One of the critical issues for a nation’s standing, as well as for individual citizens negotiating their own sense of self, is how we relate to the ‘other’ – to cultures and people different from ourselves. The concept of hospitality is central to this relationship. ‘Hospitality’ is related etymologically both to the ‘lord of strangers’ and to the ‘enemy, foreigner, or stranger’. This ambiguity within the word indicates the reflexive relationship that exists between host and foreigner, who may be also a guest.

As Derrida wrote, the question of hospitality is bound to the performance of law. For Derrida our exchanges of hospitality, our commitment to and contestation of categories of host and guest, as well as our ability to exercise hospitality and access hospitality is related to law. This is perhaps especially the case within a system of nation-states, in which questions of political and cultural belonging intersect with legal modes of belonging. From this perspective, to be ‘foreign’ is to be positioned outside of the law, before the law or subject to its judgment; potentially unable to speak the language of the law (Derrida 2000). Increasingly, it could be argued that the law performs great acts of inhospitality, acts that re-inscribe borders and identities predicated on exclusion and implicated in race, class, gender.

But hospitality also exceeds these lawful relations; indeed it forces us to question them. This is because hospitality is also culture and ethics. It is not a question of whether or not, or what variety of ethics, rather, as Derrida writes in On Cosmopolitanism, ‘hospitality is culture itself and not simply an ethic amongst others . . . ethics is hospitality’ (Derrida 2001, 17). What are some of the theoretical and practical implications of this string of relations: law, hospitality, culture, and ethics? What sorts of impacts can deconstructive thinking have on this set of relations? For instance, can a reconsideration of the relationship between law and hospitality tell us something about emerging norms surrounding animal rights, or the development of Nature’s Rights?

From another perspective, in Being Singular Plural Jean-Luc Nancy revises our basic understanding of being as being-with-one-another: ‘Being cannot be anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the with and as the with of this singularly plural existence’ (Nancy 2000, 3). This fundamentally shifts the meaning of hospitality from an act that initiates a relation to another, to an act that is mobilized within a construction of self that already includes a relation to that other. How does this revised understanding of self challenge our understanding of hospitality, the law, and the relationship between the two?
We invite respondents to consider the relation of law to hospitality, the expression of hospitality in law and the ways in which hospitality demands something more of law or even beyond law.

We invite submissions which seek to open up these questions in new ways. Critical essays, memoir, photo-essays, poetry and artistic pieces are welcome.

If you are interested in contributing to this special issue of *Law Text Culture* please submit an **abstract of 400-500 words** to the guest editors by email by **22 March 2013**. Authors will be informed of decisions on abstracts by the end of March.

**Proposed Timeline:**

- Selected authors submit full paper by 14 June 2013.
- Authors informed of outcome of peer review process by 16 August 2013.
- Publication of LTC Volume 17 in December 2013.

**References**