

A DERRIDEAN APPROACH TO QATAR'S PARADOX OF HOSPITALITY

FIFA, Souq Waqif, and the Ship of Theseus

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Abstract: Qatar has been heavily critiqued for its alleged inability to be hospitable to fans and tourists from different cultural, gender, and religious backgrounds (Todman, 2022). It has been damagingly portrayed as an “unwelcoming and closed conservative country” (Al-Ansari & Zahirovic, 2021: 203). This article examines Qatar’s paradoxical positioning of hospitality. It draws on the Derridean notion of hospitality to conceptualize the Qatari cultural and sociopolitical context as being conditioned by “hostipitality,” a term that Derrida coined to explain the contradictory nature of hospitality, “a word which carries its own contradiction incorporated into it, a Latin word which allows itself to be parasitized by its opposite, ‘hostility’” (2000b: 3). This article, therefore, utilizes Derrida’s theory of “hostipitality” to deconstruct the Western mindset of liberalism and the alleged unconditional respect for all. Two examples are used, the Qatari World Cup and Souq Waqif, to further contextualize and problematize the paradoxical positionality of Qatari hospitality. How can applying the Derridean hostipitality help negotiate Qatar’s controversial hospitality positioning? How do the cases of the World Cup and Souq Waqif exemplify the paradoxical aspect of conditioned hospitality? Additionally, the “Ship of Theseus” thought experiment is used to situate the paradox and help reconcile hospitality with hostility to form an emerging conception of negotiated conditioned hospitality. This study invokes the paradox of the “Ship of Theseus” to respond to the Derridean contradictory notion of hostipitality and further problematize Qatar’s positionality of hospitality.

Keywords: Hospitality in Qatar, Identity in Qatar, Qatar World Cup, Souq Waqif, Derrida, Hostipitality

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Cosmopolitan Right shall be limited to Conditions of Universal Hospitality.

Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*

Introduction

Arab hospitality, known as *karam*, is perceived as a genuine selfless practice of humility, generosity, honor, and acceptance of others (Torstrick & Faier, 2009). *Karam* involves welcoming strangers, travelers, or tourists within Arab urban and Bedouin societies, which have often been viewed as highly conservative and, therefore, mistakenly unwelcoming (Stephenson & Ali, 2018). Therefore, it is unsurprising that Qatari culture has upheld the hospitable Arab nature, especially in preparation for the 2022 World Cup. Many studies have addressed the Qatari hospitality crisis in terms of the country's ability to provide sufficient accommodation or in relation to the hospitality industry as a commercial domain (Al-Khulaifi & Younus, 2021) and tourism (Smith & Puczko, 2014). On the other hand, many voices criticized what is often perceived as Qatar's inability to be hospitable to fans and players from different cultural, gender, and religious backgrounds, let alone the challenge of accommodating the expected huge number of visitors from all over the world. Social justice groups and activists, for instance, continue to accuse Qatar of being inhospitable to human rights, LGBTQ, women's rights, and alcohol, ignoring how these disparaging attempts have recently backfired (Todman, 2022). This study responds to such critiques through a Derridean conceptualization of hospitality as congenial ethics, which can deviate into an intrusive attribute. The result is a sense of ambivalence that may challenge specific associations with Qatari culture. What is theoretically innovative is that this article argues in favor of a conditioned hospitality grounded in paradox. This paradox, called *mofaraqa* in Arabic, should not be viewed, as is often the case, as a disorientation marked by the intrusion of difference but as a configuration of cultural growth (Kroeber, 1947). How can the cherished Qatari hospitality ethics be understood as conditioned from a Derridean perspective? How do the cases of the World Cup and Souq Waqif promote this ambivalent and paradoxical aspect of conditioned hospitality? This article aims first to apply the Derridean understanding of conditioned hospitality to the Qatari context, and second to locate this hospitality in paradox, a Qatari positionality that informs its approach toward "*l'étranger*," the "other."

This study invokes paradox in relation to Derridean hospitality for two reasons. First, a paradox often serves as a thought experiment, usually suggesting an enigmatic proposition that provokes a sense of ambivalence; it "fails to fulfill its provocative function if it elicits a single, obvious answer" (Rose, 2020: 159). In this

case, it illustrates the contradictory nature of hospitality that Derrida calls “hostipitality” (2000b: 3), which refers to that segment of hospitality that involves a particular hostility as part of its constitutional and linguistic nature. Second, a paradox resonates with readers from different cultural backgrounds: “it must fulfill a second condition (which we will call ‘Universality’): It must elicit an ambivalent state of mind in readers of all demographic, particularly of all cultural, backgrounds” (Rose, 2020: 159). This study invokes a famous paradox, the Ship of Theseus, to negotiate and problematize Souq Waqif and further illustrate the Derridean notion of hostipitality.

A Derridean conceptualizing hospitality: Positioning a paradoxical perspective

In his advocacy for hospitality, Immanuel Kant (1795) believed that the state owes duties of hospitality to migrants. For Kant, “hospitality means the right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy ... as long as he peacefully occupies his place, one may not treat him with hostility” (Ganesh, 2018: 164). However, Levinas believes that hospitality imposes ethical and political responsibility for the unconditionally welcomed other in an absolute idealistic manner. He distinguishes between the imperatives of hospitality that operate in the private and public spheres, and associates the private with the moral realm, which compels the individual to be welcoming to strangers. The public is political and, therefore, volatile, which requires an ethical dimension (Makris, 2018: 158). Jacques Derrida acknowledged Levinas’ legacy and relevance, noting that “*Totality and Infinity*¹ bequeath to us an immense treatise of hospitality” (1999: 21), and in response introduced the conditionality of welcoming the other, “*l’être étranger*.” Derrida defines hospitality as inviting and welcoming the “stranger,” on both the personal level where the “stranger” is welcomed into the home, and the national level of individual countries. His notion of conditional hospitality negates and regulates the idealistic concept of hospitality. Derrida also distinguishes between unconditional hospitality, which he considered impossible, and hospitality which has always been conditional. He further labels unconditioned hospitality as unbearable, as “you give up the mastery of your space, your home, your nation” (Dooley & Kearney, 2002: 70). As he puts it, there is “no hospitality, in the classic sense, without sovereignty of oneself over one’s home” (Derrida, 2000a: 55). In other words, the different roles played in this intercultural encounter give the setting its formed and regulated nature; the host has power and control over his home, yet welcomes “*l’être étranger*,” who imposes in return some threat to the identity of the host, such that this imposition must be stressed as a positive outcome or otherwise negotiated, since this “exercise of possession over one’s home is not ultimately negative since it yields the possibility

of hospitality – though not in an absolute, unconditional form” (Kakoliris, 2015: 149). Thus, there is always an element of hostility within the gracious act of hospitality, which Derrida refers to with the portmanteau “hostipitality” (2000b: 3). Derrida comments on the paradoxical nature inherent in the lexicon:

“hospitality” is a Latin word (Hospitalität, a word of Latin origin, of a troubled and troubling origin, a word which carries its own contradiction incorporated into it, a Latin word which allows itself to be parasitized by its opposite, “hostility,” the undesirable guest [hôte] which it harbors as the self-contradiction in its own body.

(2000b: 3)

The etymology further defines or complicates the paradoxical aspect of hospitality, which shares cognate semantic roots with hostility:

The etymologies of the words “hostility” and “hospitality” share a common root which has to do with food. The root of the word *hostis* is the Sanskrit *ghas* meaning “to eat,” “to consume,” or even “to destroy.” And even though it is unclear as to who eats and what, a *hostis* is a stranger and a foreigner.

(Minkinen, 2007: 53)

The contradiction manifests in the simultaneous presence of opposing elements. Thus, the term *hostipitality* captures this paradoxical condition that marks the inevitable intrusion of hostility, almost in a parasitical manner, which raises an ethical conundrum.

For Derrida, hospitality is relational and ethical. It is interpersonal, interactive, and ethos-oriented:

Insofar as it has to do with the *ethos*, that is, the residence, one’s home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, *ethics is hospitality*.

(2001: 16–17)

According to Kant, Derrida explains, the anthropic and anthropological ethics inform the question of hospitality: “Universal hospitality arises from an obligation, a right, and a duty all regulated by law; elsewhere, in the ‘Elements of Ethics’ which concludes his ‘Doctrine of Virtue’”²² (2000b: 4). A host is a person, the community, the state, and the city, who welcomes and receives and yet remains in

charge. The host defines the rules of engagement and its conditions as an antidote to the chaotic unconditional entry. Derrida was after formalizing “a law of hospitality which violently imposes a contradiction on the very concept of hospitality in fixing a limit to it, in determining it” (2000b: 4). In effect, it preconditions identity as bound by the household's ethics of hospitality, which is its gift and thrift. The quintessential hospitality experience incurs hostility as its boundary-defining function. Therefore, Derrida argues that for hospitality to survive its self-contradictory nature, it must apply itself in practice: “Hospitality is a self-contradictory concept and experience which can only self-destruct or protect itself from itself, auto-immunize itself in some way ... in being put into practice” (2000b: 5). Otherwise, it is doomed to remain confusingly ambivalent and perhaps unresolved.

Positioning conditioned hospitality within the Arab and Islamic ethos

Despite being a genuine attribute of the region, Arab hospitality, at its core, is not unconditional and absolute. Historically, hospitality was a survival imperative in the vast, cruel desert of Arabia. Hosting a traveler/stranger who had been riding or walking for days in a harsh, dry, and hot environment was necessary for both guest and host, a common language and expected behavior that spoke of the host's character and claim to honor. The nomadic nature of Bedouin life in the desert meant a constant search for resources to preserve themselves and their flocks. Therefore, they were often interchangeably either guests or hosts. Unconditional hospitality was part of that tradition, to the extent that folklore tells us stories of Arab hosts who deprived themselves of food and drink to honor their guests, which denotes richness of behavior rather than material wealth (Torstrick & Faier, 2009: 132). The paradox here comes from the appearance of unconditionality. The foundation of hospitality is reciprocity, as the host gives the guest an obligation of a proportionate value to be returned at a later date. Hospitality, therefore, must be viewed beyond the singularity of generosity.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, a symbolic relationship existed between hospitality and status, which extended to honor, reputation and sovereignty (Sobh et al., 2013). Quraish, an Arab tribe of noble descent, took great pride in hosting the pilgrims who visited Makkah in the pagan era. Quraish provided Al Seqaya and Al Refada, water and food services, for pagan pilgrims throughout the season, and these services were manifestations of Quraish's honor and status. Later, these two hospitality functions were the subject of a furious dispute between Bani Abdu Manaf and Bani Abdul Dar, descendants of Qusai. Despite their eagerness to serve the guests of Meccah, conditioning was related to this hospitality, since pilgrims were conditioned to follow certain manners, rituals, and time restrictions. In Islam, generosity

to one's guest is a sign of belief in God and the day of judgment, as stated in the noble hadeeth (Rababah & Rababah, 2016: 44). In the Quran, the act of hospitality transcends sharing food, to the obligation of providing protection for one's guest, as stated in the story of the prophets Ibrahim and Lot with the angels (Rababah & Rababah, 2016: 74). The third pillar of Islam, Al Zakat, is an obligatory charity that is considered the right of less privileged groups, including *Ibn al sabeel*, the traveler, son of the road. As Sobh (2013: 445) noted, there is a "general consensus among Muslim scholars that hospitality and generosity toward guests are an integral part of faith in Islam". The guest's identity, name, and tribe are not questioned initially; he/she is welcomed unconditionally, regardless of background. A guest would need to disclose his/her identity, though, if he/she was hoping to stay for more than three days. A sense of paradox then intrudes because the host will have greater responsibilities toward a more permanent guest. Hospitality assumes the two sides of the same coin, so to speak, as it subsumes hostility. The subtle "hostility" aspect of hospitality, as Derrida (2000a) implies in *Of Hospitality*, is inevitable as long as the host has the power of being a host, a position that he/she will defend and preserve.

The Qatari Arab notion of conditioned hospitality can be observed in relation to space, customs, and household expectations. Unlike some other Arab countries, Qatar still practices gender segregation in spaces such as Majlises, wedding venues, and family events, which creates boundaries to, and yet possibilities for, hospitality. Men's Majles, for instance, is a highly protocolled sphere that may seem an intense environment for strangers due to the manners and expectations to be followed, such as greetings upon entry and upon leaving, the manners with which the host welcomes the guests, ways to use utensils and other customs. Similarly, households with women entertain female-oriented hospitality, which has sanctity, not less than a mosque, in which the participants "safeguard their own integrity, which is often described as *hurma*, as 'sacredness' or 'inviolability'" (Sobh et al., 2013: 36). Most of the customs that have survived the test of time are supplied and protected by traditional values that need to be respected. Islamic traditions and Arab customs govern, to a great extent, how cultural exchanges play out. Meanwhile, guests are expected to abide by these traditions and appreciate their autonomy and impact on the members of that society:

there is an essential "self-restraint" incorporated in the idea of hospitality that maintains the distance between what belongs to the host and the foreigner, between the power of the host to remain master of his or her house and the invitation of the other into it.

(Kakoliris, 2015: 148)

Likewise, Derrida observes that hospitality cannot be “without sovereignty of oneself over one’s home, but since there is also no hospitality without finitude, sovereignty can only be exercised by filtering” (2000a: 55). Very much like the private space, the public sphere is equally bridled and aided by hospitality. Paradoxically inviting and intrusive, Qatari hospitality seems to dictate its regional and cultural codes and descriptors.

The FIFA World Cup: Positioning the guest as parasite or host as hostage

At the international level, tourists would be provided with guidelines about how to act in public spaces with respect to local traditions or to meet the public’s expectations. This is not necessarily a compulsion in all cases, but a gesture of respect for the host’s culture. In Qatar, two different initiatives showcased the host’s public expectations. Launched first in 2012, the campaign “One of Us” was meant to encourage the ex-pat community to dress in a more modest manner showing regard for the Qatari culture. This initiative was relaunched in 2014 under the “Reflect your Respect” campaign, promoting the understanding of Qatari traditions through social media. Qatari local women and men urged visitors and foreign residents to respect the Qatari culture by wearing appropriate clothing. Women and children passed out leaflets and candy, and gifts to ask foreigners to dress modestly in public places. Sights of people wearing revealing clothing have become almost common in Doha, which prompted the feeling among Qatari citizens that their cultural values are being held hostage in the sense that an outside power or influence is involuntarily controlling them.³ Volunteers of the campaign released some flyers, pictures, and translated texts in foreign languages to educate visitors of the country about certain limitations regarding proper behavior and attire. This initiative can be seen as a representation of conditioned hospitality as it sets out to re-establish specific cultural values, generating pushback from some ex-pats (Scott, 2014: para 7).⁴ This is not to say that a traditionalist lifestyle has vanished. Nevertheless, the “Reflect your Respect” movement is a response to a slippage in maintaining Qatari ways of being. It intimates a subversion of traditional ethics. In this case, the host and guest have reversed roles: the host has almost lost their role as preserver of his/her household ethics and is now asserting their hospitality back. Such a case of renegotiating with guests signals corrosive hospitality.

Hosting an event such as the World Cup is a significant challenge in many ways. Qatar is the smallest country that has ever hosted this global event, which means it has hosted a large number of fans that is almost equivalent to its current population, if not more. The event was hosted formally by the state, but had a substantial impact on the locals and residents of the country. It was clear that there

was a huge demand for accommodation and that hospitality and commercial venues were bustling. The pressure on transportation was immense, and many labor sectors went part-time or online during the tournament. Undoubtedly, the main concerns for the people in Qatar were the massive multicultural encounters, and visiting World Cup fans' perceptions of and reactions to Qatari culture. For a conservative society regionally renowned for the modesty and composure of its tiny population of 250,000 nationals, the hosting of football fans has resulted in a cultural dilemma. The eruption of volatile moments is not unheard of in the game's history. Some football fans have shown themselves as violent, not abiding by regulations, and focused less on the games than on displaying alien political views and propaganda. In a rather expected defiance of their future host's ethics, some fans would presumably consume a great deal of alcohol and show little restraint in their behavior. It is not uncommon that after matches, hooligans would fight with the police, attack fans of opposing teams, and vandalize public property (Guilianotti, 2013). In anticipation of this scenario, the Qatari public were called upon to be cautious and to place surveillance cameras on their houses before the event. It is quite alarming that any host could perceive his guest as threatening and unrestrained: "We have to be careful," remarked resident Ahmed Al Kuwari; "We have to secure our houses ... all the year we leave our front doors open. So for one month now, okay we will close it" (Mills, 2022: para 3). Living in one of the world's safest countries, Qataris had their own mounting concerns about potential vandalism, shoplifting, and rowdiness when some 1.2 million people visit: "Curiosity may spark and maybe people would just wander into villas ... anything can happen," said Sara Al-Ansari, a lecturer in Qatar University (Mills, 2022: para 5). In effect, not all of the tournament's fans are perceived

as guests if they don't have the benefit of the right to hospitality. This is a paradoxical situation in which the guest, according to Derrida, morphs into a parasite, an enactment of the Derridean hostipitality. It is a situation in which the double, contradictory postulation exercised by the guest paralyzes hospitality. Without this right to set out boundaries for hospitality, a guest can impose a parasitical existence that is "wrong, illegitimate, clandestine, liable to expulsion or arrest."

(Derrida, 2000a: 61)

For example, a number of British and Argentine fans have been banned from attending the event because of examples of violent behavior at previous tournaments. The undesired guest is banished outside the law and realm of hospitality.

Another case of the paradox of positionality in the form of the host as a hostage was the LGBTQ controversy that surrounded the event since Qatar – branded as a

Salafi Muslim country – won the bid 12 years ago. Many fans and some teams have called for displays of blatant solidarity with the LGBTQ community, disregarding the hosting country's culture and traditions. Ever since winning the opportunity to host the World Cup, Qatar has been pressured to mirror the image of its Western guests, to mold itself into a more appealing character for its visitors. The Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani lamented the “unfair” media coverage of his country's dealings, which he believes “no other host nation” has faced:

Since we won the honour of hosting the World Cup, Qatar has faced an unprecedented campaign that no other host nation has received. And we had handled it at first in good faith while considering some of the criticism positive and beneficial.

(Ibrahim, 2022: para 13)

Qatari officials, including H. H. the Emir, emphasized the welcoming nature of the country, but also called for respect for the local culture. Similarly, the UK foreign secretary James Cleverly has encouraged LGBTQ football fans traveling to Qatar to exercise compromise and be respectful:

One of the things I would say for football fans is, you know, please do be respectful of the host nation. They are trying to ensure that people can be themselves and enjoy the football, and I think with a little bit of flex and compromise at both ends, it can be a safe, secure, and exciting World Cup.

(The New Arab Staff, 2022: para 9)

This announcement was intensely criticized and was retracted by the foreign secretary's office. A compromise in favor of the host was rendered an impossibility, which invokes a Derridean response:

We would need to venture into what is both the implication and the consequence of this double bind, this impossibility as condition of possibility, namely, the troubling analogy in their common origin between *hostis* as host and *hostis*⁵ as enemy, between hospitality and hostility.

(Derrida, 2000b: 13)

It is, therefore, legitimate in accordance with the concept of conditioned hospitality to lay down some fundamental rules that could regulate that imagined unconditionality of hospitality. Kant, for instance, insisted that hospitality should be

conditional “because he knew that without these conditions hospitality could turn into wild war, terrible aggression” (Kakoliris, 2015: 149). Indeed, “aggression” and “war” can come in the form of foreign threats to one’s identity if not digested properly and negotiated reasonably. It is no exaggeration to say that sudden and intrusive postulations can be as devastating to the culture and values of a certain host as the case in a conventional war. Likewise, Hagglund (2008: 103) stresses the Derridean notion of hosts’ rights in contrast to guests’ rights, stating that “if I did not discriminate between what I welcome and do not welcome, what I find acceptable and unacceptable, it would mean that I had renounced all claims to be responsible, make judgments, or pursue any critical reflection at all”. Thus, genuine local laws and traditions that represent the ethical core of a certain culture should be negotiated and not negated entirely. Otherwise, hospitality slips into a blame game, and the guest’s demands become parasitical: “This blame-game behavior mimics the parasite’s violation of the host’s chain of order and the creation of a new order that is self-serving” (Abdul-Jabbar, 2021: 265). The ethical singularity of the host should not be readily sacrificed at the altar of the guest’s temporality. Considering short-term events, sporting or otherwise, cultural and ethical standards remain constant but flexible. This paradoxical positioning defines the rules of engagement with Derrida’s *l’étranger* and locates the potential for synthesis in internalizing paradox. To further illustrate this positionality, this study argues that Souq Waqif enacts Qatar’s paradoxical positioning to negotiate conditioned hospitality as a case in point.

Making Souq Waqif hospitable: The Qatari Ship of Theseus

Souq Waqif got its name because sellers used to stand when selling their items. Merchandisers stood at the entrances to showcase their commodities, including clothes, spices, fish, pottery, and wood art, among other products. The Souq was not only a trade space, but gradually evolved into a socially hospitable scene where exchanges of merchandise, dealings, and communication took place between residents, nomads, and travelers from Arabia, India, Persia, and neighboring regions, who exercised different cultural influences on the Souq environment. The Souq consisted of shops for necessities and simple crafts, with mainly Qataris and Iranians working as vendors. Those who sold traditional clothing, food essentials, and fishing and hunting gear showcased their items in small old shops that surrounded what was then the only hotel in Doha, a small inn called Bismillah. The architecture of the Souq was simple, but its character has persisted to date in the form of a crafted, traditional pattern. In the Souq, people knew each other and the vendors very well. It was, therefore, the leading social scene where people from different parts of the land could interact, exchange goods, and voice their opinions.

Apropos, Souq Waqif is an old open-air market that was once a traditional trade hub that represented a significant part of the history of the Qatari identity: “The Souq acquired its name ‘Waqif,’ which means ‘standing’ in English because merchants stood up to peddle their goods” (Alraouf, 2018: 73). The “standing” feature of the old Souq indicates the simple nature of the space as one of a mere minimalist commercial interaction that can be achieved while standing. Yet, despite that simplicity, locals and others have enjoyed exchanges, interactions, and vivid communication. Nowadays, the Souq has been developed by the Private Engineering Office, a government agency directly following HH the Emir, which enables it to overpass governmental routine work and spending policy, to ideally emphasize Qatar’s local heritage. “The 164,000-square-meter Souq, which is home to around 500 shops, has become a well-known tourist attraction” (Exell & Wakefield, 2016: 157) combining souvenir booths, boutiques, hotels, cafes, and restaurants. Nominated in 2010 for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, the renovated Souq is one of the most successful revitalization projects in Qatar:

A unique architectural revival of one of the most important heritage sites in Doha aimed to reverse the dilapidation of historic structures and remove inappropriate alterations and additions ... [it has become] a showcase for traditional architecture, handicrafts and folk art, attracting locals, expatriates and tourists alike.

(Alraouf, 2012: 73)

The gradual renovation process that started in 2004, despite the eagerness to maintain the exterior architecture’s norms and patterns, came with a significant shift in the identity and function of the old Souq. The old Souq has extended in buildings and functions to cater to foreign tourists’ expectations, which may have led inquisitors to question its authenticity in the light of its indulgences in quality service and existing glimpses of modernity with paid parking, insulated walls, and street air coolers (Alghamdi & Ibrahim, 2022: 91). Arguably, in the spirit of making it more hospitable, Souq Waqif has endured character erosion and formation.

In this sense, the Souq represents a microcosm of the critique of Doha in general. For example, Mehran Kamrava (2011: 8) shares the sentiment that Doha, like Dubai, can be equally called “an airport” city “that has all the accruments and the modern façade and conveniences of an airport, but is, also like airports the world over, characterless and without a soul of its own. Kamrava disparagingly continues to assert that “Doha is also a city with little character or charm of its own. The city has a fascination with making and remaking itself, resulting in what is an incongruent collection of impressive but nonharmonious buildings and neighborhoods” (Kamrava, 2011: 8). If this opinion were valid, then Souq Waqif can be

accused likewise. However, in sharp contrast, a Qatari might be inclined to see Souq Waqif as the site that serves to represent the roots of his/her society as much as possible in an attempt to capture cultural authenticity. Similarly, a student of history or tourism interested in Qatari history, in search of its roots in the past and focusing on its current traces, will look at Souq Waqif and wonder whether to categorize it as a labor of love or a down-to-business initiative. To historians, does the act of salvaging history paradoxically and inevitably entail a renewal of some sort? Examining Souq Waqif as a cultural phenomenon brings about the paradoxical interaction of the two conflicting sides of Derridean hospitality. Specifically, the pressure toward modernization, perhaps primarily to accommodate tourists, led to the emergence of indulging aspects that subverted the traditional identity of the old Souq from its authentic and characteristic simplicity. This intrusive modernity blends a sense of hostility toward the new innovations, which are thus regarded as disfigurements of its cultural identity only to please oncoming guests. All of this raises the question: at which point does Souq Waqif cease to be itself, or become a surrogate reality? Likewise, when does Qatari hospitality stop being Qatari and instead develop into a travesty of idealized expectations to suit the guest's imaginings or value systems? This oxymoronic "modern and old" existence, or redefinition in the image of the host that is "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, 1994: 89), marks Souq Waqif with ambivalence. Given that the Souq is a cultural site that embodies hospitality as grounded in paradox, the Ship of Theseus⁶ can be invoked here as a thought experiment to illustrate the paradoxical nature of negotiated hospitality represented by Souq Waqif.

The original story first emerges in the writings of the Greek biographer Plutarch, who described the mythical hero's ship in his "Life of Theseus":

The ship wherein Theseus ... returned [from Crete] had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus [died c. 280 BCE], for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question as to things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same.

(Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021: para 4)

The story fictionalizes how growth espouses loss and triggers decay, which leads to both maturity but also mutation. In *De Corpore II*, Thomas Hobbes, the seventeenth-century English philosopher, further problematizes the story by proposing

For if, for example, that Ship of Theseus, concerning the difference whereof made by continued reparation in taking out the old planks and putting in new, the sophisters of Athens were wont to dispute, were, after all the planks were changed, the same numerical ship it was at the beginning; and if some man had kept the old planks as they were taken out, and by putting them afterwards together in the same order, had again made a ship of them, this, without doubt, had also been the same numerical ship with that which was at the beginning; and so there would have been two ships numerically the same, which is absurd.

(Hobbes, 1839: 11)

For Hobbes, considering the two ships as the same is absurd because the question of which is the “original” is paradoxical and logically unresolvable. David Rose explicitly explained the story by referring to two copies of the same ship; the first is called “Replacement,” whereas the second is called “Original Parts”: “Both can’t be the original ship. So which one is the original ship – the Ship of Theseus – Replacement or Original Parts?” (2020: 160). Hence, the paradox continues to be thought-provoking.

Similarly, Souq Waqif has lost many of its original parts and has been replaced with a new attire made from the remains of the lost parts. The Souq was almost entirely destroyed by a fire in 2003, threatening a catastrophic loss of tradition. Qatar’s emir commissioned the renowned artist Mohamed Ali Abdullah to design a new Souq as a replica:

Abdullah supervised the production of a series of drawings that illustrated the everyday living practices of Qatari people ... Modern buildings were replaced with traditionally built roofs of dangeal wood and bamboo with a binding layer of clay and straw, and strategies to insulate the buildings against extreme heat were re-introduced.

(Begum, 2022: para 18)

Like the Ship of Theseus, the Souq was rebuilt with regard to the significance of historical preservation and accuracy on the one hand and an eye for modernization on the other. The final product of the renovated Souq was surely designed to be hospitable to tourists and future generations who are accustomed to comfort:

The cobbled lanes and white washed buildings, made using traditional Qatari architectural elements including mud rendered walls and exposed timber beams, look to be from a bygone era ... Some elements of the old Souq remain, most

notably the Bismillah Hotel, said to be the first in Qatar and the one with the best view of the market. Souq Waqif could be derided as a tourist trap or a Disney version of Qatar's past, but it is more than that.

(Morris, 2011: paras 4–5).

Qatari locals share conflicting views on Souq Waqif. Some Qataris consider it a representation of the government's effort to preserve the Qatari tradition. In sharp contrast, other Qataris dismiss the Souq as too Western for local eyes:

Souq Waqif is being specifically made to target Western audiences, basically tourists. It's not so for the locals or the nationals – maybe the expatriate community but not the locals. We know as locals that is not authentic in nature. It's not actually an old building; it's just made to look old. They tore it down, and they made it a modern old building.

(Harkness, 2020: 56–57)

The zeal to modernize the Souq can also be seen as an internalization of cultural hegemony in the sense that it pleases the Western gaze: “It is no exaggeration to say that much of the most interesting work carried out this century in the Arab world deals with reactions to the West” (Leaman, 2009: 11). This positionality is bound to be situated in binary opposition and hence paradoxical. Foreignness intrudes as a parasitical presence, actualizing a sense of hostility toward hospitality as genuine, which has undermined the Souq's character and enfeebled its authentic appeal. Can the “replacement” Souq be considered as good as the original, especially since it was made out of and in the shape of the original one? To engage further in this thought experiment, consider that the Souq Waqif dilemma brings a third scenario to the paradox: even if we agree that both are equally authentic, what if we encounter a different attitude, purpose, or manner once the ship sets sail again? Was there a Theseus-like manner or spirit to harness the power of and propel this sea-going vessel? In other words, what makes the Ship of Theseus worthy of the name is not only the shape but, perhaps more importantly, the manner in which it sets sail and retains its sea-faring character. Therefore, the Ship of Theseus is conditioned not only by the continuity of shape and substance but also by expectations, ways of thinking, proclivity, and attitudes.

Due to this expansion of space and identity, the Souq has drastically changed in spirit in many ways. It has been transformed into a space packed with the consuming spirit of indulgence, spending, and leisure, which contradicts the straightforward nature of the older and simpler Souq. The renovation has been criticized for “using faux vintage materials in 2006 to resemble a nineteenth-century Arab trader's

bazaar,” which undermines the authenticity of the architecture itself and makes it look more “like a movie set” (Harkness, 2020: 73). The vendors are more likely to be South Asians and Persian, with fewer Qatari locals participating. The shops themselves are not limited to necessities and traditional merchandise: “A Baskin Robbins whose entryway is done up in pink-neon Arabic lettering” (Harkness, 2020: 73), along with other Western cafes and restaurants, are taking over the Souq. The purposes of going to and being in the Souq are also different: although many people still go there to obtain basic needs at comparatively good prices, most stay for long hours, indulging in unplanned activities and unnecessary spending. Thus, individuals might end up purchasing more than their actual needs in light of the immense consuming appeal that the 500 shops would undoubtedly invoke on any visitor to the Souq. Although the new visage of the Souq, representative of Qatari hospitality, is molded into an authentic image analogous to the Ship of Theseus, it has become defined by the demands of its guests, visitors, and consumers.

Moreover, some locals find such changes to their old Souq “illegitimate, as it’s being built not for Qatari nationals but for wealthy ‘visitor class’ clients seeking to be entertained.” They think that “Waqif is being specifically made to target Western audiences, basically tourists” (Harkness, 2020: 75). Despite holding on to some of its traditions, the Souq and its local vendors are facing an identity crisis stemming from indulgences in modern technology and luxurious facilities. Festivals and musical concerts in the Souq theater similarly speak to the preferences of guests over those of the hosts, with older local vendors criticizing the loud celebrations among the audiences of these parties, while Vox Cinema halls similarly screen Western films in the old Souq. That said, there is a flip side to the alleged erosion of the true spirit, bringing the Souq full circle confirming its paradoxical nature. Despite the influence of twenty-first-century modernity, a significant section of Souq Waqif remains unchanged, with a spirit of restraint in its more authentic architecture, practices, and facilities. According to Mohamed Ali Abdulla, the architectural designer of Waqif, the renovation and restoration process was a very complex evidence-based plan. It was the result of

a comprehensive study of Qatar’s traditional architecture, analysis of ariel photos captured the Souq’s urban fabric in the 40s and 50s of [the] last century, archival records, building records and finally local elderly people narrative of place memories structured the renovation plan.

(Furlan & Faggion, 2015: 148)

Despite the expansion of the Souq, some scholars believe that “the renovation has returned it to a typical 19th century Souq; an intricate maze of streets offers

a natural shelter from the country's harsh climate" (Alraouf, 2018: 75). Waqif is still an open-air market, in resistance to the air-conditioning technology that has spread everywhere in Qatar:

This traditional experience made Souk Waqif imperative and the prime place to visit for locals, expatriates, and tourists alike. The spatial experience currently provided is so unique. Strolling in open air along the winding souk streets and the twisting narrow alleyways is itself an interesting journey; evoking a sense of connecting to the past and reliving Qatar's ancestors lives before development.

(Alraouf, 2012: 77)

Many things did not change, which sustained the simple spirit of the Souq. For instance, factory-made goods have not replaced the demand for essential hand-made tools in the old Souq, despite the passage of time. There are still many shops locals go to for traditional medicine, spices, fabrics, clothing, and fishing and hunting tools, which negates the reductionist claim that the new Souq is made only for tourists' indulgence. Some traders in Souq Waqif still exercise restraint and avoid indulging in leisure. Since the start of the Souq, many families, such as Ibn Abbas Alkhuzaii's, have continued to sell herbs and alternative medicine and have always had loyal customers.⁷ Those vendors and their authentic trade legacy represent the cultural values of individuals who work hard to provide for their families and do not appreciate indulgence, which is viewed as foreign and anti-thetical to the spirit of the old Souq. Thus, despite the high regard for extravagance to please incoming guests, some vendors remain bound to the values and ethics of hard work and conservative traditions. Additionally, the presence of mosques, traditional policemen, and local women selling Qatari food further symbolize adherence to the old spirit of the Souq, as some sections of the Waqif community still embrace its simplicity and resist pressure toward modern extravagance. This consumerist-oriented proclivity represents the intrusion of hostility into hospitality ethics represented by adherence to simplicity and tradition. In summary, the third image of the Ship of Theseus, which has emerged as representative of the Souq, displays a contradiction that disrupts the possibility of a fixed and rigid identity of the Souq based on form and essence. In this sense, Souq Waqif serves as a representation of how unconditional hospitality is riddled with paradox. The ship that carries the feelings, expectations, rigor, smells, practices, and attitudes of the original is and should be considered the true Ship of Theseus. What metaphysics obscures into a contradictory double, axiology solves into the conditioned ethical singularity that the old spirit of the Souq adheres to:

A crossroads where a sort of double bifurcation, double postulation, contradictory double movement, double constraint or double bind paralyzes and opens hospitality, holding it over itself in holding it out to the other, depriving it of and bestowing on it its chance.

(Derrida, 2000b: 15)

The call for the effacement of ethical boundaries, the hidden rubric that monitors hospitality and makes it unintrusive and negotiable, defines the Derridean impossibility of hospitality.

Conclusion

Only a few studies have addressed controversial issues regarding Arab culture and context by drawing on a Derridean theoretical approach (Abdul-Jabbar, 2014; Hiddleston, 2020). This study conceptualizes hospitality within the context of Arab Qatari culture. Therefore, it serves as a call for scholars of Qatari sociological and cultural issues to position themselves in their research and presentations in relation to controversial concepts, such as hospitality, that are open to different interpretations. We might think of this call as Qatari accountability, which we embrace and contend with. In doing so, we respond to, if not potentially stabilize, derogatory claims that surround open-ended, unquestioned Western assumptions and already-framed claims that often go unexamined about Arab culture. Significantly, this study responds to the Western tendency to critique Arab culture⁸ with a sense of accountability toward theorization. Derrida points out that hospitality needs to be negotiated as “culture itself and not simply one ethic among others” (2001: 16). In effect, those who embrace accountability negotiate the paradox of positionality, and are also likely to experience a heightened sense of a stigmatized self-discovery of concepts that require reconciling tradition with a new emerging self. Such is the case of hospitality transcending the ethics of ethnic specificities and moving into the paradoxical terrain of culture in flux.

This study is an invitation to revisit the issue of Qatari hospitality from the Derridean perspective. It applies Derrida's concept of conditioned hospitality in response to the perception of Muslim Arab countries as inhospitable to what is often seen as an un-Islamic presence. It further infers that the state of conditioned hospitality is neither strictly prescriptive nor completely unorthodox, but inherently paradoxical. Hospitality becomes conditioned as a result of negotiation in which both parties relinquish part of their autonomy in favor of the greater good, which is, in this case, the possibility of hospitality without unexpected parasitic

intrusions. Both host and guest must internalize the paradoxical nature of hospitality and position themselves accordingly. As a case in point, this study argues that Souq Waqif embodies the inherent nature of conditioned hospitality as paradoxical. The article, therefore, uses the paradox of the Ship of Theseus as a thought experiment to illustrate the paradoxical nature of hospitality in practice, which is central to Derrida's understanding of hospitality: "The law of hospitality, the express law that governs the general concept of hospitality, appears as a paradoxical law, pervertible or perverting" (2000a: 25). Souq Waqif is a case study of reconciling hospitality with hostility to form an emerging conception of negotiated conditioned hospitality. The Souq encompasses and strikes a balance between old and new features that bestow exceptionality onto this hybrid space, a third copy of the Ship of Theseus that is neither old nor new but a synthesis that embodies the host's identity and keeps it grounded and faithful to its roots.

This study recommends the establishment of a Souq Waqif museum in Doha that preserves and celebrates its humble beginnings. The massive restoration and renovation process that reflected traditional distinctiveness needs to be visually documented and displayed for the public, which partly unravels the paradoxical nature of the Souq. Souq Waqif, therefore, is more than a market; it is a microcosm of the country's history. It buffers dogmatism, negotiates hospitality, and unpacks a fixed understanding of tradition and culture. It also blurs the distinction between home and foreign for the locals as much as for the foreigners. Hence, the call for Qatari accountability to preserve its rules of engagement with hospitality as conditioned becomes manifest. As the Souq further develops and expands, this article promotes the necessity of striking balances between old and new, between host and guest, and thereby preserving this successfully negotiated conditionality. Souq Waqif represents one scene of Qatar's endeavors to maintain its identity while adopting global openness.

Rejecting the appeal to be a well-fabricated replica of a bygone past, the Souq paradoxically conflates both copies of the Ship of Theseus, merging them into a hybrid. Yet, it seems that in both cases, the duplicate must be in the shape of an authentic image. One way to resolve or mitigate the contradictory tension of this paradox is to look at duality as reinforcement and consolidation of an authentic image. It becomes a question of persistence, and not necessarily a crisis of existence per se. The aim of this study is neither to romanticize the Souq nor to deglamorize it; the paradoxical nature of Souq Waqif carries with it a corollary regarding the hospitality of Qatar in general. It is one of the most attractive sites in Doha, yet, in view of its suspect genesis, we must harden our hearts and examine it in light of the foregoing evidence. What precisely does Souq Waqif mean now? Perhaps it has acquired a notoriously ambivalent semantic character. *Waqif* in Arabic means "standing," but it also denotes "adamant and holding its position." It embodies

how Qatar's conditioned hospitality and paradoxical positionality play an illuminating part in defining the country's future potential.

Notes

1. The reference here is to Levinas's book about ethics, published in 1961.
2. The reference here is to Immanuel Kant's *The Metaphysics of Morals*.
3. "Our kids as well, we don't want them to end up imitating this – we want to preserve our traditions and our values. They (ex-pats) have their own places where they don't have to be covered – but we have the right to go to hospitals, to the market, to the malls, to the beach, without seeing these things" Umm Abdalla explained (Scott, 2014: para 5).
4. The more recent campaigns tended to be gentler in that they did not demand immediate action and leaned more toward negotiation, such as the "discover our identity" campaign in which foreign visitors are offered a code to scan to know more about the culture and values of the host country.
5. Derrida refers to the etymological origin of the word "hospitality," "to effect this strange crossing between enemy and host" (2000b: 13).
6. The Ship of Theseus is also relevant here because it explores the issue of "the identity of artifacts over time, given the commonsense assumption that an artifact can gain and/or lost parts" (Rosenkrantz & Hoffman, 2011: 273).
7. The reference here is to the late Bin Abbas Alkhuzaii and his son, who ran the oldest herb and spice shop in the Souq. They are viewed as oral historians, and people would visit their shop to ask about past events, examine their photo collections, and converse about their recollections of people and events. Since the start of the Souq, some families, like Ibn Abbas's, have practiced commerce there for generations and have always had loyal customers. The locals know Ibn Abbas Alkhuzaii's shop very well. One of the authors' (unmentioned here only because of the peer-reviewing process) family and acquaintances have known the shop and its history and can testify to its authenticity. For more, see Al-Farjani, 2017.
8. Edward Said branded this attitude as Orientalism.

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