

## Good Host, Bad Host

LARA KRIEGEL and MARY FAVRET

“Hospitality is the virtue which is in the most eminent degree its own reward.” So begins an essay on the subject that appeared in the June 1782 installment of the *London Magazine and Gentleman’s Monthly Intelligencer*. Following upon this notion, my colleague Mary Favret and I [Lara Kriegel] are pleased to be your hosts for this session, and so to participate in this universal practice that while it binds the savage and the civilized, yet separates man from beast. To begin, I hope that you will enjoy my “laudable hospitality” as you partake of “my good cheer.” I aspire, in my example, to make it clear that “some men have a particular genius for entertaining well,” to borrow from the *London Magazine*. “They take a pleasure in it and do it with ease and alacrity.” “Their tables,” the *Magazine* notes are “never-ending scenes of jovial society.”<sup>1</sup>

It is, of course, “brutish” to eat alone. Let me thus extend gratitude to the honored guests at our table, who have come from nearby villages to make our company all the richer. Dana Rabin visits from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she teaches in the History Department. She is the author of *Identity, Crime, and Legal Responsibility in Eighteenth-Century England*, as well as a series of chapters and articles appearing in such venues as *History Workshop Journal* and *Cultural and Social History*. Currently, she is at work on a book provisionally titled *Under the Rule of Law: Britain and its Outsiders*. Ana Rueda comes to us from the University of Kentucky where she is Chair of Hispanic Studies. She is the author of several books, articles, and critical editions. Presently, she is at work on *La literatura en armas: La guerra de África*.

If the role of the host is to provide not just introductions, but food and shelter too, that of the guests is to bring gifts. And our guests have done so famously as they have offered two intriguing and original papers that consider hospitality in times of siege and war. Dana Rabin reads the well-known Jacobite Uprising and the more obscure Elibank plot through the lens of hospitality. Provocatively, she reorients our understanding, arguing that “hospitality defined the strategy employed in the ’45.” As she outlines the plot and its cascading effects, Rabin demonstrates the utility of hospitality as a concept that can inform our readings of law and territory, and of politics and domesticity. Ultimately, she invites us to ask whether the failure of a political coup might be read as the failure of hospitality. And, she presses us to consider whether one man’s hospitality might be another man’s brutality. Ana Rueda reads Marqués y Espejo’s *Anastasia* as an “exemplary case of hospitality” during wartime. As she retells the tale, Rueda considers the ethical challenges of housing the enemy in the context of the formal structure of the novel. She makes a bid for the persistence of hospitality as an ancient virtue in a conflict-ridden and seemingly inhospitable world as she reminds us, in conclusion, of the enduring value of the ancient practice of hospitality. And she leaves us to reflect upon the pressing challenge of living in communities that include strangers and enemies, in peace and wartime both.

Having introduced our guests and their gifts, let me return momentarily to the *London Magazine*, which tells us that interchange of entertaining, perhaps the essence of hospitality, is productive of the “varieties of life.” Even two beggars find enrichment in rubbing elbows and sharing crumbs. So it is that we are the richer for considering Rabin and Rueda’s essays against one another. Although they are both concerned with the deployment of hospitality in moments of en-

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<sup>1</sup> “The Hypochondriack, No. 8,” *London Magazine or Gentleman’s Monthly Intelligencer* 51 (July 1782): 309-312.

dangerment or siege, they allow us to see some of the productive uses of the category of hospitality and the project of locating it in historical events and texts more generally. Let me point here to three fruits borne of the deployment of hospitality, as category and concern, by our guests.

First, taken together, these papers allow us to see that “hospitality” as a subject allows us to move beyond common understandings and tired binaries that shape our constructions of the mid-modern period. As she traces the workings of hospitality, Rabin seeks to understand the relationships between hospitality and civility. And, in the process, she interrupts a number of comfortable dualisms: empire and metropole, state and civil society, the public and the private. Admittedly, these formulations have been queried for decades now, but I think that the potentials of rethinking political culture through the lens of hospitality that Rabin offers are especially far-reaching. Similarly, Rueda unsettles handy divisions between religious society and civil society and between wartime and aftermath. Hospitality, as an enterprise, turns out, in her hands, to be a pursuit that binds these realms and temporalities, which are often thought to be distinct. Like Rabin, she thus invites us, through the vehicle of hospitality, to reconsider familiar institutions and occasions of the long eighteenth century in new light.

To move to my second point: if the papers we have read invite us implicitly to reassess our received analytics for considering the long eighteenth century, they ask us, more directly, to take up the theme of borders. I was intrigued that both our guests turn, in their final pages, to this question. Dana asks us to think about the matter of law, as she turns to consider the reach and limits of the “jurisprudence of emergency.” Ana invites us to assess the character of nations, as she addresses the commerce of culture. It is telling, I think, that these papers that announce themselves as projects concerned with hospitality conclude by reaching to geopolitical boundaries and their porosity, for in so doing, they urge us to revisit familiar concerns about the borders of the eighteenth-century world with a new vocabulary.

Finally, it seems that a consideration of hospitality allows us to reflect upon, and perhaps even to revise, the organizing pursuits of the disciplines from which our papers arise. In reading Dana’s paper, for instance, I found myself wondering, “What does the archive of hospitality look like?” In inserting hospitality into our discussion of high politics, it seems to me that Dana invites us to follow the contributions of scholars who have studied political culture, whether by addressing the role of language or the practices of sociability. But the matter of hospitality may ask us to think even more ambitiously about issues of space, emotion, and affect, and so to find the political in new terrains and new sources. In Rueda’s essay, hospitality provides us with an occasion to reconsider form, and particularly the form of the novel. The novel, it seems is a particularly hospitable form, serving as a host to all sorts of narrative guests. As we consider this line of argument, we might want to ask what kind of archive the novel is. We might, too, want to consider the very nature of the hospitality that it offers. Is this a hospitality that is, ultimately, inviting? If so whom does it invite? And, to what?

Let me close by returning to the *London Magazine*. To borrow from the understandings of our columnist, I hope that your “complacent looks” are indeed indicative of my “good cheer.” Lest you grow too complacent, however, I should warn you that, while a universal practice, hospitality is not practiced with equal grace. There are men who are known for “ostentatious entertaining,” the sort of which can breed “violent animosities,” the *London Magazine* warns us. And “petty rivalries in pastry or syllabubs” have been known to “rankle gentle bosoms.” But there are greater scourges upon the name of hospitality, too. There are those who “bring people to a feast in order to domineer over them.” Not only do they “compel their eating and drinking,” they

“crush . . . opinions,” “stifle pleasantries,” and make their guests “the butt of ridicule.” It is with this caution that I give the table over to my colleague, Mary Favret.

[Mary Favret] While my esteemed colleague has set herself up as the gracious host, fostering an expansive notion of hospitality, I am going to turn a cold eye to her good cheer, not at all sure I want to join this party. Reading the two papers before us, I find myself resisting hospitality’s warm embrace. On one side we have a culture of rebels and—let’s say it—terrorists plotting violence behind the flimsy cover of an “ancient hospitality.” On the other side we have an allegory that appears to sentimentalize foreign invasion and justify its consequences with the “recompense” of economic gain. These accounts make it hard for me to separate hospitality from disaster. So before we celebrate hospitality within the model of “virtue ethics” or lament its waning under Modernity or its vulnerability before the State and its “rule of law,” let me toss in an APPLE—well, really, three apples—of discord. What if Ancient hospitality does not in fact bring peace or equal good cheer? What about issues of scale—that is, just how many guests can you house, feed, etc. and for how long? And, finally, what about the power dynamics at work in terms of who is asked or expected to show hospitality?

So [to Lara], try to *cheer* this!

Both papers harken to a model of pre-modern hospitality which we tend to idealize. Ana’s reading of Marqués y Espejo’s novel excavates “traditional forms of hospitality”—drawn from Classical as well as Christian models and incorporated into the very structure of the novel—to test whether they can “overcome. . . the barriers between two nations at war” (5). They can’t. Yes, the nice peasant woman allows the French officer and his wife to stay in her house, and yes she adopts their orphaned child. But the war rages unchecked; Spain is ravaged politically and economically. The novel proposes a “more generous form of hospitality” brought into the present through legal documentation and civic acknowledgment. But one could read those same documents as records of military invasion and its costs—costs which, in the end, the French aristocrat aims to cancel with a shower of coins. Meanwhile the tourist-traveler *converts* this oral tale and the accompanying private letters into a novel for the print market. *Anastasia* in the end sounds less like a revival of ancient hospitality or a solution to hostility, than it does a timely commercial appropriation.

Dana’s account of the Jacobite Scots describes their system of hospitality as “a sort of gift-exchange” which binds host and guest in reciprocal obligations. This was a hospitality that included what we might call “safe houses,” hideouts, and house arrests as well as convivial hearths. Within this system, the “peaceably tempered” and generous Dr. Archibald Cameron would defend himself against charges of treason by suggesting in court that he “was led to take a part in the rebellion [of ’45] against his own judgment and inclination, by some upon whom his all depended”—i.e. his older brother Donald Cameron, Archibald’s lifelong “host” and Jacobite insider. Distancing himself from his own Highland hosts, Edward Waverley, in Walter Scott’s historical novel about the ’45 uprising, says something quite similar. So does Darcy Latimer, the hapless hero of Scott’s *Redgauntlet*, a novel based on the aborted Elibank Plot. Where is the line between conviviality and conversion? (Didn’t Prince Charlie convert, hoping for a warmer welcome?) Or between welcome and indoctrination?

Then there are the problems of scale. The tale of hospitality conventionally limits itself to a very few individuals. One or two strangers seek shelter; one or two local inhabitants take them in. One person hurt or abandoned by the roadside, one Good Samaritan finds him care. One prince in hiding granted asylum. A knock at the door; a roof overhead; a bed provided, a meal

served, a child adopted. Simple. Until you look again. In Dana's paper we recognize that "the Prince" has not only a retinue that travels with him, but a potential army of supporters. The networks of hospitality nurturing Jacobitism may be a network of countless cells. In Ana's paper one officer and his wife are invited indoors in an act that could symbolize détente between hostile nations. But what if Spanish peasants welcomed in *every* French officer and his family? And why stop with officers? How many good hosts can Spain afford before welcome tips over into collusion? Or occupation? At the same time, what difference can one household, one bed, or one meal, make? Hospitality may be virtuous and provide lovely vignettes, but it cannot serve as *pol-icity*.

It seems, in 1753, that one man executed, drawn and split into fourths might have served as an example of the limits of hospitality. *Anastasia* offers a rosier example of housing the enemy, circa 1808. But against these individual tales press the ever-increasing numbers of devastation. A footnote in Ana's paper recounts an English tourist's attempt to count the destitute crowd receiving food one day at the cathedral in Granada: appalled, he counts 2000 men and 3024 women. Put those numbers up with the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons or unnamed casualties—dead, maimed, raped, tortured—in the brutal War of Spanish Independence. Our attention is riveted by one or two, but not by hundreds of thousands. We're not alone in this limitation: look to the archetypical stories of hospitality in western culture. Zeus and Hermes reward Baucis and Philmon, the old couple who invite them in to share a frugal meal; but the gods then destroy all their neighbors, the surrounding city, in a giant flood. In the Book of Genesis, Lot graciously hosts two men who turn out to be angels of God and the angels reward him for his exemplary hospitality, but they send first blindness, then fire and brimstone to the less gracious residents of Sodom and Gomorrah, "and overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground" (Genesis 19:25). In both cases, the one instance of hospitality hardly offsets massive destruction—in fact, it seems almost to *allow* that destruction. Maybe hospitable souls aren't actually examples but strategic exceptions.

I'm struck that in these archetypical stories, as in *Anastasia*, the good hosts tend to be impoverished—folks who may themselves be one step away from homelessness. Meanwhile, the good *guests* tend to be celestial beings or nobility in disguise, whose real habitation, elsewhere, would dwarf the humble hut that serves as hospitality's stage. Of course, these tales are myths, fantasies; they suggest "the first shall be last and last shall be first" in some higher reality even while in this reality those with little power continue to serve those with power. But, usually, those who require shelter do not have names. Or titles. Usually they come in crowds, not pairs. Who has the wherewithal to welcome them in? Is this really something that can be sorted out on the basis of individual homes, one tale at a time? Both papers highlight a shift away from codes of hospitality to more modern juridical claims and the "rule of law." What welcoming spaces remain between the single hearth and the borders of the State?