctify’ that new understanding of being, which is configured in the ceremony through bodily movements and interactions.

## **Notes**

- 1 The term hetero-normative is used to describe the discourse that assumes that heterosexuality is normal and morally correct while homosexuality is aberrant and morally compromised. It is often articulated and embodied through the construction of gay men as feminine and lesbians as masculine.
- 2 In ‘Discourse in the Novel’ Bakhtin writes: ‘For the prose writer the object [i.e. the text] is a focal point for heteroglot voices among which his own voice must also sound; these voices create the background necessary for his own voice, outside which his artistic prose nuances cannot be perceived, and without which they “do not sound”’ (1981: 278).

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