

The Fetid Antinomy of the Secret

On Our Passional Trans-lational Affinities

Ulrich Baer

In "Of Hospitality," Derrida discourses at length over the interchangeable situations of host and hostage precipitated by *Oedipus at Colonus*, elucidating the fundamental ambivalence of hosting. Derrida's exegesis of the play situates the conflict of hospitality in the correspondences between foreignness and death, focalizing on the extreme alienation of dying abroad in a secret location. Wandering alongside Oedipus as he leads Theseus, his hostage host, to his displaced gravesite, the seminar serves as a sort of genealogical tracing of the conditions of possibility for the secret: in order for a meaning to be withheld, presumably it must have taken place within language and thus for a witnessing other who records it, even if one is only confessing one's secret to oneself, in the form of speaking to yourself which Derrida describes as an "auto-affection." This processual auto-affection, negotiating the undead desires of language across the self, catalyzes vampiric transself-becomings which stage the translational affinities of poetics.

I then as psychopomp self will necessarily perform the funeral rites, of obligation to desire's sourceless secret that never stops emanating, like death, from the siteless site of the gay trans man's grave.

The self as the site of a languaged affection underscores the aporetic dilemma of Derrida's seminars on Hospitality. The etymology of the primary term produces a discursive "crossroads," where Derrida locates the conflict of identity: hospitality descends from *hostipets*, a term which refers to the master or self whose identity resides in being host. Here, *hostis* presents the antinomic polyvalence of being both "guest" and "enemy," so that the performative of hospitality, of being hospitable, is always haunted by its opposite.

Oedipus highlights the contradiction within the being of the "master" as master of oneself, by being the father or paterfamilias who, through his singular death, disappears into a state of absolute foreignness. In the extremities of illocality, Oedipus' transgression has displaced him into a vectorial state of ongoing statelessness: the *anomon* (outlaw). By confessing the secret of the location of his tomb to Theseus, Oedipus becomes the guest who takes the host hostage, via the confession. The father's fetid secret, which is the malediction endangering the city, must be guarded by the addressee who has become its host. Oedipus' secret, thus transmitted to the parasitized Theseus, takes the form of an oath which is the expression of a desire that translates itself beyond death, through its interlocutors.

The antinomies of the Oedipal secret map the topologies of aporetic selfhood, as an impossible self-possession. In order to gain mastery over oneself, one performs one's ipseity as a speaking subject through the interventions of a language to which one is "exappropriated:" the dead foreign language. In this manner, we have become hosts who are hostages to the desires of a "father" who has contravened finitude. The resonances of this submission to language, however, maintain an ambivalence resistant to dogmatic moral evaluations. Through our hospitality, a performativity which operates within and perhaps even fundamentally animates language, we precipitate the return of the dead whom we allow to take place in us by our receptivity to being addressed—by their murmuring confidences. Whether or not we acknowledge, or can even locate, the source of its ceremonial emanations, language parasitizes us like Theseus so that, when we come to speak, fundamentally we are already contaminated with the dead's desires.

The Erotics of Hospitality

What do we eroticize about being "discomfited," "altered" by the unknown, the welcoming or hailing of what can't be forethought or foreseen? To take this first step, I must include the preposition "in" in the act of welcoming, which marks Derrida's aporetic moment of self-substantiation, at the instantiation of the threshold between inside and outside, where we strangers have not arrived, yet. This imposed liminal precondition enables the act of invitation, of welcoming in, as a gesture which fixes the presupposed spatial determinations of being. One is able to perform a hospitable addressing because one has a name, an address which belongs to them and determines the place from which they speak, and the site where(by) the addressee would encounter them, and this uncrossable threshold is where one lies transfixed. Why cross? Why allow in?

Derrida repeatedly references a scene from Klossowski's *Roberte ce soir* in which the narrator's uncle derives an erotic pleasure from the imminence of a possible guest. The theoretical guest, whose precise arrival time remains unknowable, places the aunt into a state of expectation wherein she is susceptible to being surprised by the uncle, momentarily (mis)recognized as the other or the unknown arrivant. In this moment, whose strange temporality Derrida examines extensively, the uncle is both: guest and host, he exchanges being with the guest, which is the impossible condition of unconditional hospitality. As in the poetic gesture of apostrophe, a conceit which invites the reader as a third party to the confession of desire, the host welcomes the guest as third party to his erotic-domestic rendezvous, which precipitates unexpected pleasures. Within the erotics of hospitality, voyeurism animates a game of passionate affinities reflective of the impulse to share desire, to experience mutualities of desire. A conviviality—desire like a contagion, amplified through its dispersal, its recognition in another.

Hospitality's contradiction, according to Derrida, is fundamentally an issue of time, within which, chrono-logically, one cannot be both, or endure in the uncle's mixed erotic state: having and not having, "taking and not taking." "Unconditional hospitality" breaks down through the inclusion of its parasitic "other" which is hostility. The paradox of unconditional hosting cannot last: hospitality is annulled as soon as it is put into practice, by being put into place; its definition contains its contradiction: the borderlines of the domain it inaugurates in order to create the conditions for hospitality negate hospitality. Because hospitality "pre-forms" itself, only in the ghostly elapsing of the yet-to-arrive can hospitality exist as possibility, in the interstice before the borders of identity/domain are reinforced, whether physically or invisibly.

Derrida proffers: "This duration without duration, this lapse, this seizure, this instant of an instant that is canceled out, this infinite speed contracted into a sort of absolute halt or haste—this is a necessity that cannot be outsmarted any more: it explains why one always feels late, and that therefore, at the same time, one always yields to precipitation, in the desire for hospitality or in desire as hospitality. At the heart of a hospitality that always leaves something to be desired." The self desires its voyeur-recorder. The self, which is as if a strobe light, the self as if a stuttering periodicity, found and lost, (re)gained as active felt presence of self in moments of shared recognition which defy a "chrono-logics" of steady progression, inducing strange alternate temporalities. Almost like eternity. Self as poiesis, poiesis as techne of autoaffection.

Trans *Anomon*

If the hospitable host eroticizes the act of waiting at the threshold, as they hail the unknowable guest (*l'arrivant*), the vampire is the being of a ritual clandestination (*le revenant*), which must be invited across the limits of the self as one's home and place of being addressed. The vampire, like Oedipus, is the doubly encrypted, the crypt-held; the vampire reeks of the grave—that secret dwelling place of self-returning, which is its sheer and violent freedom—associated with the uncontained of contagion. Like Oedipus, the gay trans man vampire is *anomon*, the outlaw, the "father-son transgressor" perverting the rules of filiation. The gay trans man vampire speaks the language of language's secret. The engraving of "sexual difference," violently naturalized onto bodies as if constituting an innate property of them, only displaces another and another and another secret—of those unknown meanings which language excludes through its acts of exappropriation.

The hostile self longs to combat this paranoiically overcoded difference, re-designated as infestation, and destroy the alterity of the trans/*revenant*; the alterity must be rooted out, destroyed at its hiding-resting place. This is the situation of the oppressed—looted and rooted out at their source of individuated being, called to account for themselves according to the obsessive fetishizations and fantasies of the host who refuses to pronounce his desire for the guest. Instead of reception, the trans individual suffers the practical violence of legal-juridical conventions

around the documentation of identity—the conventions of naming that can't even account for themselves, as names always exceed the fixed meanings or designations which identity documents are supposed to ensure. Derrida alludes to his more extensive discussion, in "Mes Chances," of the singularity of the name, which can never be reduced to semantic equivalences; the name Pierre cannot be reduced to the meaning of a stone—when one addresses Pierre an entire field of possible Pierres opens up and out. The iterative principles of language-itself introduce this chaos of names which name one, name many, and name the unknown.

However, the hierarchical power differentials of coloniality proceed through these grave fixations on identity. Rather than being responsive to one's obligation, with respect to the stranger, to treat the other self as interchangeable with oneself, the invisible border of identity is re-introduced along lines of colonial racializations that seek to overcode and deauthorize difference. Derrida pointedly traces the socio-historical fluctuations of a conditional and xenophobic hospitality extended to a colonized Algeria in the 20th century, in the form of changing citizenship law requirements.

Instead of endeavoring to subject its guest to the violence of the pre-formed notions of subjectivity which proliferate within a localized milieu, an unconditional hospitality hails what absolutely can't be known in advance of its arrival, if ever. In this manner, unconditional hospitality perhaps greets and initiates contact with the realities of what is lived. Derrida repeatedly alludes to translation as one of hospitality's performative gestures. Is your translation capacious enough to carry the foreign name, the trans individual name, across acts of recognition?

No Jouissance Without Hospitality: Rimming His Secret, We Root Through

In *Homosexual Desire*, Hocquenghem draws from Deleuze & Guattari's model of oedipalization in discussing the epiphenomenal production of the privatized individual, while also introducing the theoretical instruments for a critique of phallogocentrism. The "sublimated anus" provides the model for the extraction of the disparate individual from desiring fluxes, as private self or self-possession. Anality becomes the fetid secret that both inaugurates and haunts the individual as subject. Cryptically, Derrida ends the last seminar of "Of Hospitality" with two biblical allegories where hospitality proceeds through deferred acts of sodomy; in both the case of Lot and his daughters and that of the Levite, women are substituted for the men who must not be anally penetrated. The deferred-desired sodomization of the father, the paterfamilias, the displaced secret rotting in an undisclosed locale, as if utterly foreign, is sublimated into hierarchies of substitution, reiterations forcibly inscribing sexual difference onto bodies as power differentials.

In this essay, can you hear me speaking? In speaking as me, can you hear yourself-speaking? Are we taking place in one another?

Taking, not taking; being and not-being—the vampire performs this contradiction. The temporalities of the undead never correspond to our own. The insoluble status of the revenant defies static categories of knowability—he is the deferring of understanding. The vampire who gains admittance leaves a wake of damage, in apparently interpretable signs of malediction. Is violence the index of the unfixated? Hospitality always includes the danger of being changed at the site of the reception of the unknown. The vampire is the source of a fixation which entrances without itself being emplotted. One articulates identity via thresholds. One imagines one self in order to be, to be through being master of one's own domain. The vampire cannot cross unless invited in, but it is the obligation of the host to service a potentially porous border. The vampire is like the absolute exteriority of the war machine, whose reactionary or revolutionary determinations can only be ascertained case by case, through the intuitions of experimental judgements.

A radically transerotic homoethic fervently welcomes the unknown who and/or which will break this loneliness of the guarded self. I, the gay trans man, father-son transgressor and revenant, take place in my host. As in the act of writing poetry, the gestural performatives of hospitality in sexual hosting negotiate the correspondences of my desire to condense with the site where the other longs to come-apart: at the threshold, in a responsive versatility.

The erotics of hospitality delineate the self as the dialectized dynamic of the host who desires to perform the yielding of self in service to the guest self, in an exchange/interchange of identity that overturns the hierarchy of the master-slave dialectic in Hegel, placing identity back into free play and mutability. The host who is guest who is host, in an indefatigable sequence, is no longer alienating his desire to play unconditional host in favor of a pre-formed notion of the desired guest which re-produces a violently reductive pre-formed ipseity of selfhood or manhood.

The gay trans man top as the proper, and properly ironized, holder of the phallus, has come as an anomalous, therefore undecidable, liberator. The gay trans man is the coming man, not the final man but the man as *eschaton*, who heralds an apocalyptic event of revelation which has always already occurred—it's still happening: the continuous breaking-in of the tragic beautiful chaotic ineffable irrepressible real.

