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The Host Hosted

Hospitality and the Recognition of the Host in Heinrich von Kleist's *Amphitryon*

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Abstract

My article focuses on the Derridean aporias of unconditional and conditional hospitality. I argue that Kleist's play *Amphitryon* performs a two-fold deconstruction of the elementary conventions of hospitality. First, hospitality is practiced only after the guest is (falsely) recognized as the head of the household, which on the one hand confronts us with the impossibility of hosting the host, but on the other hand points to a possible condition of unconditional hospitality, which is the anonymity – and hence interchangeability – of the guest and the host. Second, and not independently from the first, Kleist's play also illuminates not-knowing or the unknown as a key factor of hospitality, which makes hospitality an open secret in the sense that its conditions are never fully revealed but have never been fully concealed either.

Keywords

Conditionality, Jacques Derrida, doubles, enemy, hospitality, hostipitality, invitation, Heinrich von Kleist, open secret, the unknown

1. Introduction

After Jacques Derrida's so-called ethical turn in the 1990s, which brought with it highly influential theorems such as zoopoetics (Derrida 2008, 6; see Driscoll and Hoffmann 2018) or gift-giving as a non-transitory event (Derrida 1995), hospitality or "hostipitality" became one of his more inherently paradoxical concepts. Not only because the French word *hôte* has a double meaning, designating both the host and the guest, the latter of whom can turn out to be either a friend or a hostile stranger (Derrida 2000a, 3), but also because unconditional hospitality can only be achieved through several restrictions.

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This is an inevitable and incessant transgression which Derrida calls "the step of hospitality" which at the same time means no hospitality: *pas d'hospitalité*. This step is taken by the host, who can only guarantee hospitality within certain limits, and the guest, who crosses these limits; first of all the threshold of the house (Derrida 2000b, 75). This is why Derrida concludes that hospitality is always a step from one impossibility to another, it is sheer impossibility, because for unconditional hospitality to happen, it must be conditional: one of its conditions is that "the conditions, the norms, the rights" (77) and laws have to be transgressed in order to take the step *of* and *to* hospitality, but such conditions are what make the transgression possible in the first place.

In my article, I first discuss the paradoxes, limits, and conditions of hospitality as conceptualized by Derrida. Second, I interpret hospitality in Heinrich von Kleist's play *Amphitryon* as an act that is eminently based on the unknown, or more accurately the not-known, on something unbeknownst to those involved in the event of hospitality which is nevertheless performed – a dynamic similar to that of the open secret. Third, I examine the two main doubles in the play, Sosias/Mercury and Amphitryon/Jupiter, in terms of the relationship between the host and guest. Fourth, I conclude with the consequences that the situation of the host being hosted creates for the act of invitation as a conventional element of hospitality.

2. Hospitality in and out of Bounds

If we take a closer look at the aporia of the interdependence between conditionality and unconditionality, we can see that it stems from the fact, already alluded to above, that there are several limitations at play in Derrida's idea of hospitality. Lóránt Kicsák argues that hospitality can be broken down to a moment of decision-making, when it is not the content (i.e., the issue on which a decision must be made, or the goal or consequence of the decision) that counts; instead, the emphasis is on the act itself (Kicsák 2023, 27). In other words, a decision must be made which establishes a relationship between the present situation of conditional hospitality and the universality of unconditional hospitality. This also presupposes an openness to an incalculable future horizon that is necessary for such a decision, the consequence of which is a promise in a broader sense. It is a promise made by the host in such a way that they are willing to receive the guest: the promise is thus an invitation that the host can be taken up on and which makes the host indebted to the guest before the guest is indebted to the host.

This dynamic of promising hospitality – the promise as invitation and debt to the other – recalls ideas from Nietzsche's seminal work *On the Genealogy of Morality*, in which the ability to make a promise is indispensable to culture insofar as the latter is based on institutionalized forms of memory. According to Nietzsche, the foundation of culture occurred at the very moment when the one who made the promise could be reminded of the promise and rightfully taken up on it (Nietzsche 2006, 35–6). In the context of Derridean hospitality, the debt that constitutes the temporal frame for culture in which rights and duties are established – i.e., one can make a promise and thus be held to one's word – can be interpreted as the debt of the guest, which is nevertheless conditioned by and contingent upon the existence of rights and duties through a temporal double-bind. But the possession of rights is not itself absolute, since it is not granted unconditionally: the guest has not only a right in relation to the host, but also a duty to behave properly in relation to the host; that is, to respect the host's rights. It is compliance with this duty that ensures the continued possession of one's rights as a guest (Kakoliris 2015, 146). Derrida also reminds us, however, that without the host's right to a home, despite the restriction on hospitality that this ownership might imply, there is no opening or passage to hospitality (Derrida 2000a, 3), and thus no right or debt to hospitality to ensure that the moment for the decision about hospitality arises (Kakoliris 2015, 150).

Making a promise also constitutes a community, a kind of "mutual belonging" that is preceded by a decision and serves as the basis for all subsequent decisions: a promise is a decision about what we share with whom, and therefore what we deny to others (Derrida 2005a, 80). Derrida remarks that the figure of the enemy, interpreted exhaustively by Carl Schmitt, is helpful in the sense that it constitutes a border that is clearly identifiable and signifies the limits of communal belonging (83). Considering that the sovereignty of the host depends on the right to refuse entry, to not extend the invitation (i.e., the promise of hospitality) to certain people, it is easy to evaluate the importance of the stranger who is at once a threatening force and a guarantee of togetherness (Derrida 2005b, 11). Giving the stranger a name further illuminates their "delimiting" role, whether we call them a friend, who can take that step to hospitality by crossing the threshold, or an enemy, who has to remain outside the boundaries of the household.

The demarcation of the role of the enemy, the host, the guest, or the stranger – who may turn out to be any of the above – occurs through naming. This is why Derrida suggests that absolute hospitality does not need words, since it would lead to a decision about the identity of the stranger beforehand (Derrida 2000b, 15–7).

Still, language seems necessary, since without it no conventions could be enacted. In other words, without the use of words, no restrictions would be placed on the guest, but nor would there be any framework to welcome them into the household. The unnamed and unidentified stranger, who is neither compelled to confess nor forcibly assigned an identity, is the exact opposite of the Schmittian figure of the enemy, to which Derrida often refers in his analysis of friendship and hospitality – especially with regard to how Carl Schmitt introduces meticulous distinctions into the said figure. For instance, Schmitt distinguishes between the enemy with whom there is no friendship and hospitality, as was the case between the Greeks and the barbarians (Schmitt 2006, 163), those who are regarded as mere enemies, and those to whom this right is denied, such as rogues, rebels, and traitors (164). However, as Derrida points out, while the figure of the enemy is indispensable to Schmitt's thought insofar as it serves as a model for all other figurative differentiations, the distinction between enemy and friend, as well as within the figure of the enemy itself, can be blurred. Not only because "the antithesis of friendship *in the political sphere* is not […] *enmity* but *hostility*" (Derrida 2005b, 87 [italics in original]), which would yield to the lack of sentiment and affection, so that the enemy would be the stranger who is approached without xenophobia – and not the other way around, so that everyone who is the target of xenophobia is categorized as a stranger – but also because one can be hostile towards a friend in public and love their enemy in private (88). Consequently, unlike in the political sphere or the world of the law, the roles of friend and enemy can overlap in hospitality, and such inextricabilities also introduce the dialectics of the private and the public that can be translated back into the relationship between the laws of the household and those laws that cross a single threshold and are thus enacted across multiple households.

As Schmitt notes, the space of the law has undergone many changes, the most prominent of which is probably the transition from nomadic fields to the fixed household (*oikos*), the latter characterized by proper land appropriation that establishes a stable order, in the enforcement of which the law opens up (Schmitt 2006, 341). This dynamic of the law returns in Derrida's idea that hospitality requires a household while also establishing what a household is – similar to how the law that transgresses itself is the law of hospitality:

> The antinomy of hospitality irreconcilably opposes *The* law, in its universal singularity, to a plurality that is not only a dispersal (laws in the plural), but a structured multiplicity, determined by a process of division and differentiation […] It would risk being abstract, utopian, illusory, and so turning over into its opposite.

> In order to be what it is, the law thus needs the laws, which, however, deny it, or at any rate threaten it, sometimes corrupt or pervert it. (Derrida 2000b, 79)

Another set of limitations that contribute to the inherently paradoxical nature of unconditional hospitality is discussed by Giustino de Michele. He emphasizes the different kinds of finitude that Derrida considered necessary for authentic hospitality to take place (de Michele 2023, 88). First, hospitality requires the finitude of space, whether we mean leaving a particular territory in the case of the exile, or the threshold and door of a house in which one finds refuge. As the German media-theorist Bernhard Siegert notes "[a] door is a place where the difference that constitutes the law has to negate itself in order to become effective," while the threshold "is a zone that belongs neither to the inside nor the outside" (Siegert 2015, 194). The limitations introduced by the door and the threshold as markers of spatial finitude are the elementary condition of opening up for the other, who enters a new world by crossing the threshold – a rite of passage that provides a new identity, often proposed as transfiguration. Second, there is temporal finitude: the guest remains a guest only as long as they do not intrude, or until they become a member of the household, which, alongside becoming a parasite, is one possible consequence of overstaying one's welcome. And third, there is the finitude of life and power: as Derrida reminds us, the constituent of the word "hospitality" is not only *hostis* (host, hostility, etc.) but also *potis*, which is related to words such as *potentia* and *potentis*, expressing mastery and sovereignty, even in the unlimited form of the des*pot*. Consequently, there is an essential "self-restraint" in the idea of hospitality (Derrida 2000a, 13) that maintains the distance between what belongs to the host and the guest respectively, on the one hand, and the power of the host to remain master of their house, on the other, so that they can invite the guest into it. Therefore, the one who has unlimited power can be neither host nor guest.

Following Plautus and Molière, Kleist's play *Amphitryon* builds on these paradoxical and transversal elements of hospitality, especially with regard to two factors: the act of decision-making and the productive limits of finitude. The impossibility of decision-making comes to the fore when the problem of identifying the real Amphitryon arises. It is a question closely related to distinguishing between guest and host, the main conflict around which the play revolves. In *Amphitryon*, the question of hospitality comes down to the hospitability of the host, in a sense that it is the host who is being hosted. And as for finitude, Jupiter, an omnipotent god, towards the end of the play demands of the real host, the real Amphitryon, to "recognize how noble is / My ancestry and that I'm lord in Thebes. / Mine shall he

call the fertile fields of Thebes; / […] / And mine, this house; and mine, the mistress / Who dwells within it quietly" (Kleist 1962, 65). But only by disguising himself as Amphitryon – that is, by masking himself as a mortal – can he make himself hospitable. As obvious as this masking and the dramaturgy of doubles are to the recipients of the play (its readers or the audience), it is precisely the misrecognition of the host that makes it possible to interpret not only the actors' actions on stage as theatrical presence, but also the characters' actions in the household, thereby creating a metalepsis through which the paradoxical conventions of hospitality can be staged. Rather than abusing them, Kleist's characters unknowingly endorse and act out the self-transgressive conventions in the Derridean notion of hospitality.

3. The Interchangeability of the Host and the Guest: Hospitality as an Open Secret

I argue that Heinrich von Kleist's *Amphitryon* stages most of the aporias of hospitality outlined above: the indistinguishability of host and guest, the latter of whom may be hostile or friendly; the conditionality of unconditional hospitality, and the self-establishment and self-transgression of the law. To demonstrate these impossibilities inherent to hospitality, Kleist's play presents a situation in which the host is hosted, or more precisely, the one whose intentions are interpreted as hostile, the abusive god Jupiter, is taken as the host and in the end praises the household for its hospitality.

Since Kleist's version of *Amphitryon* began as a translation of Molière's popular play, he already used Amphitryon and Sosias as telling names or aptronyms: the former means "the good host" and the latter "the double," as popularized by Molière (see Lacan 1991, 259). Kleist also added miraculous episodes, such as the displacement of the diadem from the gilded box given to Alcmene by her husband, or the transformation of the letter on its seal from A to J. The magic (*Reiz* '[de]light') sparked by the communion of Alcmene and Jupiter as Amphitryon (Kleist 1962, 16–7), however, soon turns into madness (*Wahn*) when Alcmene and Charis investigate the miraculous transformation of the capital letter, which now designates Jupiter, who stands in for Alcmene's husband, instead of Amphitryon. Turning wonder into delusion clearly distinguishes Kleist's version from the tongue-in-cheek comic

atmosphere of Molière's (see e.g., Szukala 2013, 38–9).[2] Moreover, one element that is almost entirely Kleist's invention is the third act, in which public testimony is required for the decision about hospitality, that is, the recognition of the host as a guest and *vice versa* – the main thematic paradox of *Amphitryon* – when Alcmene has to identify her real husband (Kleist 1962, 75) in front of military men and the general public.

In Kleist's play, hospitality is practiced only after the guest is (falsely) recognized as the head of the household, which on the one hand confronts us with the impossibility of hosting the host, but on the other hand points to a possible condition of unconditional hospitality, namely the anonymity – and hence interchangeability – of guest and host. And just as in Kleist's short story *The Marquise of O*, where the protagonist submits an article to the paper to identify the father of her unborn child, in *Amphitryon* Alcmene's testimony about her husband must also be supported by the public; in the case of the latter, by the comrades of her real husband, who give her the right of identification, and by those heralds who would spread the news (76). Alcmene's testimony not only stands on the threshold between privacy and publicity, but also executes the reconstruction of an event that is only accessible through the referentialization of conditions (see Lőrincz 2016, 242–3), an act proposed as an iteration of mistaking the guest for the host. In other words, unbeknownst to her, the decision about which of the two Amphitryons is her husband is also a decision about who the host and the guest are. Furthermore, the reason why Alcmene's hosting of Jupiter as Amphitryon cannot be testified *by* and *to* the public is that the identification of her husband is already an iteration of the unconscious, or better to say, unknown decision about remaining faithful or accepting the divine gift, her future demigod child, Hercules.

Like public testimony, this "unknown" (*unwissentlich*) is a recurring theme in Kleist's work, and it also plays an important role in *The Marquise of O*. On the one hand, *unwissentlich* is the substitution of "immaculate" as in the immaculate conception, which is acted out in the play via the interchangeability of host and guest: Alcmene gets pregnant by a god because the double stands in for the original and gives birth to a new character – an iteration yet again. On the other hand, the unknown encompasses not knowing who the guest and the host are, which is

[2] This transfiguration from wonder to delusion also brings Kleist's dramaturgy closer to a Shakespearean model. While it is common in the reception of the play to refer to the dramaturgy of a comedy of errors (see e.g., Wittkowski and Riechel 1971), Kleist's version of *Amphitryon* shares dramaturgical elements not only with Shakespeare's comedies but also with his tragedies. Alcmene's being tortured by visions bears some resemblance to Lear's or Macbeth's fate, while the haunting delusions triggered by members of the household was a favored leitmotif among Shakespeare's contemporaries as well, it is enough to think of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*.

presented as a precondition for hospitality; a false testimony, or one might even say, a lie that the guest is the host, is what makes hospitality possible (196). However, Jupiter masking himself as Amphitryon also implies another "lie", namely that he is not the host of the household – he repeatedly brings this up to Alcmene – so that he can be hosted (Kleist 1962, 19). The unknown or not knowing is nevertheless constitutive of the decision about hospitality, not only because it preserves the stranger as unnamed, unfamiliar, and unidentified, but because it relieves the host of their conventional responsibilities – so that Jupiter disguised as the host can be a guest in Amphitryon's house.

This structure disrupts the conventions of conditional hospitality and introduces turmoil and disturbance among the characters. In Csongor Lőrincz's interpretation of another of Kleist's short stories, *The Betrothal in Santo Domingo*, a speech act such as the identification of the host or the guest, or a testimony about who is which, becomes intelligible only when it is ratified as such by contract or convention (Lőrincz 2016, 204). In *Amphitryon*, however, it is a false testimony as a speech act that makes all other acts of hospitality intelligible and valid. Consequently, the inextricability of the unknown and the false at play in decisions, identifications, and testimonies enacts hospitality as an open secret, in the sense that the conditions of hospitality are never fully revealed but are never entirely concealed either. According to Lőrincz, there is always a threshold in operation in Kleist's work that allows someone to make a testimony about what they have done but not about who they are (197): it is no wonder that when Amphitryon realizes that he must have had a double all along, he says that this "other" has taken away his figure and his deeds (*Gestalt und Art*) (Kleist 1962, 57). Therefore, unconditional hospitality can be perceived

> as a disruption of some domestic order, but primarily as a real threat to the unity of the SELF. The more we perceive the subject as a certain inviolable, harmonious whole and fullness, the greater is the threat associated with the arriving outsider. Then the person is perceived as an interloper, carrying the risk of intrusion and disruption of the subjective individuality, sovereignty. (Marzec 2011, 24).

The unraveling of the paradoxes of how the host can be hosted, how a decision can be made about the identity of the host and the guest, and how the stranger makes hospitality possible by dislocating fixed roles and identities evokes the dynamic of the open secret.[3] While the open secret is usually understood as a

[3] I would like to thank Andrea Timár at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest for recommending this concept to me.

piece of knowledge that cannot be acted upon and lacks the private claim of a secret, it is also a means of protection that grants the privilege of ignoring rather than claiming a piece of knowledge (François 2008, 2). Not only does the open secret challenge axioms of the Enlightenment, such as "knowledge is power," and constitute a non-rational discourse, it also helps to reevaluate a dramatic situation (3) that is conventionally interpreted either as something that contributes very little to nothing to the plot or as something indispensable to prevent an event, so that this prevention itself can become an event in its own right. The decision not to act, however, does not necessarily have to be interpreted as passivity. Instead, it is a "gesture of self-canceling revelation [that] permits a release from the ethical imperative to act upon knowledge" (3). However, in the context of Kleist's play, which revolves around hospitality based on misrecognition, the quoted sentence about the open secret presumes a certain amount of ambiguity, so that the relief from acting upon knowledge gives way to the kind of unconditional hospitality that Derrida aspired to. Thus, in the dynamic of the open secret the element of not-knowing or ignorance becomes a key factor, rather than the claim or demonstration of knowledge. And ignorance as a constitutive feature of unconditional hospitality is present throughout Kleist's play when the guest is mistaken for the host. In *Amphitryon*, Alcmene's perception of Jupiter as her husband is a decision that has been made unknowingly, but if this indispensable element of hosting him as the host is approached in terms of the open secret, then she can no longer be regarded as a character who passively suffers the deception of a god, rather as having the agency of recognition by letting Jupiter dwell in the form of the host, even though he is still treated as a guest.

Such an inclination or deferral between insight and action, which is nonetheless characteristic of the open secret, often calls for free indirect style, as Anne-Lise François notes. And even though she applies the theorem to novels and narratives, her remark that indirect speech frees the character from self-representation (François 2008, 14), which would consist in a constant report on one's agency and the analysis of the connection between causes and effects, motivations and actions, conditions and executions, etc., applies all the more to dramatic forms. Jupiter speaks directly about his identity, while Alcmene unknowingly accepts his identity as her husband's without having to say it out loud (Kleist 1962, 19). But hospitality still occurs, since Jupiter is hosted in lieu of the host and is taken to be the host. This paradox does not need to be articulated; in fact, it can only happen so long as it is unknowingly acknowledged but not expressed – as an open secret should be – for the play's dramaturgy to work.

Consequently, "'unclaimed' experience needs no more [to] signify 'traumatic' experience than 'unvocalized' experience needs [to] signify 'unrealized' experience" (François 2008, 18). The indirectness of the open secret, however, is not simply a distancing or alienating effect, or paradoxical in the sense that despite giving a second-hand account, indirect style can still be presented as an exhaustive description of the self. On such merits, the open secret can be interpreted as a statement whose content completely eludes the character (see 18–9) or even the object that it refers to. If the discourse of the open secret is understood in this way, it explains why Jupiter does not unmask himself until the very end, as well as why Alcmene iterates what has been said between them earlier, at key moments when she is threatened with going mad: first to Charis (Kleist 1962, 42), then to the real Amphitryon (77). The indirect repetition of what has been said suspends the dichotomy of identification and non-identification, which also happens not to the title-character, but to his servant, Sosias. He repeatedly reports to Amphitryon (24–5) and Alcmene, and the play begins with him practicing his role as messenger (3). Then he repeats Mercury's (his double's) words as if they were his own (15). The one who is supposed to be the host, the real Amphitryon is thus (mis)quoted and addressed in indirect speech, but Amphitryon himself never employs this technique: the missing host, who is replaced by the guest, thus becomes the subject of the open secret.

4. The I and Its Doubles

Through the character of Sosias, hospitality is also inextricably linked to the play's main theme of identity and mirror images. On his way home to tell the lady of the house of her husband's victory, Sosias keeps distinguishing between friend and foe (4) and is identified by his double, Mercury, as acting as if he were the master of the household (10). Sosias, in turn, identifies Mercury as someone like himself, albeit a stranger, who can be defeated with some help from the gate (whether by pushing the other into it or taking refuge behind it). The *Me*s and *I*s that Sosias utters and with which he tries to identify himself are soon taken hostage by his double, who also assumes his role as a servant (11). From being the host's right hand, a gatekeeper, Sosias becomes the intruder, held hostage by the true intruder: bound by giving up his identity through an oath that he recognizes Mercury as himself – a similar situation of being taken hostage by an oath was analyzed by Derrida in the play *Oedipus at Colonus* (Derrida 2000b, 107).

The taking of hostages, however, can only take place within the confines of the house to which they belong. This situation is turned upside down when Mercury

takes Sosias hostage outside: when Sosias says that he is now on his way (Kleist 1962, 15 – "mein Weg" in the original) and then approaches the house, he is denied entry by Mercury, who is now posing as the household servant. This is a twofold event: on the one hand, Mercury forces Sosias – the double of whom he has become – to perform his (new) identity, which is determined by a higher power who has chosen to become a mortal gatekeeper. On the other hand, even though Mercury belongs to the realm of the immortals, theatrically he is a foil, his character created as a complement to that of Sosias, yet by snatching his identity, he fundamentally influences his fate – one might say: he cancels it altogether – which refers back to the dramaturgy of ancient tragedies and thus to the original *Amphitryon*. And while Mercury chooses to assume that identity, Sosias cannot choose his identity, since he says: "I'm not Sosias, who I am. / For something, you'll admit, I have to be" (15). By taking his name, Mercury also takes away not only what Sosias is called, but also his calling (*Beruf*), which eventually draws Sosias into an intersubjective relation in which he would have to assume an identity that is not determined by conventions; differently put, his identity is no longer determined either by genealogy (13) or by his position in the economics of the household. And as for Mercury's reception, it is a parodistic situation as far as the conditions of hospitality are concerned, since instead of the stranger being forced to reveal his identity, he reveals his name as that of the gatekeeper: he literally takes a name for himself from a distinguished member of the household – from the one who stands in for the host in his absence – and then he stands in for him. In this case, the stranger is not responsible for his actions (cf. Derrida 2000b, 27) but defers responsibility and punishment: Sosias is blamed for Mercury's mischief, and the latter even gives him a beating as a divine gift (Kleist 1962, 16). Therefore, the event of hospitality that takes place between them frees Sosias from the path already determined for him by his genealogy, fate, etc., and the god becomes hospitable by standing in for a mortal who has already stood in for the host.

While Sosias has only one name, Amphitryon has many, according to Alcmene: "'Tis true, whene'er the populace rejoices in you / And spends its rapture in each of your great names" (17). And although Jupiter is often interpreted as a rapist in the play, he is also the one who challenges the conventions of hospitality by distinguishing between Amphitryon's names and identities. When he inquires whether he is welcomed as a lover or a husband (18) – which also means asking Alcmene whether she loves Amphitryon the victorious general or Amphitryon the passionate man – Alcmene brings up the laws of hospitality, which in this case are

intertwined with the laws of marriage. Jupiter responds by saying that "[t]o think that you're complying with a legal form / Which you imagine binding" (19), but his discourse is soon littered with militarized tropes. On the one hand, he starts echoing Sosias's *geschlagene* ('being beaten,' Sosias used this word when summing up his encounter with Mercury), henceforth establishing another possible mirror relation between Sosias and Amphitryon, servant and master, which further supports his disguise. On the other hand, the iteration of *besiegene*, that is 'besieger, defeater,' raises the question of whether the guest, the one who is welcomed into the house, can appear as a conqueror (18). The Derridean notion of unconditional hospitality, however, allows for such an unannounced or uninvited guest, whose arrival can be codified as an intrusion or invasion; a violation of the domestic order that turns conventions upside down (Derrida 2000b, 22). But such an intrusion can also mean the annulment of conditionality, the transgression of the host's law, especially when someone close to the host visits and makes themselves at home. Jupiter, pretending to be Amphitryon, literally invades the household of the host in whose place he stands in order to be hosted.

While Jupiter's intentions can be interpreted as a desire that finds satisfaction in the self-referential recognition of his own greatness by his beloved (Szukala 2013, 39), it can also be suggested that he opens Alcmene's eyes to the conventions of marriage that influence the codification of love and intimacy – while it is exactly the unknowing acceptance of the conventions of hospitality that allows the guest to be present in the household and to question the conventions. In his last major work, the German system theorist Niklas Luhmann distinguished between the functions associated with marriage as an institution and love that both guarantees and rests on it. For Luhmann, love is not a sensation or a general humanitarian idea – like the codified love of the guest in some European languages, as in the case of the German *Gastfreundlichkeit* or the Hungarian *vendégszeretet* – but a conditional feeling insofar as it is limited to one or more persons, i.e., the family, which in itself can constitute a kind of society and provide stability (Luhmann 1998, 23–4). According to Luhmann, loyalty, fidelity, and stability become the foundational elements of a society as soon as love, marriage, and sexuality are institutionally intertwined (30), and Jupiter's tour de force against Alcmene may be regarded as an attempt to draw her attention to this – and to the dynamics of the public and the private. After announcing their union in public, the married couple usually sets clear boundaries for what they only share in their privacy (40). In contrast to the comrades of Amphitryon, who believe they have the right to gain full insight into the couple's affairs, Jupiter, an immortal

deity, propagates privacy and evokes the fact that Alcmene and Amphitryon ended up together because of fate – a myth well-known to all recipients of the play – and not because of economics or mutual gratification (cf. 39).

In contrast to Jupiter, Amphitryon arrives home as a guest after listening to Sosias's story, in which no human sense (*Menschensinn*) can be found for the latter's duplicity: it is a story about an "I" that has been taken hostage: the new "I," the double that has taken over his identity, has conquered the gates and given him his own inscription in the form of a beating (i.e., the marks on Sosias's back [Kleist 1962, 26]). And when Amphitryon finally sees Alcmene again, she evokes the discourse of debt (30),[4] of *die Schuld* that also means 'sin' in German, by which she unknowingly tells him that she might have sinned – which she, also unknowingly, did. Still, what she is trying to find out is how she dishonored her husband, which is different from the unknown infidelity, and the two aspects are only synthesized by the recipients of the play on the outside – beyond the confines of the household, the theater stage. While Alcmene searches for witnesses – it is no coincidence that Jupiter dismissed all the servants before he "conquered" Alcmene (16) – Amphitryon makes her recount "his" stay in the castle (33, *Aufenthalt im Schloss* in the original) and not at home (*zu Hause*).

In their dissonance, Alcmene is willing to take back her marital vows, which is the exact opposite of being taken up on her promise, the debt to her husband. Coincidentally, Jupiter's sovereignty consists in his ability to release someone from their vow or promise (46, *ent*schuld*igt*, 'to owe someone an apology, to pardon, to forgive one's debt'), so his power is not productive in the sense that it would generate anything new, but rather he exercises the power to take away something; one's debt, or his position as a host when Amphitryon is "deamphitryonized" (73, *entamphitryonisiert*) by him. His eternal right to cancel the debt also raises the question of whether it is the host who can do this, or whether the guest can release the host from further hospitality. This also applies to Jupiter's ambiguous discourse, which aims to absolve Alcmene from the conventions of marriage, about which she would have to decide unwittingly whether or not to accept these words as coming from her husband, a situation that is repeated in public when she has to identify her real husband. Thus, the rupture between the direct sense of mortals and the completely different set of values imposed on them by the gods becomes central to the event of hospitality in the play as a staging of dichotomies such as the private and the

[4] It is worth noting that according to the original myth, Alcmene's giving herself to Amphitryon would have already counted as a transaction: her virginity in exchange for avenging her brothers' death – hence the discourse of debt paid in full.

public, the mythical and the conventional, and so on. If Alcmene were to abide by the law, she would be faced with a choice between the law and love: she thinks of Amphitryon in front of the statue of Jupiter (41–2), the one that represents the founder and executor of divine law, but her agency, given her feelings, is provided by military officials, the enforcers of mortal law.

5. Conclusion

On the level of mortals, the decision about hospitality is accompanied by a series of paradoxes that cannot be conceived rationally – they lack "human sense" (*Menschensinn*) – and threaten the characters with the loss of their identity. Sosias tries to evade this by enacting various institutional forms, for example by first offering a truce (12) and then an alliance to his double (69), asking him to tolerate him in brotherly love. When Derrida – again alluding to Schmitt – speaks of the enemy in the form of the brother, he also draws attention to the fact that the enemy always brings with it the question of the *I* and the *me*: it addresses the one who regards another as the enemy, which leads to the question of who the enemy is *for me*, who my greatest enemy is. Is the enemy regarded as an enemy because the enemy threatens the *I* in various ways, including the case where I am the greatest enemy of myself (Derrida 2005, 162–3)? If so, Derrida rightfully points to the fact that one of the greatest enemies *of* and *in* Western thought is the obsession with the *I*.

It is quite telling that (the deamphitryonized) Amphitryon can only be a host again after recognizing Jupiter as the master of the house, since his recognition guarantees Jupiter's indebtedness to him as a guest. Yet Jupiter's demand to be recognized as the host in order to retroactively enact himself being hosted as the guest, mirrors the way in which it was originally a divine invitation that served as a perquisite of hospitality. His is, however, a reconstructive gesture, not unlike the iteration of the decision that was made unconsciously *out of* and *about* the unknown in order for hospitality to take place. Conventionality is always only the aftereffect of this original call, the invitation that comes from the "unknown" of hospitality as an open secret. The mortal can be called and invited, but he must decide whether to accept or decline the invitation, to whom it should be extended, and who should be identified as the one who invites. Therefore, invitation as such is always the bridging of a gap, not only between host and guest, but between mortals and immortals. And even if in Kleist's play there is an unknown clash between the divine law (gift) and the earthly one (fidelity), it is the invitation that makes such differentiations possible,

having already merged the two realms. All the violence inherent in the hostility of hospitality, be it the threatening anonymity of the stranger or their trick of posing as the host, is also violated by the reconstruction of a primordial invitation – the so-called "ought to come" in Derrida's work – which differs from the recognition of violence based on the right of the guest, that is, to take someone up on their promise, the duty of the guest in relation to the host. Jupiter's commitment *to* and *with* invitation is a promise that does not produce a referential surplus like oaths taken by mortals: Alcmene says she is ready to return her oath, while Sosias is held hostage by an oath and tries to escape it through contracts. These are cases of economizations, transactions centered on the preservation of the *I* in the household, from which the immortal deities try to free the mortal characters of the play. After all, as Jacques Lacan so thoughtfully observed, "Greek myths aren't ego-based" (Lacan 1991, 264).

Being pardoned is being liberated from the *I* that can be one's greatest enemy. To achieve this, one needs to recognize the conventions of hospitality as an open secret, never fully revealed or articulated, but practiced indirectly when hosting the one who is pretending to be the host, in this way violating the conventional dichotomy of the host and the guest. Challenging the rules of the household (*oikos*) by exploiting misrecognition means the end of treating promises, decisions, debts, and invitations in the context of economics and transactions – Jupiter's divine gift in the form of a demigod for the hospitality he received in Amphitryon's household is not a *quid pro quo*. It is but the result of unconditional hospitality, in which the *hôte* expects nothing in return, and since the whole event is based on misrecognition, neither host nor guest can be held to a particular meaning of their given word. Therefore, to be deamphitryonized is to be released (*entamphitryonisiert* is also *entschuldigt*) from a conventional role, which opens up the possibility of letting oneself be invited.

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