

Patriarchal Hospitality; or, Unqueer Rousseau

JIMMY CASAS KLAUSEN

Although Jean-Jacques Rousseau described “The Levite of Ephraïm” in modest terms as “merely a kind of short poem in prose, a paraphrase of the last three chapters of *Judges*,”¹ he nevertheless cherished it deeply. Prior literary studies have placed the piece in the context of Rousseau’s persecution and flight after the condemnation of *Émile*,² or have focused on its reworking of the question of “mute eloquence” from *Essay on the Origin of Languages*³ and especially the representation of inscribing meaning on the body of a woman while muting her voice.⁴ Scholars trained in political theory by contrast have seen in “Levite” not primarily the intrusion (qua refiguration) of the author’s own woes and anxieties nor the insistent gendering of speech acts but rather a more general advocacy of duty and justice: Michael Kochin interprets Rousseau’s retelling of Judges 19-21 as an exercise in rendering the Bible a living text, whereby the duty of obedience to God takes form first as obedience to patriarchal right and then as an impersonal imperative to renounce personal desire for communal duty, and similarly Jonathan Marks has seen in “Levite” Rousseau’s depiction of the Jews as a model—more exemplary, even, than other ancient peoples—of how pity can motivate secular justice.⁵ By contrast to these abstract and disembodied concerns, feminist political theorists have viewed “Levite” as interlacing themes of gender relations, republican sacrifice, national membership, political dismemberment,

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¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “The Levite of Ephraïm,” in *Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music*, trans. John T. Scott, *Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 7 (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2009), 351; “Lévite d’Ephraïm,” in *Œuvres complètes*, Pléiade ed. (hereafter OC), 5 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-95), II:1205. Hereafter I cite this work internally, giving first the page from the *Collected Writings* and then that of the Pléiade edition, vol. II.

² Jean Starobinski, “Rousseau’s Happy Days,” *New Literary History* 11.1 (Autumn 1979): 147-66, esp. 160-5; Thomas Kavanagh, *Writing the Truth: Authority and Desire in Rousseau* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), ch. 5; Kavanagh, “Rousseau’s *The Levite of Ephraïm*: Synthesis within a ‘Minor’ Work,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau*, ed. Patrick Riley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 397-417.

³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 250. Not only does “Levite” reprise the Levite’s dismemberment of his female companion’s body discussed in *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, but also Rousseau had planned to publish “Levite” together with the *Essay*, in addition to “On Theatrical Imitation.”

⁴ Peggy Kamuf, *Signature Pieces: On the Institution of Authorship* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), ch. 3; Judith Still, “Rousseau’s *Lévite d’Ephraïm*: The Imposition of Meaning (On Women),” *French Studies* XLIII.1 (January 1989): 12-30; Mieke Bal, “A Body of Writing: Judges 19,” in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 208-30. See Tanya Horeck, *Public Rape: Representing Violation in Fiction and Film* (London: Routledge, 2004), ch. 2. Horeck also diagnoses the absence of the question of rape when interpreters such as Kamuf, Starobinski, Kavanagh, and others view “Levite” and/or the passage on “mute eloquence” from *Essay on the Origin of Languages* as allegories of writing.

⁵ Michael S. Kochin, “Living with the Bible: Jean-Jacques Rousseau Reads Judges 19-21,” *Hebraic Political Studies* 2.3 (summer 2007): 310-25; Jonathan D. Marks, “Rousseau’s Use of the Jewish Example,” *Review of Politics* 72 (2010): 463-81.

and body politics. For example, while Elizabeth Wingrove has argued that “Levite” confirms Rousseau’s repeated recourse to the heterosexual romance as a means for securing and embodying a coercive consent (or consent to coercion) that subordinates men to the republic and women to men, Mira Morgenstern by contrast rescues Rousseau by arguing that he does not confuse, but rather sharply distinguishes, consent and coercion, and that “Levite” self-consciously portrays an “inauthentic” and unstable society in which violence against women and strangers will beget yet more violence.⁶

In what follows, I consider how “The Levite of Ephraim” serially juxtaposes hospitality and hostility in a way that invites an exploration of the effects of their mutual entanglement. As Rousseau himself recognized when he noted in the *Geneva Manuscript* (I.2) that “[t]he words strangers [étrangers] and enemies were long synonymous for ancient peoples,”⁷ hospitality and hostility are historically and linguistically related concepts. Inspired by Émile Benveniste’s reconstruction of the Indo-European cluster of concepts and institutions referring to mutually strange guests and hosts and mutual enemies, Jacques Derrida argues for the simultaneity of hospitality and hostility by calling the irreducible ambivalence “*hostipitalité*.”⁸ Although several scholars mention the theme of hospitality in Rousseau’s “Levite” and in Judges 19, none has focused on it.⁹ Nonetheless, hospitality and hostility ought to be of more central concern to political theorists, since they involve practices that actively associate or dissociate peoples (or persons taken as representative of peoples). In my reading, the contrast between the hospitality of the old man of Gibeah and the hostility of the Benjaminites, and the Levite’s action of sacrificing his female companion to gang rape when caught in between hospitality and hostility, crystallize a set of relations through which all other relations of the text are refracted. All of these hospitality-hostility relations enact patriarchal domination. Even the final episode, in which Axa’s choice to marry her Benjaminite captor rather than her fiancé Elmacin would supposedly neutralize coercive obedience to her father, is no exception.

Absorbing the insights of the feminist accounts of “Levite” (and especially Wingrove’s readings of the collapsibility of coercion and consent), I extend them to an analysis of hospitality and hostility as relations within which queer concerns may be revealed. My interest in the text falls at the intersection of two areas of previous research: a book-length study of Rousseau’s political theory in which questions of body politics (including dismemberment) and the problem of the

⁶ Elizabeth Rose Wingrove, *Rousseau’s Republican Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), ch. 6; Mira Morgenstern, “Strangeness, Violence, and the Establishment of Nationhood in Rousseau,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41.3 (spring 2008): 359-81.

⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Geneva Manuscript* in *Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 4, trans. Judith R. Bush et al. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997), 81, trans. modified; OC III.288. A series of entries in the *Encyclopédie*, many of them written by the Chevalier de Jaucourt, also reveals an awareness of such entanglements: “Hospice,” “Hospita,” “Hospitalier,” “Hospitaliers,” “Hospitalité,” “Host,” “Hostelage,” “Hostie,” “Hostilité,” “Hôte,” “Hôtel d’un ambassadeur,” and “Hôtellerie,” in *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Ronde d’Alembert, nouvelle ed. (Geneva: Chez Pellet, imprimeur-libraire, 1777-9), Tome XVII, 758-69.

⁸ Émile Benveniste, “Hospitality” and “The Slave and the Stranger,” *Indo-European Language and Society*, trans. Elizabeth Palmer (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1973 [1969]); and “Gift and Exchange in the Indo-European Vocabulary” (1948-49), *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (New York: Routledge, 1997), 33-42; Jacques Derrida, *De l’hospitalité / Anne Dufourmantelle invite Jacques Derrida à répondre* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1997), 43, 45.

⁹ Even the study by Peter Melville, I would argue, bypasses hospitality in a sense to focus more on figuring the making-responsible of Rousseau the person. See Peter Melville, *Romantic Hospitality and the Resistance to Accommodation* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 23-59, esp. 25-33.

alien or stranger for nativism and cosmopolitanism are prominent, and two article-length studies specifically of hospitality, especially sexual hospitality, in the *Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville* by Rousseau's frère-ennemi Denis Diderot.¹⁰

All hospitality-relations in "Levite" are patriarchal in that they link men through the bodies of women: male hosts and guests are allied by the gift of a woman (even if she is not given by the host to the guest, or vice versa, but to third parties). Inversely and symmetrically, hostility-relations in "Levite" are patriarchal in that they sever potential male-male ties through the bodies of women: men, as mutual enemies, dissociate from each other by the theft of a woman. Sexuality is a central effect of all these relations. While patriarchal hospitality evokes analyses from feminist theory and anthropology of the exchange of women as the essential element of kinship and therefore all social relations, patriarchal hostility evokes studies from feminist international relations of the place of gender in armed conflict and especially of genocidal rape.¹¹ In both cases, patriarchal domination is as much about sexual relations between men as about sexual relations between men and women. That is, on the one hand, male homosexuality (the sexual link between male guest and male host) is the implied logical end of patriarchal hospitality, while, on the other, men's indirect control of their male enemies' sexuality is one vehicle of patriarchal hostility.

Elsewhere I have argued for the relevance of theories of the exchange of women not only to kinship in segmentary lineage societies but also to hospitality-conceptions in eighteenth-century Europe.¹² According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, the "exchange of women" is as crucial to "communication" among human groups as are exchanges of "goods and services" and "messages," and each of these exchanges is governed by its own set of rules: unique and discrete structures of kinship, economy, and language. Women, material goods, and words are each "values of an essential type" for social life; their communication from one social group to another constitutes human society—culture—itself. While it might theoretically be possible for men to circulate (or be exchanged), Lévi-Strauss stubbornly insisted that in fact they never do.¹³ Although he differentiates kinship and economy, Lévi-Strauss's theory of kinship nonetheless, from a feminist perspective, presumes that the first expropriation—the most primitive of all primitive accumulations and thus, according to Friedrich Engels, the origin of private property¹⁴—was men's expropriation of women's bodies from the women themselves as potential agents.

¹⁰ Jimmy Casas Klausen, *Fugitive Rousseau: Slavery, Primitivism, and Political Freedom* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014); "Of Hobbes and Hospitality in Diderot's *Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville*," *Polity* 37.2 (April 2005): 167-92; "Empire and Compulsory Heterosexuality in Diderot's *Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville*," *Political Theory* 43.1 (February 2015). For the Diderot/Rousseau relationship, see Jean Fabre, "Deux Frères Ennemis: Diderot et Jean-Jacques," *Diderot Studies* 3 (1961): 155-213.

¹¹ For analyses of rape in war with respect to Judges, see Alice Bach, "Rereading the Body Politic: Women, Violence and Judges 21," in *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*, Second Series, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 143-59. For Rousseau's "Levite," see Horeck, *Public Rape*, 42.

¹² Klausen, "Empire and Compulsory Heterosexuality."

¹³ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale* (Paris: Agora-Plon, 1974), 76, 100-1, 77, 64.

¹⁴ Engels does not use the term "primitive accumulation" to describe the overthrow of mother-right by patriarchal monogamy: Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of Family, Private Property and State*, rpt. in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2d ed., ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 1978), 738-39. In contradistinction to my affirmative attempt to tie feminism to advocacy of queer sociabilities, Engels considers male homosexuality, at least in its iteration as antique "Greek love," a secondary degradation-effect of men's prior degradation of women. For an analysis of Engels's view, see Andrew Parker, "Unthinking Sex: Marx, Engels, and the Scene of Writing," *Fear of a Queer Planet*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 31-33.

Feminist readers of Lévi-Strauss found his account both illuminating and frustrating. Allowing that the exchange of women explains much but rejecting the claim that it is foundationally necessary for culture, Gayle Rubin thus argued in her classic Marxian analysis of sex/gender systems, “As long as the relations specify that men exchange women, it is men who are the beneficiaries of the product of such exchanges—social organization.”¹⁵ Coming to the same conclusion as Rubin that men can only be beneficiaries by keeping themselves in reserve from commodification and circulation, Luce Irigaray drew a further conclusion: that the logical conclusion of the exchange of women is male homosexuality because the sexuality that is the basis of all kinship is activated by and between men. “Reigning everywhere, although prohibited in practice,” Irigaray notes, “hom(m)o-sexuality is played out through the bodies of women . . .”¹⁶ According to the functional law of patriarchy, the women exchanged by men are proxies for—simultaneously impediments to and links of—male homosexual intimacy. Although this law cannot be interpreted openly, texts and artifacts unwittingly attest to desires to do so.¹⁷

Rousseau’s “Levite” is one such artifact. The triangular relation among the old man, the Levite, and the Benjaminites crystallizes patriarchal relations not least because male homosexuality is the form that Benjaminite hostility takes when it threatens the old man’s hospitality. Although the Benjaminites’ actual transgression seems ambiguous—is it their gang rape of the Levite’s female companion, the threat of forcible male homosexuality, or simply their hostility to hospitality itself?—the way that the sexual domination of women is echoed in other episodes whose moral effects the text does not unambiguously condemn leads to the conclusion that, in “The Levite of Ephraim,” *male homosexuality is itself hostility, even though homosexuality is logically implied in patriarchal hospitality*. Certainly, the text’s figuring of male homosexuality as threat might merely recapitulate its source text, but a contrapuntal reading of “Levite” with Judges 19¹⁸ and Rousseau’s *Confessions* confirms two conclusions. First, although it is possible—as some recent Biblical scholars have done—to distinguish sodomy from the violation of hospitality in Judges (and Genesis 19, which Judges 19 recalls), “The Levite of Ephraim” and homosexual scenes in *The Confessions* project an author-function named “Rousseau” whose signature move is the lurid representation of that which he demonstratively rejects as morally repugnant. Second, reading “Levite” with respect to the heterosexual lesson that Rousseau draws in *The Confessions* in reaction to a threatening homosexual proposition suggests that the specter of male homosexuality may underwrite a more emphatically heteronormative complementarity between masculine respect for women and the strong expectation of feminine virtue. Ultimately, the unrelenting character of Rousseau’s unqueerness resides less in his extravagant rejection of the homosexuality he feels compelled to represent, than in the fact that his reaction to forcible male-male sex is to sublimate forcible heterosexual sex into the moral duty that women voluntarily subordinate them-

¹⁵ Gayle S. Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” in *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 45.

¹⁶ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 172.

¹⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

¹⁸ For reasons of length, I leave aside comparisons of “Levite” and Judges 19 to Genesis 19, the narrative of the incineration of Sodom and Gomorrah. I cite critical lesbian and gay studies scholarship on Genesis 19 below. Nonetheless, among other possible lines of inquiry, it may be useful to note that Genesis 19, in which two angels appear as male humans and are taken in as guests by Lot and threatened with rape by the townspeople, participates in a wider circum-Mediterranean sharing of customs of respect for strangers as possibly being gods or divine emissaries in disguise. For example, note Hebrews 13:2: “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” See, generally, David J. Bederman, *International Law in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), ch. 3.

selves to depersonalized male authority. Arguably, then, the apparently triumphant reknitting of intertribal community that closes “The Levite of Ephraim” does not neutralize patriarchal domination and the threat of homosexuality but rather inexorably depends on them.

Rousseau may have been drawn to the way that Judges 19-21, though inherently perverse, plays out in a field where centralized political authority is absent, and yet independent local groups nonetheless may count on common *moeurs* to facilitate interactions; these common *moeurs* were posed and confirmed by “the terror of vengeance,” which took “the place of the Laws’ restraint.”¹⁹ In other words, the Hebrew tribes did not require a (secular) power superior to them because their mores acted in the place of sovereign positive law, and they could enforce their common code of conduct against transgression by violent revenge among equals instead of a sovereign leviathan’s sword. These three chapters of Judges are set apart by a refrain that opens and closes the group. The narrator notes that the events occurred during the period when Israel had no monarch (Judges 19:1, 21:25) and “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

During this time of quasi-anarchic yet richly social independence, the people of the Lord were driven to dismember and repair themselves. In Judges 19, a Levite resident in Ephraim journeys to retrieve his departed wife,²⁰ who has absconded to her father’s house in Bethlehem-judah. The Levite’s father-in-law receives him gladly and hosts him generously. As the evening draws near on the fifth day, the Levite declines the offer to stay longer and presses toward his home with the concubine. Although the Levite’s servant urges his master to rest for the night at their earliest convenience, the latter chooses to avoid cities of foreign peoples: “We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel,” he declares (Judges 19:12). However, upon arriving at Gibeah, the city that the Levite prefers because it is of the tribe of Benjamin and ostensibly his own people, no one initially offers to take them in for the night. When he complains to an old man passing by that “there is no man that receiveth me to house” even though the wayfarers want nothing for their or their asses’ provision, the townsman invites him to lodge at his home for the night.

Soon the people of Gibeah, “certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about” and ordered the old man to yield over the visitor “that we may know him” (Judges 19:22). In formulae quite similar to Lot’s response to the Sodomites in Genesis 19, the old man answers, “Nay, my breth-

¹⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men*, in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 167, OC III.170-1. See Aubrey Rosenberg, “Rousseau’s *Lévite d’Ephraïm* and the Golden Age,” *Australian Journal of French Studies* 15 (1978): 163-72. Within Rousseau’s historical anthropology (not always consistent across his writings), Rosenberg places the events of “Levite” at the end and in the decay of the Golden Age. Kavanagh (*Writing the Truth*, 111-2, 114) speaks of the tribes’ uniting to form a “general will,” as does Madeleine Anjubault Simons, *Amitié et Passion: Rousseau et Sauttersheim* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1972), 86; and Horeck, *Public Rape*, 64. However, persuaded by Rosenberg, I would resist Kavanagh’s and others’ moves and note that, strictly speaking, there can be no “general will” proper prior to the establishment of legitimate social interdependence. Similarly, the lessons of duty and justice Kochin and Marks find in “Levite” also depend on blurring distinctions among dependence, society, and legitimacy. I distinguish illegitimate asocial independence, illegitimate social independence, and legitimate social interdependence in *Fugitive Rousseau*, 9-13. As quasi-elementary forms of social life, hospitality and hostility can take place in any epoch to which Rousseau ascribes human sociability.

²⁰ I follow Bal in referring to the Levite’s female companion as his wife. The nameless woman is called a “concubine” in the King James Version. Bal, naming her Beth, insists on referring to her as *pilegish*, a marital position, though with secondary legal status, which modern understandings of “concubine” would tend to preclude. See, e.g., Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 81, 83-4.

ren, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly. Behold, here is my daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing” (Judges 19:23-4). When the townspeople proceed to dispute the substitution of the women for the male stranger, the Levite

took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning; and when the day began to spring, they let her go. Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man’s house where her lord was, till it was light. (Judges 19:25-6)

Upon waking, the Levite finds his concubine at the threshold of his host’s home and, on his ass, takes her back to Ephraim, probably nearly dead.²¹ There he divides her with a knife into twelve pieces, sending her with emissaries “into all the coasts of Israel” (Judges 19:29).

In response to the unprecedented brutality contained in this message, all the Tribes convene in Mizpah and mobilize a military host to correct the abuse. Significantly, in addressing the assembly, the Levite does not mention the homosexual threat, only that the residents of Gibeah wanted to slay him and “forced” his wife to death (Judges 20:5).²² However, when the Benjaminites refuse to turn over the specific malefactors among themselves, the other tribes advance against the Benjaminites as a whole. After massive losses from faithless execution of the war by the intertribal alliance, a consultation with the Lord finally imbues them with the confidence of righteousness, which spurs them to defeat the Benjaminites. Having lost forty thousand men themselves, they inflict on the Benjaminites a nearly total slaughter: all but six hundred male Benjaminites are killed. In the aftermath, the intertribal alliance suddenly realizes that their massacre of the Benjaminites would condemn this tribe to extinction, because the others had vowed in the heat of indignation never to give their daughters to a man of the tribe of Benjamin. Chapter 21 presents the ways that the alliance attempted to evade, for the survival of their nearly exterminated brothers, their own vow: the men of the alliance, first, slaughter the townspeople of Jabesh for having refused to send troops in solidarity with the alliance and allow the Benjaminites to take the four hundred remaining virgin daughters of Jabesh; the other two hundred Benjaminites are instructed to abduct virgins from a dance of maidens outside Shiloh. Without perjuring themselves, the genocidal patriarchs of the other tribes thus permit the tribe of Benjamin not to perish from the earth.

As Thomas Kavanagh has noted, Rousseau’s “Levite” follows Judges 19-21 but for three “clusters” of deviations.²³ First, Rousseau fills out Judges 19’s otherwise sketchy account of the relationship between the Levite and his wife with the accoutrements of pastoral romance: the

²¹ Bal, in my view, insists persuasively: “As her death begins at her exposure and ends with her dismemberment, we cannot know when exactly she dies, and we must not know it. . . . She dies several times, or rather, she never stops dying”: “Body of Writing,” 222.

²² This has provoked disagreements in the scholarly literature. Defending the narrative coherence of Judges 19-20 as against Genesis 19, Susan Niditch apologizes for both the Levite and the author of Judges 19 by noting their discomfort with homosexuality in “The ‘Sodomite’ Theme in Judges 19-20: Family, Community, and Social Disintegration,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44 (1982): 365-78. Bal criticizes that Niditch’s “apologetic attitude shows the strong inclination . . . to identify with the party that holds up the standards of idealized Israel,” in *Death and Dissymmetry*, 159. Bal explores the question of Rousseau’s Levite’s lying in “Body of Writing,” 218-20.

²³ Kavanagh, *Writing the Truth*, 112-22.

Levite lavishes her with devotion, song, and honey. Perhaps, consequently, she leaves him (in Rousseau's account) out of feeling smothered rather than (as in Biblical translations) because she was sexually unfaithful or simply lacked faith in him.²⁴ Second, Kavanagh notes, Rousseau famously describes the dismembered parts of his murdered wife's body as adequately conveying through "mute eloquence" an intended message rather than, as in Judges 19:29-30, with emissaries to complete the message verbally;²⁵ furthermore, Rousseau culminates the pastoral romance with a colorful scene in which the Levite expires after addressing the assembled tribes, whose members reassemble his wife's body and entomb the couple together.²⁶ Third, Rousseau embellishes a rather skeletal verse (Judges 21:23) on the two hundred male Benjaminites' abduction of virgins from Shiloh by rendering an entire scene of self-sacrifices by the fathers, daughters, and fiancés of Shiloh. Represented by the old man of Lebonah, Axa, and Elmacin, respectively, these Shilohites (characters invented by Rousseau) submit to personal renunciations for the restoration of the decimated tribe of Benjamin and thus the unity of the Israelites.

Certainly the triangle of relationships among the old man of Gibeah, the Levite, and the Benjaminites is focal to both Judges and Rousseau's "Levite": the offering of hospitality and the offense against it occupy the entirety of Judges 19, whereas the quantitatively more massive events of the ensuing war and subsequent sexual violence unfold in one chapter each (Judges 20-21). Rousseau magnifies the importance of this central scene, narrated in the second of four cantos, by altering another narrative detail unmentioned by Kavanagh but noted by Mieke Bal: Rousseau has the old male host in Gibeah offer only his own virgin daughter to the abusive Benjaminites rather than, as in Judges 19:24, both his daughter *and* the Levite's wife.²⁷

The detail is not minor, and Rousseau's alteration subtly changes the consequences of this focal conflict, but Judges 19 and "Levite" share important elements. In both, there is patriarchal hospitality: a male resident welcomes into his home a male traveler and his entourage. In both, there is patriarchal hostility: townspeople upset from the outside the hospitality-relation established between two men and attempt to control the guest's sexuality, if not directly by homosexual rape, as was initially threatened, then indirectly, by gang-raping his wife in the last instance. In both, the Levite is the subject of hospitality who acts to deflect hostility against him. In both, the Levite's wife links patriarchal hospitality and hostility: gift and theft, she serves as dual object, and, confirming their patriarchal character, she is never positively the subject of the old man's hospitality, nor, strictly speaking, of the Benjaminites' hostility (since she is not their enemy). In both, the old man is a model host, who tries to save his relationship with another man from an external threat by exporting a woman as a substitute for him.

However, what the old man models differs subtly between Judges and Rousseau. The difference between the old man's offering both his daughter and the Levite's wife or just his daughter alone amounts to whether emphasis falls on the preservation of patriarchy or the preservation of hospitality. In both cases, hospitality is coconstitutive with patriarchy, defined as an impersonal set of relations in which women as a class are subordinate to the class of men. However, Rousseau nudges patriarchy into the background by personalizing it as patriarchalism, subordination to a given, familiar man.

²⁴ See Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 81.

²⁵ Kavanagh, *Writing the Truth*, 115. The King James Version, however, is ambiguous in regard to the involvement of emissaries.

²⁶ Comparable images of dismemberment in Rousseau include "Discourse on Political Economy," 6, OC III.244; and *Social Contract* II.3, 58, OC III.369-70. See Klausen, *Fugitive Rousseau*, 229-42; Horeck, *Public Rape*, 54.

²⁷ See Bal, "Body of Writing," 218.

What effects follow from the fact that in Judges 19 the host offers, in addition to his own virgin daughter, his guest's companion as substitute for the guest vis-à-vis the Benjaminites? At the very least it establishes his patriarchalism in the domestic domain: both Judges and Rousseau agree on the old man's power of life and death over his daughter. However, the old man's inclusion of the Levite's wife in his offer to the Benjaminites suggests that in Judges 19 she is not herself a guest worthy of protection, that, more generally, a woman is never a guest in a man's house but always potentially an object of property to be exploited by her owner or his host. Under conditions of patriarchal hospitality, women always potentially serve as a link between male guests and hosts.

Yet the contrast between Judges 19 and Rousseau's "Levite" underscores an aspect of the relationship between the two men that might otherwise go unnoticed. In Judges, the old man affirms his hospitality-relation with the Levite by subordinating women, no matter which male authority they may be under. That is, he affirms hospitality within the class of men by way of patriarchy. In Judges 19, the Levite's wife is not a guest but, as Peter Melville refers to her, a "sub-guest."²⁸ Hers, however, is not a unique case. She deserves no protection because any woman, as member of the class of women, may be sacrificed to save male dominance. The old male host saves his male guest from being subordinated sexually to other men *and* saves those abusive outsiders, the Benjaminites, from offending against the unity of men as a dominant class. In Judges, the Levite affirms his host's bid to preserve patriarchy by offering his wife himself. In this respect, the old man, the Levite, and the Benjaminite rapists—host, guest, enemies—are united in subordinating a woman.

By offering all the women in the house (who are neither slaves nor primary wives, though neither is mentioned), the old man proves zealous in preserving patriarchy. Yet the Levite declines the old man's offer of all the women and instead sacrifices his own wife only. Doing so, he retroactively calls attention to the old man's hostly magnification of generosity by including his own daughter within the class of women. In a sense the Levite must subtract the host's daughter—keep her in reserve from the total class of women—to reemphasize the hospitality within patriarchy. Declining part of his host's offer, the Levite shows how extensive his hospitality had been. (Of course the judgment of patriarchal altruism here depends on denying female agency and self-possession. As Peter Melville puts it, "The irrepressible violence of this hospitable contract posits women not as sharing such duties but as shared *by* these duties . . ."²⁹)

By contrast to the asymmetry in Judges (i.e., the host's offer of two women for the guest's offer of one) Rousseau's "Levite" scrupulously insists on symmetry. Both guest and host try to preserve their hospitality-relation against outside interference by each offering "his" "own" woman to the Benjaminites: the old man suggests his daughter as substitute for the Levite and thus "redeem[s] his guest at the expense of his own blood" (358/1214); the Levite yields over his wife as substitute both for himself and for his host's substitute for himself. If in Judges the Levite's wife receives no protection as a proper guest, in Rousseau's "Levite" her status is ambiguous: she is possibly a guest and not unprotected, though she is never positively protected. If she is a guest, she is so only as an appendage to her husband; the old man presumes to have no direct relation to her. Hence, rather than emphasizing the impersonal gendered class relations of patriarchy, Rousseau's "Levite" personalizes these gender relations as patriarchalism. Each male household head interacts with the other's women as the other allows. The effect is that, rather than seeming to act centrally to preserve patriarchy (and to preserve hospitality only marginally,

²⁸ Melville, *Romantic Hospitality*, 31.

²⁹ Melville, *Romantic Hospitality*, 31.

by subtraction), each man vies symmetrically with the other to sacrifice a male-female relation precious to himself in order to secure their male sociability. The effect is the same as Judges 19—a woman is subordinated to a male-male bond—but the valuation of women is substantially greater. The private-property-effect may be present in patriarchal relations, but in patriarchy the private-property-effect is heightened because women are cherished.

The asymmetry or symmetric competition between the Levite and the old man suggests that, even when parties agree on preserving (or severing) a bond between them, they may disagree on the conditions or conduct to that end. When cast in these terms the central episode refracts all the other major relations of Rousseau's text as contestations over patriarchal hospitality and hostility.

The First Canto stages a confrontation between two possible patriarchal relations, each straining toward unseemliness in a desperate bid to distinguish itself from the other. On the one hand, despite the narrator's lamentation in the Fourth Canto that a woman is "always slave or tyrant, which man oppresses or adores" (363/1221), it is the male Levite, "driven by love" (354/1210), who proves both slave to and tyrant over his wife. Consequently, when he goes to Bethlehem to retrieve his departed beloved, he experiences her father's hospitality as theft: "he believed the time he passed from from his retreat robbed him of love, was given over to others rather than to his beloved" (355/1211). Counteracting this excessive and selfish love, the woman's father tries to detain his Levite son-in-law in hospitable relations for as long as possible: for the first three days by authoritative agreement ("My son, give me three days; let us pass these three days in joy, and on the fourth day, you and my daughter will leave in peace"); for a fourth full day by seductive persuasion via his daughter ("the daughter, caressing her husband, had him remain until the morrow"); and finally for the greater part of a fifth day by force ("as he was ready to leave he was stopped yet again by his father-in-law, who forced him to seat himself at table while awaiting full daylight; and the time flowed by without them perceiving it") (355/1211). The Levite and his wife's father both agree that a transfer of a woman binds them, but, while the woman's father seems to want the transfer to be eternally reenacted under his roof, the Levite wants the transfer to happen once for all. While the father's hospitality seems to want to maintain a continuous patriarchal circuit,³⁰ within which the daughter/wife is given and regifted endlessly, the Levite wants to break the circuit and have her to himself. As the father's "forc[ing]" the Levite once more to breakfast suggests, both host and guest mix patriarchal hostility with their shared hospitality. Because each man, despite the hospitality between them, refuses the other's perspective, each experiences the other's preferred relationship to the daughter/wife as a theft.

This simultaneous location of gift and theft in the Levite's wife's body plays out in the Second Canto, where the cost of the preservation of hospitality between the old man of Gibeah and the Levite is his wife's life: the townspeople sexually abuse her to the point of death. A woman's life is consumed for and sacrificed to patriarchal hospitality. How might this be understood? Given how devoted he has been to her, the Levite had only intended to extend usufruct of the concubine's body to the townspeople for a definite period of time. He expected that she would be able to rejoin him in the morning and addresses her as "more respectable to me [after the rape] than before your misfortunes"³¹ (358/1215), but when she does not answer his call to get up, he

³⁰ Writing of Judges 19, Bal notes, "the father's invitation to share a meal is an attempt to establish a group, a community of the father-house": *Death and Dissymmetry*, 167. The Levite's exclusive love, as Rousseau characterizes it, bridles against any such attempt at sharing.

³¹ Notably, he says "*nos malheurs*." See Horeck, *Public Rape*, 58.

realizes that, by using her up completely, the townspeople have transformed his temporary transfer of the woman's body into a theft in perpetuity. It is for this reason that he divides her body to disseminate across Israel: by cutting her body into twelve pieces, which he gives as gifts to each of the twelve tribes, he acknowledges *retrospectively* that certain individual Israelites, whose hospitality he believed would not be hostile to him, had in fact abused a patriarchal relation by taking in perpetuity what he offered only temporarily. He acknowledges, in other words, a brutal expropriation by a comparably brutal retroactive donation of gifts. A subset of Israelites has taken her life, but he gives all Israelites her death. At her own behest only when she steals away from the Levite to her father's residence, the nameless wife and daughter was never given leave to safekeep anything, herself above all.

While in Judges, the Levite tells the Israelites who assemble in response to his "frightful parcels sent to the Tribes" (359/1215-6) only that the Gibeahites had wanted to murder rather than rape him (Judges 20:5), Rousseau's version does euphemistically call attention to homosexual rape and murder:³² "the people of the country surrounded the house in which I was lodged, desiring to commit an outrage against me and make me perish" (359/1216). Thus the Third Canto of "Levite," less ambiguously than Judges 20, may be read as describing a righteous war against forcible homosexuality. In part, this is a divine punishment, carried out by the other tribes' swords, of Gibeah's inhospitality, homosexuality, and heterosexual rape, and for this reason the faith of the Lord's human instruments is an issue: the Lord tells them that their "duty" should not "depend on the outcome" of the war, and they became "wise and brave" combatants rather than "wild men" when they finally transform (personal) human vengeance into (impersonal) divine duty (361/1218).

However, more interesting is the way that the question of solidarity with or against the crime of the central episode intersects with patriarchy, hostility, and hospitality. For, although the rest of the tribe of Benjamin is invited to distance itself from the residents of Gibeah and to turn over the transgressors, they nevertheless "rushed to Gibeah's defense" (360/1217). Thus even those who did not transgress demonstrated active complicity with heterosexual gang rape, homosexuality, and hostility. Inversely, the people of Jabesh-Gilead mentioned in the next canto were understood implicitly to condone the Benjaminite malefactors in "unjust pity" for the other Benjamins slaughtered in the war. For "perjury and desertion of the common cause" of holy war, all the males of Jabesh-Gilead and all the women who have known them—groups tainted by the refusal to disavow the crime that the tribe of Benjamin so fiercely fought to harbor—all, that is, but the virgin women, are, in turn, killed (363/1220). The patriarchal logic of these hostilities, sharpened by the precision of righteousness, aligns all sexuality either with or against Gibeah. On the side of Gibeah, only the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead—pure in two senses, relative and absolute, being relatively distant along the continuum of complicity because absolutely innocent of sex and now, fatherless, freed for male control—categorically escape slaughter. The policing of sexuality is not only the reason for going to war, *jus ad bellum*, but also reasonable conduct in war, *jus in bello*. In either case, the hostilities were undertaken to realign the community to patriarchy.

These three conflicts, of interpaternal relations, of a woman's body torn between gift and theft, and of patriarchal hostility, all refract key problems of the central scene. However, it is in the counterpoint between the Fourth Canto and the central scene of "Levite" that Rousseau's signature moves come into play. Indeed, it is possible to speak of the final scene, with its central triangulation of three men negotiating access to one woman, as hospitality for two reasons. First,

³² I differ from Bal, who asserts that Rousseau's Levite definitely lies, in "Body of Writing," 218.

hospitality in its broadest sense might be understood as those practices that effect to counteract hostility, i.e., those practices that transform dissociative enmity into friendly association and even into intimate familiarity. Second, the final scene invented by Rousseau virtuously mimics, by neutralizing the vicious terms of, the scene in Gibeah. Just as hostility shatters a hospitality-relation in Gibeah, so, inversely and symmetrically, does hospitality repair hostility-relations in Shiloh.

The final canto follows Judges 21 in showing that the allied tribes scheme to evade their vow never to *give* their daughters in marriage to a Benjaminite by letting the two hundred surviving Benjaminites, whom the slaughter at Jabesh-Gilead did not provide with virgin wives, to *take* Israelite brides at Shiloh. Rousseau departs from the Biblical source by dramatizing the latter's unadorned chronicle of events. Rousseau dramatizes the account first by injecting a central consequential tension absent from Judges. Whereas Judges 21:23 notes simply, "from the dancers whom [the Benjaminites] caught, [they] took as many wives as there were men and then, setting off, went back to their heritage, rebuilt the towns and settled down in them," Rousseau stops the abduction *in medias res* and gives a role to an assembly that has gathered at the tumult: "Torn between justice and pity, the assembly at last pronounces that the captives would recover their freedom and decide their fate for themselves" (364/1222). Tension mounts precipitously from this pronouncement because the virgins' decision does not, of course, affect their fate alone but the fates of their familiars and their former enemies, indeed of all Israel.

"Levite" moreover dramatizes Judges 21's matter-of-factness by, second, adding the previously cited cast of characters to personalize this fateful decision. When the virgin Axa escapes the embrace of her Benjaminite abductor, she betrays her prior commitment to Elmacin, "to whom she had been promised" (365/1222). Her abductor was "ready to withdraw," having "divined all" in the glances she trades with Elmacin. However, the old man of Lebonah who had advised the Benjaminites in bride-theft is revealed to be Axa's father: "He had himself chosen Elmacin for his son-in-law, but his probity had prevented him from warning his daughter of the risk to which he exposed those of other people" (365/1223). Observing the tragic dilemma in which he has entangled his household, he urges his daughter to deliberate carefully:

you know my heart; I love Elmacin, he would have been the consolation of my aged days, but the salvation of your people and the honor of your father must win out over him. Do your duty, my daughter, and save me from opprobrium among my brothers, for I have counseled everything that has been done. (365/1222)

With great pathos, she decides. She succumbs to the tugs of female filial piety and "half dead" "falls into the arms" of her abductor after having bid "a weak and last farewell" to Elmacin. Axa's choice inspires the abducted virgins, who "imitate her sacrifice, and renouncing their first loves . . . deliver themselves to the Benjaminites who pursued them," their "authorized rapists," "*ravisseurs autorisés*" (365/1222).³³

What operations of patriarchal hospitality and hostility does this scene reveal? It reveals a series of transfers of a woman among men whose bonds with one another are either severed or sealed by the possession or renunciation of her body. A patriarch (the old man of Lebonah) has promised his daughter to a townsman (Elmacin). An intruder (the vanquished wifeless Benja-

³³ Horeck discusses the "paradox of 'authorized rape'" in *Public Rape*, 56. The English translation finesses the French original: "the abductors, so authorized . . ." (364/1222).

minute) intervenes because the old man has authorized the daughter's theft. Between the promised gift and the authorized theft, one must be cancelled, the other executed. The executed transfer of the daughter's (Axa's) body will seal the bond between two men, while the cancelled transfer severs a male-male bond. In Shiloh, it is the Benjaminite who prevails: the authorized theft of Axa, once executed, converts the enemy into a familiar by enjoining patriarchal sexuality. Elmacin, by contrast, must renounce the promised gift of Axa. Severing his prior bond with Elmacin, the patriarch indirectly thus controls his sexuality, though Elmacin turns force into consent: involuntarily renouncing Axa, he voluntarily accepts celibacy.

Intertribal hospitality here displaces intertribal hostility. As such, the scene at Shiloh reverses the terms of the scene at Gibeah. Positions and relations repeat in each scene, although the roles are redistributed or collapsed. In the Gibeah of "Levite" though not of Judges 19, there is, for example, a fiancé, though he is collapsed into the class of intruders. (Rousseau deviates from the Bible on this detail: "I have a daughter still a virgin, promised to one among you," says the old man to the Gibeahites, "I am going to lead her to be sacrificed to you . . ." [357/1214]). Similarly, collapsed into the Levite are two positions separated in the scene at Shiloh: the Levite is forced to renounce his wife, and so his sexuality is controlled (by hostility rather than hospitality), yet he is also the one whose bond the patriarch strives to protect (though as confirmed guest rather than converted enemy).

The most significant difference between the two scenes—more important than the reversal of intertribal hospitality and hostility—is that although Axa and the Levite's wife are both simultaneously gift and theft, Axa voluntarily submits to these roles (if only retroactively), while the Levite's wife is always involuntarily given and taken by others. Initially passion but then duty replaces force and violence. The Levite had "dragged" his wife to his host's door before the predatory Benjaminites violated her (358/1214). Twice over, Axa *chooses* her designated role as gift or theft: she has passionately committed herself to Elmacin, to whom her father gave her; she dutifully commits herself to the Benjaminite who was invited by her father to take her (as representative of a class of other virgin daughters). In this way, Axa's voluntary renunciation parallels Elmacin's, although she has submitted twice—once already to him—to his once. The "Levite" thus seeks to resolve crises of patriarchal coercion by presenting dutiful consent.³⁴ Axa and Elmacin both voluntarily accept what the Levite and his wife are forced to undergo: rape for the women, restricted sexuality (in the form of celibacy) for the men.

Yet, as much as the conclusion seems to present a neat structural resolution, it also unleashes effects that undermine its progressive claims to replace patriarchal hostility with patriarchal hospitality and patriarchal command with a national duty that calls on women and men both. Certainly, such improvement is already questionable given the proximity of patriarchal moral pressure burdening Axa's will to choose. Yet bracketing this question of father-daughter coercion (which is already not patriarchal command), Axa's act generates woman-to-woman relations that may have coercive effects. Axa's consenting to her authorized rapist provides a present example to the other virgins, who follow her lead (and the text's voice seems to approve: "There are still virtues in Israel" [365/1223]), but her example also spectrally and retrospectively legitimates all the prior rapes and abductions or at the very least pressures the women retroactively to revise others' thefts of their bodies as self-sacrifices for men. Despite the fact that the narrative voice looks askance at the abduction of the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead—"What weddings for the timid young virgins . . . who received ties of attachment and of love from hands filthy with the blood

³⁴ It also resolves the crisis of antisocial amorous devotion: the Levite's unseemly love for his wife is replaced by female filial piety and the "salvation" of Israel (365/1223).

of their near ones!” (363/1221)—Axa’s exemplarity coercively enjoins these other virgins to revise their collective rape and abduction as necessary self-sacrifices for Israel.

Yet the effects of Axa’s exemplarity go further still to erode the distinction between authorized and unauthorized heterosexual rape. For if she consents to her position in exchanges between men and thus rewrites her authorized rape and abduction as voluntary duty, then her exemplarity may prejudice any attempt to include heterosexual rape, even rape unto death, within the total transgression of the Gibeahites. In other words, if it is a duty to one’s people for a woman to consent to being the object of transfer between men, then it is the case that the Levite’s wife was not only potentially unprotected as a guest but that she should voluntarily have submitted to this non-protection. Sexual violence against her is discounted in advance: it cannot have been a violation if she was to have volunteered. The unauthorized rape *does* count violation, though, not because it is unauthorized by her, for she is unprotected either way. The violation that matters in her rape unto death, and what makes it unauthorized from the patriarchal perspective, is not that she was raped but that she is dead and therefore unavailable for the Levite’s continued sexual enjoyment. So it is not quite true that the Benjaminites are permitted to repeat as antidote the noxious crime for which they were condemned: this may be true in Judges, but Rousseau’s deviations make heterosexual rape no longer the object of punishment.³⁵

Despite the ambiguous exclamation to the transgressors, “O wretches, who destroy your species through the pleasures destined to reproduce it” (358/1214), which could allude either to homosexuality or to heterosexual rape, the rape of the Levite’s wife is subtracted, then, from the cluster of wrongs that comprise the Benjaminites’ violation. The offense against hospitality, the threatened homosexual rape, and the death of the Levite’s sexual partner are bound up together: the Benjaminites in league abstained from hosting the Levite because they wanted to violate him in the open yet instead raped his wife to death. They maintained “a trace of respect for the most sacred of all rights” of hospitality (357/1214): once hosted in a home, a guest enjoyed undeniable rites and rights of hospitality. Their offense was not neglect of hospitality, then, but premeditated sexual hostility: their hostility would have taken the form of homosexual rape and cannot be separated from it, although they settled on controlling the Levite’s sexuality by proxy. Hence, Rousseau’s version of Judges defies the attempts of Biblical scholars to argue that the primarily sexual reading of Genesis 19 and Judges 19 is a later imposition on a text that is not self-evidently about sodomy and homosexuality, but rather offenses against hospitality, in the first place.³⁶ Rousseau’s deviations from Judges rivet sexuality to hostility more securely than does his source. In the final analysis, the neglect of hospitality and the Levite’s wife’s death were collateral effects of the central transgression, namely, hostility as homosexual rape.

By reference to Rousseau’s *Confessions*, this transgression can be formulated more simply: male homosexuality *is* hostility. Useful though it may be for other purposes to read “Levite” alongside the passages late in Book XI of *The Confessions* where Rousseau discusses composing the prose poem amidst the hostility of French authorities to the publication of *Émile*, I argue that his descriptions of his disgust at homosexual advances are more relevant for understanding the hostility and hospitality of “Levite.” Rousseau rather famously (infamously) was introduced to

³⁵ I differ from Kamuf, *Signature Pieces*, 85-6; and Horeck, *Public Rape*, 55. On the status of the antidote/poison theme in Rousseau, see Jean Starobinski, *Blessings in Disguise, Or, The Morality of Evil*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 118-68.

³⁶ See John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), ch. 4; and Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), ch. 2. Cf. Michael Warner, “New English Sodom,” *American Literature* 64.1 (March 1992): 19-47.

homosexuality by a “Moor” in the Catholic hospice in Turin. Always obliging, the Moor had expressed a fondness for Rousseau that extended to kisses, which Rousseau, not wanting to be unfriendly, felt would be “wrong to repulse.”³⁷ Eventually, Rousseau reports, the Moor

recommenced his caresses, but with such violent movements, that it became quite alarming. At last, he wanted to take the most disgusting liberties with me, and, taking hold of my hand, tried to make me take the same with him. I uttered a loud cry, and, jumping back, freed myself from him; and, without exhibiting anger or indignation, for I had not the least idea what it was all about, I expressed my surprise and disgust so energetically, that he left me where I was; but, while finishing his efforts, I saw something white, like glue, shoot toward the fireplace and fall upon the ground, which turned my stomach.³⁸

The lesson Rousseau draws from this attempt to engage him in male-male mutual masturbation are consequential for “Levite,” and I shall return to them.

However, a second episode, connecting hospitality, homosexuality, and the fear of murder, replicates relevant features of “Levite” and Judges 19. In Lyons, Rousseau tries to economize by no longer taking meals or staying at an inn. Settling down to sleep on a warm night in the public square, not unlike the Levite in Gibeah, Rousseau is accosted by an Abbé who, after pleasant conversation, “told me that . . . he certainly would not leave me to sleep in the square.” Offered “half his bed for the night,” Rousseau accepts the hospitality. However, less like the old man of Gibeah and more like the Benjaminites, the Abbé, it turns out, “had the same tastes as my Jew of the hospice, but did not show them so brutally Taught by my former experience, I soon understood what he wanted, and shuddered. Not knowing in what kind of house or in whose hands I was, I was afraid to make a noise for fear of being murdered.” Rousseau manages to dissuade the Abbé from his sexual designs by “relating to him in terms so full of horror and disgust” his recent encounters with male homosexuality.³⁹

As Rousseau conceives the matter in both “Levite” and *Confessions*, a homosexual advance can only be taken as hostility and is experienced therefore as attempted rape because any such advance is, presumptively, unwanted. Certainly this is unqueer enough as a conclusion, and hardly surprising. Unqueerer and more surprising, however, is how Rousseau refracts this back onto *heterosexual* relations. In response to his “disgusting little adventure” with the Moor, Rousseau not only avers that he desires women more than before, but also reflects that he must express desire for them more gently: “women, to my mind, gained much by comparison; it appeared to me that I owed them tender feelings and personal homage by way of reparation for the insults of my sex; and the ugliest strumpet became in my eyes an object of adoration, when I remembered the false African.”⁴⁰

Having been the object of brutal, potentially murderous men’s advances, Rousseau confirms his heterosexuality and affirms that women deserve better treatment. And this homosexual panic underwrites Axa’s choice as well, because men’s tenderer approaches to women compel moral

³⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, no trans. (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), 67; Pléiade *Œuvres Complètes*, I:67.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 68/I:67.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 172/I:166-7. Although she discusses homosexuality in “Levite” and *Confessions*, Simons does not discuss this passage in *Amitié et Passion*, ch. 5.

⁴⁰ Rousseau, *Confessions*, 67, 69-70/I:66, 69.

complementarity between the sexes. Axa's father's act of simultaneously extolling and morally pressuring her sexual consent reveals that when men give women homage, women in turn *must*—are expected to—be obliging to men. By a chain of consequences, then, the dutiful woman, the woman who must will rightfully, finds her genesis in men's prejudgment of all homosexuality as rape and therefore as hostility. Rather than progressively overcoming patriarchy by its end, Rousseau's "Levite," when read in counterpoint with the *Confessions*, implies that the complementarity between male restraint and female solicitude is rooted precisely in the anxious avoidance of what Irigaray identified as the open interpretation of patriarchy's tacitly functional law, namely, male homosexuality. Even when no longer captive to the physical coercions of male tyranny, women are still subject—now voluntarily, by duty—to moral patriarchy.

Furthermore, and consequently, this heterosexual moral complementarity is based on an asymmetry. When men restrain themselves and expect women to be dutifully solicitous in return, women still risk the physical consequences of men's slips in moral restraint. This might be better grasped by transposing one of Pascal's *Pensées* from master/slave to gender relations: "Are you less of a slave for being loved and flattered by your master? You are certainly well off, slave, your master flatters you. Shortly he will beat you."⁴¹ Rousseau's homosexual panic provokes him to enjoin men to flatter women, and for women in turn to be voluntarily obliging, but the risk that women bear in exchange for self-sacrifice is that men may now aggress against women directly as well as collaterally to men's interpatriarchal relations. In being elevated to subjecthood in hospitality relations, women must now voluntarily be hospitable toward men, yet they are still also involuntarily the objects of men's hospitality and hostility relations. Men, meanwhile, remain only subjects of hospitality and hostility but never objects.

The effects of this asymmetry are maximally unqueer in that women and men consequently occupy largely overlapping but differentially empowered ranges of meanings of "host." The etymology of "host" and the family of words related to "hospitality/hostility" (hostel, hotel, hospital, hospice, hostage) derive from an array of Latin usages indicating stranger, enemy, host, guest, foreigner, and compensatory offering: hence the Christian usage "host" for referring to the wafer in the sacrament of Eucharist to represent the sacrificed body of Jesus; hence, also, "host" for referring to a warlike mass of men in the Bible and Medieval literature.⁴² In the simultaneously complementary yet asymmetric heterosexual moral landscape inaugurated by Axa's choice, women may occupy all roles in the array of senses of "host," while men occupy all the roles except compensatory offering. Viz.:

women: stranger, enemy, host, guest, foreigner, compensatory offering;
men: stranger, enemy, host, guest, foreigner.

The overlap is imperfect: women may be hosts in that Eucharistic sense, but men, rejecting (from homosexual panic) the possibility that they could be objects, will not be. In being elevated to the realm of choice-worthy moral-cum-political duty, women are nevertheless made available to

⁴¹ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, Fragment 393, in *Pensées and Other Writings*, trans. Honor Levi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 89.

⁴² The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives four different entries for "host" as referring to hospitality (and hostelry), to hostility, and to sacrifice: "host, n.¹," "host, n.²," "host n.³," "host, n.⁴," *OED Online* (September 2014), <<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>, accessed 19 November 2014. "Host" in the last usage only later extended beyond war to any other large agglomeration of objects or animals, e.g., a host of sparrows.

enmity like men. However, as a consequence of the prior asymmetry, women are subject to a new one, specifically:

women: stranger, ~~active enemy~~, passive enemy, host, guest, foreigner, compensatory offering;
 men: stranger, active enemy, ~~passive enemy~~, host, guest, foreigner.

That is, since women can be compensatory offerings while men will not be, women are effectively prevented from being active enemies. This prior asymmetric vulnerability exposes women to rightful aggression by others (men) but preempts them from aggressing. Women are thus rendered passive enemies only. If they do not voluntarily sacrifice themselves as offerings to men, they may either be involuntarily sacrificed to men's mutual hostilities or else targeted directly as a passive enemy—there are so many ways that women will have been preemptively disabled from actively taking up arms against men. Meanwhile this asymmetric heterosexual complementarity wrought by homosexual panic immunizes men against any risk of self-sacrificial hosting in the sense of compensatory offering, although they will always be exposed, and able to expose others, to the aggressions of enmity.

However, if, as the voice of “Levite” desires, happiness turns on true equality (363/1221) rather than asymmetric moral complementarity between the sexes, then not only must women be able to be active enemies (to men and women), but men must voluntarily be hosts in the Eucharistic sense—they must be willing to sacrifice themselves, even sexually, for women and men. Axa's choice is so troublingly unqueer because of all of the coercions and the asymmetries underwriting it. Yet self-sacrifice, while always unsettling, need not necessarily have the troubling, exclusionary effects Rousseau gives it. Queer, rather than patriarchal, hospitality and hostility would strive for radical openness. Anyone, men or women, cis- or trans- (although Rousseau does not mention this possibility in “Levite”), or altogether otherwise and strange, could occupy either of the complementary roles of guest or host or of mutual enemies. At the same time, no class of persons could categorically bar themselves from serving as auxiliary objects to these hospitality- and hostility-relations. None could categorically reserve themselves from serving as compensatory offerings between mutual enemies or hosts and guests. Yet because of its radical openness, queer hospitality and hostility would necessarily exceed the equality that Rousseau's text explicitly calls for but tacitly denies. Queer hostility and hospitality would resist the fiction of isometry that underwrites such equality. Instead of Rousseau's fictively isometric asymmetry, it would be underwritten instead by anisometric quasi-symmetry: momentary and contingent, its near-similitudes would be informed by distances, absences, alterities. The queer desire to make hospitality and hostility neither coercive and inegalitarian nor consensualist and egalitarian, but rather non-coercive and anisometric yet quasi-symmetric—because radically open to strangeness and thus ever risky—would provoke us to disburden them of the historical sediments of both patriarchy and of the liberalism that domesticated it.