

INTRODUCTION

A perfect host

Julian Pitt-Rivers and the anthropology of grace

ANDREW SHRYOCK and GIOVANNI DA COL

Mary Douglas begins her appreciation of Julian Pitt-Rivers' Andalusian ethnography with a vivid recollection of how he appeared to her when they first met at Oxford, in the late 1940s.

He stood out from the other anthropology students in many ways. It was partly because of his striking good looks, partly his elegance, which would have distinguished him anywhere, and partly because of his princely good manners. *Debonair*—I think everyone who remembers him would agree that *debonair* was the word. (2004: 43, emphasis added)

In a similar vein, Jonathan Benthall describes Pitt-Rivers as “the most cosmopolitan British social anthropologist of his generation,” and “everywhere, the odd man out.”¹ Allusions to his patrician habitus are pervasive among colleagues who knew Pitt-Rivers well, and this way of portraying him is never simply

1. The words are from Benthall's obituary for Pitt-Rivers, which appeared in *The Independent*, August 24, 2001 (www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/professor-julian-pitt-rivers-9153369.html).

personal. Instead, it would seem to relate directly to his professional life, and it says important things about his approach to social analysis, in which hospitality and grace figure centrally as both objects and methods of study.

Julian Pitt-Rivers (1919–2001) was a leading figure in twentieth-century social anthropology, known best for his writings on Mediterranean societies, yet his intellectual profile resists easy characterization. To some, he was a conservative thinker drawn to village life, communal rituals, and social forms now seen as traditional (the honor complex) or morally retrograde (bullfighting). To others, he was unconventional, an analytical risk-taker who turned the anthropological gaze in new and surprising directions, making a more global stance possible for the discipline. His ethnography of a Spanish village, *The people of the Sierra* (1954), based on fieldwork conducted between 1949 and 1952, was the first study of a European people undertaken by a British social anthropologist. His Oxford advisors, Meyer Fortes and E. E. Evans Pritchard among them, thought Andalusia was not a promising object of ethnographic scrutiny; they pushed him toward Africa. Pitt-Rivers ignored their advice. Spain would be the epicenter of his work, though he engaged broadly in social anthropology, Europeanizing it in irreversible ways.

His work was exceptional from the start. *The people of the Sierra* captured both the complexity and parochialism of European village life, bringing local notions of gender, kinship, religion, and morality into crisp focus, all the while exploring the delicate patterns of evasion and noncompliance that shaped interactions between rural Andalusians and an enveloping nation-state. The book was shrouded in an air of mystery that Pitt-Rivers diligently preserved. Grazalema, the village he called Alcalà in the first edition, was a hotbed of anarchism before and during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39). Pitt-Rivers studiously avoided partisan political critique in his monograph, but it was clear that some deeper interest in revolution and anarchism, dimly visible in the text, had brought him to southern Spain. In 1971, when the second edition of *The people of the Sierra* was released, he gave a pithy assessment of it: “The whole book can be read as no more than an explication through an ethnographic example of Simmel’s great essay on secrecy and the lie” (1971: xvi).²

2. Pitt-Rivers is even more forthcoming in Chapter 20 of this volume, “Reflections on fieldwork in Spain,” where he reveals aspects of his research agenda that, for decades, he could not discuss in print.

Pitt-Rivers often commented on how his fieldwork, carried out under the watchful eye of Franco's dictatorial regime, was colored by suspicion, and how the villagers in Grazalema treated him generously, but always believed he was a spy. Ian Fleming (a fellow Etonian) would probably have found him suitable for the role. Pitt-Rivers was a Captain of the Royal Dragoons during the Second World War and wrote the first official regimental history of the conflict (Pitt-Rivers 1956). Immediately after the war, he became the private tutor to King Faisal II of Iraq (b. 1935), whom he met in Baghdad, and arranged the boy king's education in England. Despite his ready access to powerful people and institutions, Pitt-Rivers located most of his anthropological effort in the countryside, studying townspeople and peasants. The incongruity led to predictable speculations. Paul Dresch reports that, in his conversations with French colleagues, the professorial take on Pitt-Rivers sometimes resembled that of Spanish villagers: "An Englishman of means, once married into Hispanic aristocracy, a name in American circles, dinner guest of Parisian luminaries, now married to the French editor of *Reader's Digest*, and intrigued by *rural* Europe. . . . What *was* he [really] doing there?" (2000: 116).

This apparent misfit was replicated (and it caused equal ambivalence) in a much larger contradiction: namely, that of anthropology in Europe. What Pitt-Rivers was really doing in the French and Spanish countryside was building infrastructure for a new kind of anthropology. With the publication of *Mediterranean countrymen* (1963), he established Mediterranean studies as a dynamic field known for interdisciplinary vigor and historicism many years before those virtues were common, or even broadly claimed, among anthropologists. Later, this area of study would become notorious for its vexed relationship to boundary-marking concepts like honor, shame, patriarchy, patronage, and preferential endogamy. Pitt-Rivers contributed centrally to the formulation of these analytical motifs, taking them far beyond the realm of cultural stereotype. The larger enterprise of Mediterranean studies, now a permanent zone of intellectual production, cannot be championed or criticized without constant reference to Pitt-Rivers and his work. His disciplinary influence was at its peak in the 1970s—*The fate of Shechem* (1977) contains some of his most innovative essays—but he produced superb work into the 1990s. His last volume, edited with John Peristiany, *Honor and grace in anthropology* (1992a), was reissued in 2005.

Mediterranean studies remains a minority interest in anthropology, its influence paling in comparison to, say, Amazonian or Africanist traditions, but Pitt-Rivers was always at home in the intellectual spaces where elite anthropology

is made. He held faculty positions at the University of Chicago, the University of California at Berkeley, and the London School of Economics. His post at the École Pratique des Hautes Études came at the invitation of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who had enormous respect for him. (*The savage mind* was published by the University of Chicago Press in a series edited by Pitt-Rivers and Ernest Gellner.) His students were no less impressive. In 1974, Pitt-Rivers examined Mick Taussig's doctoral thesis at the London School of Economics. A quarter-century later, as if to repay this debt of spiritual kinship, Taussig took up two of Pitt-Rivers' enduring concerns—lying and secrecy—in *Defacement* (1999), a book that features a brilliant tribute to Pitt-Rivers disguised as a critique of the old master's handling of “public secrets.” In *Grazalema*, Taussig concludes, ethnography and deception were necessary partners.

For surely what is referenced here in this epiphanous encounter between north and south, between the cultivated man of letters from the north and the sun-drenched tillers of the southern soil of untruth is an uneasy acknowledgment as to a certain secret of the secret in which the south has long had the function of mirroring, in its dishonesty, the dissimulation of dissimulation in the north? (1999: 77)

It was from this “uneasy” place of knowledge production that Pitt-Rivers fashioned his unique brand of anthropology. He loomed large in the Anglo-American academy, in France, where he lived for many years, and in Spain, where his research on Andalusian culture was widely celebrated. He published, did fieldwork, and taught in all three national languages.³

GENEALOGIES AND COSMOLOGIES OF DISTINCTION

Throughout his career—indeed, throughout his life—Pitt-Rivers worked with and against the special reputation he inherited with his surname, which is an illustrious (and occasionally notorious) one in Britain. Lieutenant-General Augustus Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers, the ethnologist and antiquarian who founded the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford in 1884, was Julian's great grandfather.

3. Superb appreciations of Pitt-Rivers' life and work are available in Velasco, Fournier, and Viana (2004) and Velasco and Caro (2015).

George Pitt-Rivers, Julian's father, owned one of the largest estates in England. He was an anthropologist as well, trained by Bronislaw Malinowski in the 1920s, but enamored of eugenics and supportive of Fascism in the 1930s; he was imprisoned during the Second World War as a national security threat.⁴ In 1954, Michael Pitt-Rivers, Julian's older brother, was involved in a sex scandal that led eventually to the decriminalization of homosexuality in Britain.⁵ Julian Pitt-Rivers established himself as an anthropologist adjacent to these persons and events, though he had little to say in published work about how his aristocratic upbringing influenced his outlook on things anthropological.⁶ He would have considered public musings of that sort distasteful, or pointless. His status was common knowledge among his colleagues and students, as was his intense rejection of his father's political views. In one of his later essays, he noted what, to him, was axiomatic: "[T]he fieldworker's culture, upbringing and previous experience place limits upon the possibility of his knowing anything which he cannot assimilate in some way to something he knows already" (1992b: 133). This "personal factor," as he called it, determines not only what the ethnographer "observes but what conclusions he draws" (ibid.).

Pitt-Rivers was a man of privilege. He was brought up in it; it is what he knew, and it gave a noble cast to his work. We believe it would be wrong to fetishize Pitt-Rivers as a hybrid creature made up of intellectual charisma and charm, but it would be equally wrong to ignore these gifts and their role in producing a body of work marked by its subtle engagement with ideas and institutions that convey mastery, repute, distinction, and (in every sense of the word) grace. Something akin to pedigree, or genealogy, is at stake in his writings, which are often oriented toward old and authentic things. "Unlike many

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4. For a full account of his life and politics, see Hart (2015).
 5. Michael Pitt-Rivers' conviction on charges of homosexual indecency prompted the Wolfenden Report of 1957, which recommended the decriminalization of homosexual behavior conducted privately between consenting adults. Patrick Higgins explores the case in *Heterosexual dictatorship: Male homosexuality in post-war Britain* (1996).
 6. According to Françoise Pitt-Rivers, Julian was beginning to write "retrospective anthropology" when his final illness set in. The Pitt-Rivers legacy, she says, "was very hard for Julian to live with," and the popular belief that he was extremely rich is mistaken. George Pitt-Rivers sold off much of the vast Pitt-Rivers estate, and what remained passed to Michael Pitt-Rivers, as eldest son. Julian was disinherited by his father, "from whom he did not receive a penny" (Françoise Pitt-Rivers, personal communication, September 14, 2017).

of my British colleagues,” he wrote, “I am very much concerned with origins” (1977: vii).

Pitt-Rivers was unusual in the extent to which he anchored his scholarship in Abrahamic and Hellenic traditions, emphasizing their centrality to Mediterranean society as myth, history, and moral frame. He did so for intellectual and deeply personal reasons. *The fate of Shechem* (1977), for instance, grew out of his childhood puzzlement over certain difficult passages in the Bible and his adult confusion over why Lévi-Strauss (and most other anthropologists) systematically ignored the kinship systems of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern societies, in which hierarchy and endogamy flourish. His attraction to concepts such as honor, grace, hospitality, and *mana*—qualities available to all people, but associated in special ways with people of high station—was part of the sociopolitical world of class that produced his sensibilities and his scholarship. He brought into (and drew out of) anthropological thought a diverse range of ideas that, before his monumental work in Spain, were considered too European, too historical, and too complex to be treated ethnographically. This omnibus is a call to reengage with these ideas, making them available again for appreciation, critique, modification, and discerning use.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE *OMNIBUS*

Aficionados of Pitt-Rivers fall into several distinct cohorts, and the twenty essays that fill this volume were selected to please and connect as many readerships as possible. We have included most of Pitt-Rivers’ “greatest hits,” which focus principally on honor (Chapters 1 and 4) and hospitality (Chapter 7), concepts that fed his interest in grace and friendship (Chapters 3 and 9). His writings on kinship (Chapters 5 and 6) are represented as well, along with classic essays on ritual, especially the role of sacrifice in social reproduction and change (Chapters 12 and 14). Some of the essays are no longer popular, or never were, but they predict contemporary trends in research or speak to them in uncanny ways. Ontologists and those intrigued by animal/human relations will find useful leads in “Spiritual power in Central America” (Chapter 11), Pitt-Rivers’ essay on *naguals*, the companion animals that shape the careers of witches in Chiapas. Ethnographers interested in infrastructure, both economic and material, should give close attention to “Lending a hand” (Chapter 10), a vivid account of how

mechanized farming, paved roads, and expanding electricity grids transformed patterns of sharing, and notions of solidarity, in the French countryside. Scholars of embodiment should head directly to “The role of pain in rites of passage” (Chapter 13), in which Pitt-Rivers builds a more visceral model of Van Gennep’s rites of passage. Likewise, historicists and genealogists of ideas will find inspiration in Pitt-Rivers’ analysis of the terms “caste” (Chapter 18) and “race” (Chapter 19), traveling concepts that continue to inform and distort ethnography wherever they find local footing.

We are especially happy to include English translations of five essays previously available only in French. “The sacrifice of the bull” (Chapter 12), a fascinating alloy of history, ethnography, and the comparative analysis of myth, was one of Pitt-Rivers’ favorite essays. In English, Pitt-Rivers wrote in a straightforward, elegant style. In French, his pieces are no less sophisticated, but they are often more confidently opinionated and funny. For proof, sample the parade of wry insights on youth, generational politics, and aging in “*Quand nos aînés n’y seront plus*” (Chapter 15). Finally, we include five essays that have never been published before, the most substantial being “From the love of food to the love of god” (Chapter 14), which Pitt-Rivers gave as the 1988 Marett Lecture, and “Reflections on fieldwork in Spain” (Chapter 20), a recollection of how he did the research on which *The people of the Sierra* is based.

In bringing together this mix of old and new essays, we are not advocating for a precisely defined approach to anthropological theory or method. Like so many ethnographers trained by Evans-Pritchard at Oxford, Julian Pitt-Rivers believed fieldwork was more art than science, with no techniques or protocols that would be applicable everywhere. He was likewise averse to theoreticism, insisting instead that good theory is implicit in careful ethnographic description, another meme passed down in the lineage of Evans-Pritchard.⁷ There are, however, dominant themes in Pitt-Rivers’ work, and he returned to them repeatedly. Among the most pronounced of these motifs is the respect host and guest owe to each other, which Pitt-Rivers explores beautifully in what many readers consider his best essay, “The law of hospitality” (Chapter 7). This host/guest respect is reciprocal; it is a gift of acknowledgment that enables outsiders and locals to interact in a temporarily shared space. We would like to think of

7. In his own words, “the theoretical conclusions will . . . be found to be implicit in an exact and detailed description” (Evans-Pritchard 1973: 3).

this omnibus as a shared space of intellectual hospitality, in which Pitt-Rivers is our host. The perfect host is seldom encountered in real life—Pitt-Rivers wrote often of hospitality gone wrong—and the perfect guest is equally rare, but their approximations always excel at giving and receiving graciously, which is to say abundantly and with serious regard for the hospitality context itself.

The best way to interact with Pitt-Rivers' essays, we believe, is to treat them as rituals of incorporation and display in which he invites us to participate. This invitation typically comes in four guises—four recurrent trends in his work—which we have used to organize the volume into four parts.

The first, *moral frames* (Chapters 1–4), calls our attention to mediating ideas—honor, *mana*, grace, distinction—through which humans express primary social values and deal with the structural contradictions these values resolve, create, and reflect.

The second, *uncertain relations* (Chapters 5–11), emphasizes the definition, often contested and blurry, of key positions in social structure, or in social discourse. Repeatedly, Pitt-Rivers shows how concepts that exist in opposition—friend/kin, man/woman, animal/human, and guest/host—overlap in practice, or oscillate, or interact in ways that produce a space of paradox and risk, where categorizations rarely hold.

The third, *transformative rites* (Chapters 12–16), fixes on the ritual means by which paradox and risk are worked out, often in the form of sacrifice, blood-letting, and bodily marking, but always with the goal of transforming self and society re/productively.

The fourth theme, *analytics in place* (Chapters 17–20), stresses the importance of knowing social forms as they are localized in discrete contexts, both historical and contemporary, and as systems of relations that can be abstracted and objectified to allow for comparisons. Comparison, in turn, creates new forms of knowing that, Pitt-Rivers insisted, are themselves localized between and across social worlds.

As a proper guest, you should accept all four of these invitations. Each will introduce you to essential tendencies in Pitt-Rivers' thought; for that reason, we have not tried to streamline the content or factor out redundancies. As at any good feast, there will be more here than you can possibly eat, and the best dishes will be served up often and amply across all four parts of the volume. In our dual editorial role as Pitt-Rivers' guests and (in his absence) your hosts, we will try to manage this abundance by drawing your attention to what is rarest and most fortifying in the essays we have placed, as it were, on the table.

A FEAST OF ETHNOGRAPHIC THEORY

This volume contains some of Pitt-Rivers' clearest statements on theory, yet each is made with an eye toward producing sharp, effective analysis. It was analytical precision and interpretive insight that he was after, and he believed that neither could be attained without detailed attention to context, to the elucidation of social forms, and to how meanings are made in relational sets. His work was distinctive for its reliance on "community" as both an object and field of study, an orientation he believed was necessary to the study of peasant villages (Chapter 10), the historical evolution of marital and kinship practices (Chapter 16), or the development of racial formations in contemporary trans/national contexts (Chapter 19). Pitt-Rivers assumed that social life was a meeting ground of people, things, and structures that held significance, or created it. For example, his parsimonious explanation of when it is appropriate to wear the *sombrero de ala ancha*, a wide-brimmed men's hat popular in Andalusia (Chapter 17), is buttressed by an elaborate discussion of the contextual analysis of signs (his own blend of Saussure, Austin, and Evans-Pritchard), a consideration of local agropastoral economies and their gendered hierarchies, and attention to Spain's national heritage policies as they relate to regionalism and international tourism. This interpretive firepower is trained on a simple—but, it turns out, elaborately situated—article of clothing, and his ability to make sense of it, paired with a local Spaniard's ability to take it all for granted, was evidence for Pitt-Rivers that contexts had a structural reality that was simultaneously "already there" and made anew, and made differently, through analysis. In his skilled hands, contextual analysis allowed the analyst "to escape from . . . servitude to context by making context explicit," thereby achieving "a higher level of generalization" (p. 393).

Pitt-Rivers believed that human interaction is shaped by dense associations of ideas and perceptions that are unconscious, or, if they enter consciousness at all, do so in polysemous languages of ritual and symbolism that cannot be explained by "rational" exegesis, whether such explanation is offered by local actors or ethnographers. For precisely this reason, he argued, the irrational and unsaid perform work essential to community formation. In a suggestive passage from "From the love of food to the love of God" (Chapter 14), Pitt-Rivers poses the unconscious as a kind of cultural reserve, with its own ordering, which swirls around us (or "above" us) and is sometimes drawn into increasingly explicit and textually specified meanings.

Rather than conceive of the conscious as above the unconscious—hence “sub-conscious,” “sub-liminal,” etc.; Freud early on gave up sub-conscious in favor of unconscious—we should invert the spatial representation and, borrowing a different idiom, consider consciousness the other way up. That which is not fully apprehended, which is “lived” without being “consciously conceived,” remains “up in the air” until it can be brought down into consciousness, “put *down* in black and white,” reduced from the multi-dimensional sphere of the polysemic to, literally, the black ink on a white page, where alternative meanings, inconsistencies, and logical contradictions are anathema. (p. 292)

His analysis of bullfighting is a superb example of how an ethnographer gains access to the culturally implicit. Pitt-Rivers moves from detailed accounts of the confrontation of man and bull in the ring to considerations of folkloric and mythical tropes many centuries old, all the while connecting Andalusian material to notions of gender, blood stigma, and bodily transformation found in human societies around the world (Chapter 12). His conclusions, he admits, would not make immediate sense to Andalusians. Nor should they, necessarily. The interpretive work of anthropology, he contends, is beholden to locality and is always locatable, but it also generates new ways of knowing that are more “objective,” more inclusive and transcendent, because they are made of insights generated through a careful comparison of ethnographic analyses done in multiple times and places.

However one judges Pitt-Rivers as a theoretician or fieldworker, his powers as an analyst were tremendous, and they derived their potency from what he described: ideas, objects, and beliefs that are durable and compelling over time. His work is valuable for its exemplary quality as cultural history, as deep history, as a working out of tradition.⁸ We can redeploy Pitt-Rivers as an animating force for a kind of anthropological inquiry that unfolds on small and large scales at once, never losing its attachment to discrete historical pathways or its explanatory potential in relation to more global contexts of similarity and difference. In a striking passage from “Women and sanctuary” (Chapter 8), for instance, he

8. Pitt-Rivers’ engagement with Mediterranean cultural materials brings to mind Talal Asad’s (1986) recommended approach to an anthropology of Islam: in both cases, one is dealing with a “discursive tradition,” and Pitt-Rivers, ever the erudite scholar, offered a wealth of “founding texts” on which to base his analyses of moral systems, from the Old Testament to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, from *Don Juan* to *Don Quixote*.

develops a model of post-Neolithic and preindustrial social space that, in the Mediterranean and other world regions, is ancient, generic, highly gendered, and intimately known to us. The social world of the premodern Mediterranean was, according to Pitt-Rivers, divided into (1) “the house,” which is internally divided into a private sphere associated with women and dependents, and a more public space where guests can be received; (2) the areas outside the house, “the common meeting-grounds of the whole community,” which are made up of similarly structured households whose members know each other and have real, continuous relations of rivalry and alliance; and (3) the “outside world” beyond the community, “from which come strangers, that is, unknown persons who, unlike the fellow-members of the community with whom relations are habitual and clearly structured, remain mysterious, their nature and their power in doubt and who derive from their strangeness a preferential relationship to the Divine” (pp. 189–90).

Each of these spaces is a cosmos unto itself, in which anthropologies of diverse sorts can unfold, and the extent to which these spaces are entirely present or gone, contemporary or historical, is less obvious than Pitt-Rivers pretends when he locates his model “prior to modern urban development” (p. 189). Concepts like “house,” “community,” and “outside world” are the unfinished business of anthropology; they surface and sink as notions of place, structure, duration, and belonging evolve alongside notions of mobility, agency, change, and exclusion.⁹ Pitt-Rivers was modeling a world dominated by hospitality and house politics, but his key terms will inevitably be read into the present, where they are endlessly reconfigured in relation to conscious and subconscious aspects of the modern. Insofar as he was describing his own cultural tradition—the Bible and Homeric epic, as he treats them in *The fate of Shechem* (1977), are very much foundational to his own identity—he was predisposed to treat the Otherness he confronted in the past, or in a Spanish village today, in much the way members of a “premodern” Mediterranean household treated a guest from the outside world: as something mysterious, powerful, and sacred. One could argue that “honor,” which Pitt-Rivers saw as a complicated and demonstrably ancient

9. As refugees and migrants enter Mediterranean countries in growing numbers, these concepts reassert their political and analytical importance. For recent works that prove the trend, see Cabot (2014), Albahari (2015), Ben-Yehoyada (2017), and Rogozen-Soltar (2017). The resurgent literature on hospitality, too, is saturated by these motifs, which are brought together in stimulating fashion by Candea and da Col (2012).

construct, occupied the place of the respected stranger in his writings. He was clearly enamored of the concept, even though it has been thoroughly pathologized by modernists, who portray it (and its darker partner, “shame”) as a quality more Oriental than Occidental. In “The malady of honor” (Chapter 4), one of his last commentaries on the word, Pitt-Rivers argues that something like “honor” is found in all human societies, but that speaking conspicuously of one’s honor is considered “old-fashioned” in Europe and North America today. He suggests that sentiments of shame have more staying power in contemporary Western societies, where honor is now treated as a sickness “whose symptoms show only in its absence” (p. 118), that is, when one is publicly disgraced.

What, then, of “the preferential link to the Divine” encoded in Otherness? What of the sacredness that marks persons and qualities that arrive from the margins of the social world, or (as if) from the distant past? Do these motifs still have a viable place in ethnography? Do they figure as cosmological blinders, as a politics of difference, as tools for culture-making? Pitt-Rivers answers these questions by drawing creatively, yet again, from the same discursive traditions that valorize honor, house, host, and guest. In one of his final engagements with Hellenic and Abrahamic cosmologies, “The place of grace in anthropology” (Chapter 3), he shifts his focus from what might be described today as conventional features of social structure to the spaces just beyond them, which are not empty or formless, but are full of the numinous material that is required to make social life and, he argues, bind it to sacred things.

THE UNFATHOMABLE WORLD OF GRACE

Part of Pitt-Rivers’ legend is that he brought British social anthropology to Europe. In doing so, he managed simultaneously to provincialize Europe and deprovincialize ethnography, but he also accomplished something far more profound. He brought anthropology into a space between law and grace, two ideas central to European self-perceptions. He realized that the space between law and grace is one in which powerful, generative ideas are made. Law is associated with regularity, with right and wrong, with form. Grace, of its nature, is harder to define. “The only general rule,” Pitt-Rivers claims, “is that grace is always something extra. . . . [I]t belongs on the register of the extraordinary (hence its association with the sacred)” (p. 72). Doing someone a favor is graceful, and a “return of grace is always expected, whether in the form of a material

manifestation (regardless of the material value of that which is returned) or merely in verbal expression” (ibid.). Hence the proliferation of “thanks” and “thank you,” words that pepper our daily interactions.

Pitt-Rivers’ thoughts on grace predate philosophical and anthropological inquiries about the possibility of the “free gift” (cf. Derrida 2000; Laidlaw 2000). For Pitt-Rivers, grace is a concept that explains all those forms of unaccountable and unexchangeable value that exist on both the social and theological planes, and that increase the value of things or transactions yet cannot be quantified, predicted, given, kept, or preserved without facing some sort of ontological limit, without risk or the prospect of loss. Grace, to use Pitt-Rivers’ own words, refers to “what cannot be owed or won, specified in advance or merited” (p. 88). In different economic cosmologies, these forms go by terms such as “luck,” “fortune,” or even “chance” (da Col 2012). Comparing grace to Polynesian ideas of *mana*, and to hospitality everywhere, he defines it as “something over and above what is due, economically, legally, or morally; it is neither foreseeable, predictable by reasoning, nor subject to guarantee. It . . . can only be exchanged against its own kind” (p. 88).

As it was for Derrida (2000) on hospitality and Bourdieu (1977) on gifts, the foundational text that led Pitt-Rivers to his Copernican rethinking of the problem of reciprocity was Émile Benveniste’s *Dictionary of Indo-European concepts and society*, in which all the essential motifs appear:

[W]e have services without return, offerings “by grace and favor,” pure acts of “grace,” which are the starting points of a new kind of reciprocity. Above the normal circuit of exchange—where one gives in order to obtain—there is a second circuit, that of beneficence and gratefulness, of what is given without thought of return, of what is offered in “thankfulness.” ([1969] 2016: 158)

For Pitt-Rivers, likewise, grace is never reducible to rules or requirements. The good host is grace-producing; the bad guest is an in-grate, and dis-graced. These are simple insights, but they are already too complex to be fully contained in legal structures, which diminish grace by associating it with compulsion. It is now widely understood that Mauss’s *The gift* cannot be read separately from the essay on sacrifice he wrote with Hubert (Hubert and Mauss [1898] 1964). In Mauss’ accounts, all gifts entail sacrifice; they contain a part of the donor, which the donor parts with. Whereas for Mauss sacrifice is a model for the gift, for Pitt-Rivers the renunciation of things given is not predicated on a cosmology

of assured returns: it is a *gambit*.¹⁰ The linearity of direct reciprocity, or the circularity of generalized reciprocity, is replaced by nonlinear trajectories. Think non-Euclidean and quantum anthropology. The host sacrifices the space of the house to a stranger he might never see again, because God will compensate the host, someday, whether the guest can or cannot. *Dios se lo pague*, “May God repay you,” say the beggar and the guest. Pitt-Rivers offers a profound insight when he argues that the expectation of reciprocity is replaced by the invention of the free gift, which can occur only in a transcendent and encompassing field of hospitality. The latter is akin to the little-understood Neapolitan tradition of *caffè sospeso* (“suspended coffee”), in which a customer orders a coffee, plus one. The serving of the plus-one—*il caffè sospeso*—is “suspended” for the sake of a future customer, who might be low on change, or even penniless. Donor and recipient will never meet. Hence, the free gift—*il caffè sospeso*—is not exactly “free.” It requires the hospitality of the café where it is consumed.

But Pitt-Rivers goes further. He argues that a theory of grace has never been “treated as a concept of analytical utility in anthropology” (p. 279), an oversight he attributes to key interpretive mistakes made by the founders of economic anthropology.

Mauss’ interest in contract and its religious origin, together with his failure to recognize the existence of the concept of grace, caused him to misinterpret Malinowski’s material on the Kula. This is equally true of the rest of his great essay on the gift and of the essay on sacrifice. . . . Unfortunately, Evans-Pritchard followed Mauss in thinking one could understand the theology of Nuer sacrifice, or any other, without the concept of grace. (p. 278)

Absent from the anthropologist’s analytical repertoire, Pitt-Rivers contends, is a solution to the problem of exchange in which nothing (material) is given; or, more precisely, in which nothing but satisfaction or “thanks” is given. He suggests that the answer can be found in a more rigorous examination of enjoyment, pleasure, and mutual feeling.

Not much has been done in this direction since Meyer Fortes (1969) opened the door to such a discussion with his provocative concept of “kinship amity.” Yet in

10. Serendipitously, the etymology of “gambit” traces it to the Italian “*gambetto*,” or tripping-up.

the meanwhile, Émile Benveniste (1969) has shown that the etymological origin of the word “grace” is precisely an Indo-Iranian root, “gir” meaning an offering to the gods, *one that is given not in the hope of a material return, but to give pleasure*. It seems that the idea of giving pleasure, or giving thanks, has mysteriously been left out of the anthropologist’s tool kit—and pleasure (like grace) is something that must always, in fact, be returned if amicable relations are to be maintained. (p. 279, added emphasis)

Cautioning that anthropologists should not apply concepts of “economic equivalence” to all forms of sacrifice, and especially to Nuer sacrifice, Pitt-Rivers criticizes Evans-Pritchard (1956) for reproducing a Maussian world of *hau* obligations, thereby eclipsing the world of *intentions* summoned by grace, whose aim is rather to “please” and “appreciate” the divinity. Nuer sacrifice to Kwoth is, for Pitt-Rivers, “an expression of friendship, respect, appreciation, love, which comes from the heart, not from a sense of obligation; as such, it is a vehicle of grace, and it can be returned, as it must be, only in the form of grace” (p. 279). With this brilliant insight, he fashions a pioneering “theory of affect” that brings kinship, economy, and cosmology into a unified interpretive frame.

The reordering Pitt-Rivers suggests in his treatment of grace is radical, and developing it further would require moving entrenched assumptions about exchange aside. At least since Hobbes, reciprocity has been posed as the founding principle of human society, and even in the softest Maussian traditions, analysis shifts quickly to modes of give-and-take that are oriented toward the calculation of equivalences, of loss and gain. For Pitt-Rivers, basic sociality is rather to be found in the noneconomic offerings of gratitude and pleasure, which are immeasurable and rooted in the exchange of favors.¹¹ Coupled with his insights in “The kith and the kin” (Chapter 5), an essay written as a tribute to Fortes’ “principle of amity,” one sees the remarkable extent to which Pitt-Rivers had already developed this alternative theory of relatedness. In key respects, it resembles Marshall Sahlins’ argument that kinship is based not on an exchange of biophysical substances, but on “participation in one another’s existence” (2013: 18), or “mutuality of being” (ibid.: 2).

The role of volition, of intentional and chosen action, is essential to this framework. Returning a favor, like returning a gift, might seem obligatory, but

11. Some of these implications have been examined, in relation to a theory of favors, by the contributors to *Economies of favour after socialism* (Henig and Makovsky 2017).

Pitt-Rivers, upending Mauss, asserts that nothing about either gesture is required. We must choose to respond, both to the experience of grace and to the inadequacy of law, which graceful gestures exceed. Without these willful actions, the social does not happen. It is not possible.¹² Grace is Pitt-Rivers' "floating signifier" (Lévi-Strauss [1950] 1987), yet unlike *mana* or *hau*, it cannot be possessed or transferred; it can only be *hoped for*. In this sense, grace is reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss' notion of a "supplement" or "third element" both internal and external to systems of reciprocal exchange, and to the abstract relational oppositions of language itself. This "supplement" can generate and contain the asymmetries that give speech its variability and social structures their tendency to change. Without floating signifiers, language would ossify, because the relationship between signified and signifier, uninterrupted by the accumulation of historical events and contingent knowledge, would become necessary and immutable. Lévi-Strauss believed that, without the diversity generated by a third element, even systems of reciprocal exchange (direct or generalized reciprocity) would evolve toward an ultimate balance and their constituent groups would eventually merge. The motion of exchange would meet an ontological termination. How does Lévi-Strauss solve the problem? He needed a concept to explain the persistence of logically and logistically unsustainable systems. Thus, he had to find a way to replicate the effect of a signifier with *zero symbolic value* in language—one which breeds and incorporates variation, as the words "stuff" and "thing" do in English—at the level of social institutions.¹³ The result is the invention of the "zero institution," one having "no intrinsic property other than that of establishing the necessary preconditions for the existence of the social system to which they belong; their presence—in itself devoid of significance—enables the social system to exist as a whole" (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 159).

This was the central paradox to which Pitt-Rivers returned as well, and often with greater originality and panache than his Parisian friend. Human society is

12. This kind of philosophical puzzle, or *aporia*, is a device famously associated with Jacques Derrida. Anyone who reads his *Of hospitality* (2000) alongside Pitt-Rivers' "The law of hospitality" (Chapter 7), or their related analyses of friendship, or gifts, will wonder if they were secret admirers of each other's work.

13. "In the system of symbols which makes up any cosmology, it would just be a zero *symbolic value*, that is, a sign marking the necessity of a supplementary symbolic content over and above that which the signified already contains, which can be any value at all, provided it is still part of the available reserve, and is not already, as the phonologists say, a term in a set" (Lévi -Strauss [1950] 1987: 64).

held together by a complex array of structures and traditions. Rules, in short. But social life happens because *we constantly move beyond the limits of received forms*. We constantly alter and transcend them. More tantalizing still, we create them—or do they simply occur to us as miracles?—in a realm of excess, of gratuity, that pulls us beyond the mere reproduction, even the savvy modification, of social life. The implications are mind-bending. Consider, for example, the temporality of the gift. We know from Bourdieu (1977, 1997) that the paradox of the gift dwells in the possibility of experiencing it as *both* gratuitous and repayable. This contradiction is solved by the work of time: more precisely, by the time-lag between gift and counter-gift that enables us to perceive gifts as altruistic and keeps us from knowing, with certainty, whether a gift is ultimately gratuitous or not. Grace, however, stretches the horizon of time even further, posing *eternity* as the point of (no) return, annihilating the very element Bourdieu considers constitutive of the gift.

Similarly, Pitt-Rivers' invitation to test the limits of the social pushes us to reflect on figures who embody values antithetical to noble expenditure and the Maussian "joy of giving." Instead of keeping things now in order to give them away later, or to allow lesser gifts to circulate (*per* Weiner 1992), these agents take without giving, consume without recirculating, and transform the substances they consume for reuse in other domains entirely. Often these agents inhabit a cosmological imagination that attributes to them innate wasting powers, or exploitative natures. Because they already exist within a social structure, these agents can invade other social or vital spaces, nullifying or consuming the forms of value found there without producing different values. Examples of such figures of nullification are the parasite, the tax-evader, the free-rider, the witch, the plagiarizer, the sycophant, the hanger-on, and the usurer. In the worldview suggested by Pitt-Rivers, they would all have a necessary (and negative) relationship to grace.

As Jacques Le Goff (1990) has shown, twelfth- and thirteenth-century theological treatises offered elaborate accounts of how usury distorted a natural economy ordained by God and how this distortion could be repaired by the pure externality of grace. Because usurers sold time, an immaterial quality that could be owned only to God, their trade was characterized as a kind of theft; in short, as stealing from God. Can one legitimately harvest time, as one can reap a field of wheat? The idea of charging interest for a sum of time was deemed sinful because it was unnatural. Yet usury is essential work even in protocapitalist economies, and the medieval Church found ways to rationalize (or at least

tolerate and forgive) it. How to solve the conundrum of the theft of time? By introducing a new manipulation of time and a new space in the cosmology of the afterlife. The profit on delayed returns was cured by *creating the spatial embodiment of a time-lag*, namely Purgatory (*cf.* also Le Goff 1984). The profits generated by collecting interest could be laundered, so to speak, in Purgatory, in the afterlife, where the sin of selling time could be forgiven through *a time of penitential waiting*. The wealth amassed through delayed reciprocity was cancelled through delayed salvation. By this route, the money-lender could enter Paradise, and European capitalism could sanitize its profits, and restore its spiritual health, in the refracted space of Purgatory.

None of this reasoning would surprise Pitt-Rivers. He realized that a fraught, generative relationship between law and grace is built into Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions, which are heavily invested in notions of divine blessing, divinely ordained law, and a better world beyond the one we know. His anthropological sensibilities were perfected in Spain, a modern Christian society. But like Mauss, Pitt-Rivers was a skilled sampler of the ethnographic canon. Given the presence of hospitality and honor-like notions in most human societies, he assumed that ideas of grace are equally widespread.¹⁴ Finding them requires analytical work at “the point of junction between the ideal and the real world, the sacred and the profane” (p. 103), and this analytical effort requires movement and response similar to that which animates social life. For Pitt-Rivers, this movement was always, quite literally, about relocating the analyst and what s/he analyzes. He was a connoisseur, long before it had faddish appeal, of the scalar shift. This tactic is evident in almost any essay Pitt-Rivers wrote, and it is aided and abetted by the elasticity of his key analytical concepts. Honor and grace (like house, host, and guest) can be used to interpret the granular details of Andalusian village life, or they can be analyzed in relation to class hierarchies, larger national contexts, ambient Mediterranean alternatives, their likenesses to ancient Greek and Hebrew materials, or to analogous concepts located as far afield as Inuit seasonal camps or the strong words of Tikopian chiefs.

This analytical effort took Pitt-Rivers into a space beyond existing form and content. His approach was fundamentally comparative and articulatory, but it never has the flat, accretional, contingent feel we now associate with assemblages and actor-networks. There is always a discernible hierarchy of value

14. We could argue that in so-called “fortune societies” (da Col 2012), ideas of grace suffuse the *cosmoeconomies* of everyday life.

in his work, with obvious import and moral consequences. This preference for the moral, and for moral distinction, explains the kinds of topics Pitt-Rivers gravitated toward and how he engaged with them. It also accounts for the prophetic, cautionary strands in his work. When he wrote about honor, hospitality, or friendship, he engaged in a deeply moral project. One might even say he was crafting an anthropology that allowed him to moralize, and a moral stance that supported a specific kind of anthropological reasoning.

Pitt-Rivers knew that movement between law and grace, head and heart, is necessary to produce interpretive insight. It is something that must be reenacted in analysis, not merely analyzed. It carries us, as actors and as analysts, beyond mere habitus. The gratuitous is not random for Pitt-Rivers. It has its own history of movement, and as such it can be traced in a variety of traveling concepts. Analytical movement into spaces of grace is always, according to Pitt-Rivers, *voluntary*. It is an act of will; it requires transcendence; and it does not guarantee a return. In his preface to the second edition of *The people of the Sierra* (1971), Pitt-Rivers claims that to do ethnography and to analyze ethnographic data well, the anthropologist must stake out a position neither fully within, nor fully beyond the world s/he describes, thus coming loose from prior constraints on moral imagination and acquiring, in a new space of perception, a kind of heightened sensitivity to pattern and exception. The process is aspirational, and always incomplete.

It is never possible to detach oneself entirely from one's natal culture—what on earth should we be if it were?—the culturally homeless anthropologist cannot exist, however he rebel against his past; such an ideal is unattainable. Yet if he does not strive for objectivity placing his moral judgment in abeyance, he will fall only into pedestrian ethnocentrism. The worth of a work of social anthropology relates largely to the degree to which it achieves a genuine detachment. (1971: xxiii)

Detachment, for Pitt-Rivers, is genuine when it frees us from binding moral judgments, from our own histories and life experiences, and even from the precedents and predilections of anthropology as a discipline. In short, detachment could be said to produce an interpretive state of grace, one located in an analytical context (actually, in a kind of intellectual striving) that, like the mediatory concept of grace itself, is “evanescent and self-contradictory” (p. 98).¹⁵

15. In his deep-cutting critique of Pitt-Rivers' thoughts on lying, secrecy, and method, Taussig immediately perceives the religious undertones in this stance: “We note

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE AT ONCE

Pitt-Rivers insisted that “analysis” is only one location in a string of production sites that, together, make anthropology. In fine Oxford tradition, he insisted on endless movement between the ethnographer’s own society, worlds defined specifically by fieldwork, and the vast body of knowledge anthropologists make available to each other for comparison.¹⁶ In each of these locations he could produce the evanescent, self-contradictory moments of illumination that are, for the anthropologist, the equivalent of “saying grace.” His observations on aging and youth culture in the societies of the global north (Chapter 15) have the clarity of vision that comes when sociological analysis is comparative and, as a result, more broadly human. His essay on honor in Andalusia (Chapter 1) is uncanny in its ability to parse out local meanings, contextualizing them within variable frames of class and gender. His essays on *mana* (Chapter 2), caste and race (Chapters 18 and 19), and ritual kinship (Chapter 6) are *tour de force* displays of comparativist reasoning, and their sublime moments come unexpectedly, when Pitt-Rivers demonstrates failures of analogical overreach and misapplication of terms, the all-too-common sins of ethnographic theory. Something like detachment is required to name these sins, and to atone for them. “Conceptions are something other than the words used to express them,” he says (p. 48), a simple and marvelous observation; once a conception is defined, “we should search for its significance, not in attempting to find words in English equivalent to it, but in the associations it makes between different realms of meaning” (p. 42). And in the latter pursuit, the impossible relation between detachment and embodiment materializes, almost as a mystery.

It is in the nature of such constructs [honor and *mana*] that they are lived in the struggle of life rather than conceived objectively and therefore while they

the spiritual call to self-discipline with its promise of future reward, the self-denial required by law, not the law of the state, as in Franco’s Spain, but the laws of ‘methodology’ stipulated by social analysis in search of truth” (1999: 75).

16. This tripartite scheme, originating in the ideas of Evans-Pritchard, circulated for decades in the pedagogy of Oxford anthropology. Pocock offers the classic formulation: “It is by recognizing that he is engaged in a dialogue of three—himself, the society studied and his fellow sociologists—that the objectivity peculiar to [the ethnographer] is preserved. . . . It is clear that if he eliminates any one of the partners . . . the dialogue is broken and he falls back into the collective representations of his own or the other society” (1971: 105). The argument is remade by Pitt-Rivers in “Contextual analysis and the locus of the model” (Chapter 17).

can only be felt from inside they cannot be known save from outside. Indeed to be lived effectively they must *not* be known objectively for they must inspire the commitment that contact with the sacred bestows and contact with the laboratory destroys. (p. 45)

Hence the need to create a space of interpretation, somewhere between life and laboratory, in which struggle, knowledge, feeling, commitment, and the sacred can be analyzed as if from inside and outside at once.

Pitt-Rivers offers us a glimpse into his making of this space in “Reflections on fieldwork in Spain” (Chapter 20), an essay that is humane and tactical in equal degree. Describing his much younger self from the vantage of old age, he paints the untrained¹⁷ ethnographer as an even-keeled fumbler, unsure of what he is doing but willing to play along. He is suspect (a presumed spy) and welcome (an obvious guest); he is laughed at, misled, befriended, and dragged along on misadventures. Mostly, he is confused. He diligently fills his notebooks under the protection of patrons and local helpers who risked their careers and reputations to place him in Grazalema, procure municipal records for him, and coax him toward a sure knowledge of how things work. The detachment and objectivity Pitt-Rivers describes in the second preface to *The people of the Sierra* must have come many months later, over a desk in Oxford; in Grazalema, he is fully engaged, a green stranger, and (most apparent of all) English. Graceful things, in analysis or demeanor, seem far away, and hospitality, the mutual obligation of host and guest, is all that allows movement toward them.

Pitt-Rivers situates his data-gathering within a largely improvised, hard-to-manage flow of events and interactions. Figuring things out, even knowing how to ask sensible questions—about bullfighting or *compadrazgo* or healing—is a skill that emerged gradually. Judging from the anecdotes he shares in “Reflections on fieldwork in Spain,” which were clearly polished for teaching and have the lingering effect of parables, we can see that the eventual state of detachment, unattainable and ideal, is a result of many delightful and humiliating mistakes. This is the abrasion, the shaking loose that leads to transformative insight. It is not always painful, but it is always unsettling, and the conclusions Pitt-Rivers

17. Pitt-Rivers received almost no training in fieldwork methods, which were treated, in the Oxford of his day, as a kind of private (if not occult) practice unique to each ethnographer and each site of fieldwork. For a fairly detailed account of what he did in Grazalema, and how, see “The value of the evidence” (Pitt-Rivers 1978).

drew about the role of pain in rites of passage (Chapter 13)—basically, that pain secures in the individual body and mind the reality of a changed social status—can perhaps be redeployed to explain the role of fieldwork in the making of anthropologists.

BENEDICTION

In his *Introduction à l'œuvre de Marcel Mauss*, Lévi-Strauss ([1950] 1987) famously argued that Mauss was fooled by native concepts, that he missed the forest by focusing on the trees, by linking his explanation of the gift to the Maori notion of *hau*. Rather than examining exchange as a whole, Mauss split it into three parts which a good structuralist would have to reassemble in order to highlight the more fundamental human phenomenon of *circulation*. Lévi-Strauss accused Mauss of failing to perceive the underlying structural totality and phylogenetic mechanism which grounds the construct we call “gift”: the endless need to exchange words, things, persons, and vital forces. Now imagine that Lévi-Strauss had written an *Introduction à l'œuvre de Julian Pitt-Rivers* and imputed to our Englishman the same methodological blunders he ascribed to Mauss. Is Pitt-Rivers not foregrounding *grace* as a native Christian concept, thus missing the more subtle yet foundational phylogenetic element of relationality? As for the structural totality underlying the asymmetrical structures of incorporating strangers, of commensality and conviviality, of sanctuary and visitation, of sacrifice and feasting, and of so much else that is normally encompassed by the polythetic category of “hospitality”—what might this totality be? What if the universe of gratuity, of chancy offerings and returns—a sociality of gambits—were to constitute the horizons of intention and influence that define the “mysterious effectiveness of relationality,” as Viveiros de Castro calls it (2009: 243)? We hope readers of this Omnibus will puzzle over these thought-experiments, which abound in Pitt-Rivers’ writings.

Marilyn Strathern (1990) once noted that certain geographical regions encourage the development of particular forms of anthropological theory while discouraging others. The observation leaves us to wonder what anthropology would look like today if it had arrived in the Mediterranean and Europe sooner. How would we talk about “sociality” and “relations” if the problem of hospitality had been isolated and treated before the problem of the gift? What if grace and honor were foundational concepts, and *mana*, the *hau*, and *taboo* were

regional oddities? What if biblical and classical traditions were more often the explicit backdrop, rather than the background noise, of cultural analysis?¹⁸ The dimensions of this alternative anthropology are not the stuff of counterfactual history. They are fully visible in the modes of ethnographic theory Pitt-Rivers perfected. This other, actually existing anthropology is thoroughly historicized and text-based; it is cosmopolitan; it is oriented toward house politics, hospitality, and the ethical complexities of host/guest relations; it is amenable to the informal and everyday as well as the institutional and complex; and, most of all, it is drawn toward transcendence, toward deferral and absent ideals, a preference that makes it attentive to the moral uncertainties—the zones of lying and truth—that accumulate in the ambiguous spaces between local experience, regional systems, and worlds that exist before and after the ones we now inhabit. It is an anthropology, we might argue, that was too late in arriving and is still not as firmly established, or as widely and competently practiced, as it should be.

Pitt-Rivers was alarmed by the likelihood that this alternative anthropology would be captivated by logics and institutions that dismiss the possibility of transcendence, an outcome that would subject the discipline to a single moral judgment, thereby preventing insights of a genuinely alternative kind. In “Contextual analysis and the locus of the model” (Chapter 17), Pitt-Rivers warns that, if anthropology falls into its own theoretical discourses, it is doomed. If it falls into the worldviews of the people it studies, merely restating or empirically documenting their case, it is doomed. If it becomes a kind of global “technocentric” expertise, enlisted in institutional strategies to organize and control difference, it is doomed (p. 396). As Euro-American socioeconomic and ethical forms have steadily pervaded the worlds studied by anthropologists—especially those characterized as “remote”¹⁹—the concerns of this early Europeanist anthropologist have grown ever more pressing. It is as though, writing in 1967, Pitt-Rivers foresaw the problems that would dominate anthropology from the 1980s on.

18. Our critique is directed at Anglophone anthropology. In France, Jean-Pierre Vernant, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, and Marcel Detienne used structuralism to develop an anthropology of the classical world, which has since been widely employed to revisit the synchronic ethnographic analysis of such long-established anthropological categories as sacrifice (Detienne and Vernant 1998).

19. In the sense intended by Ardener: “a condition not related to periphery, but to the fact that certain peripheries are by definition not properly linked to the dominant zone” ([1987] 2012: 532).

Hubert and Mauss believed that “society always pays itself with the counterfeit coin of its dreams” (1904: 127, our translation). But some transactions exceed the limits of the social. The Spanish stranger-guest summons God to pay his debts, transacting grace for hospitality, a role Pitt-Rivers was taught to play, with great skill, by his Andalusian hosts. In the pages that follow, the worldly fruits of that exchange, and its incalculable balance, are passed on to us.

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