

# Loving the Other Beyond Death

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For P

[*The idea of putting an end to mourning*] presumes [...] that mourning depends on us, in us, and not on the other in us.<sup>1</sup>

*One must stop believing that the dead are just the departed and the departed do nothing. One must stop pretending to know what is meant by 'to die' and especially by 'dying.' One has, then, to talk about spectrality.*<sup>2</sup>

'I feel myself [...] borne to love the dead other [*Je me sens (...) porté à aimer l'autre mort*]'<sup>3</sup>

I feel myself, I have the sensation, of myself, carried, moved, to love, to love the dead other. I feel myself, engaging myself, I feel a sense of being linked, assigned, obligated, indebted, in advance, to give my heart to, to love, the dead other.

'I could not love friendship [*aimer d'amitié*] without engaging myself [*m'engager*], without feeling myself in advance engaged to love the other beyond death. Therefore, beyond life' (*PA*, 29/12).

'I feel myself [*Je me sens*], in advance [*et d'avance*], before any contract—borne to love [*porté à aimer*] the dead other' (*PA*, 29/12).

\* \* \*

'Friendship for the dead one [*le mort*]', Derrida writes in the first chapter of *Politics of Friendship*, 'carries *philia* to the limit of its possibility' (PA, 29/12, tr. mod). (It is interesting to note here that Derrida, emphasizing the alterity of the dead other, does not use a more neutral term such as 'le defunt [the deceased, the dead]' or 'le disparu [the deceased, the dead person]' even though the English translations of Aristotle go with the more neutral 'the deceased'). 'But at the same time', Derrida continues, this *philia* 'uncovers the ultimate spring of this possibility: I could not love friendship without projecting its impetus towards the horizon of this death. The *horizon* is the limit *and* the absence of limit, the loss of the horizon on the horizon, the ahorizontality of the horizon, the limit as absence of limit' (29/12). This horizon, then, this threshold, forms the perimeter, the edge, the outer bounds of *philia* while at the same time opening on to an *aimance* beyond death.

Derrida first made use of *aimance* at the Heidegger conference that took place at Loyola University, Chicago (1989). There he presented a paper 'Heidegger's Ear: Philopolemology (*Geschlecht IV*)' in English, which was subsequently published in French as 'L'oreille de Heidegger: Philopolémologie (*Geschlecht IV*)', as a supplement to *Politiques de l'amitié* (1994), itself drawn from Derrida's seminars of 1988-89.<sup>4</sup> In 'Heidegger's Ear', Derrida relates that he is using the word *aimance* as a rendering of *das Lieben*, Heidegger's translation of *philein* (PA, 369/180). Even though Derrida's short-lived term *aimance* has not really been taken up or has been left undeveloped, possibly due to the difficulty of adequately rendering it into English ('lovence' and 'lovingness' have been suggested as renderings), I would like to take up *aimance* as 'a loving friendship' or 'a friendship in love'.<sup>5</sup>

Derrida's seminars from which *Politics of Friendship* is drawn were devoted to a scrupulous examination of Western discourses on friendship from Aristotle, Cicero and Montaigne to Nietzsche, Schmitt, Blanchot and Nancy. *Politics of Friendship* takes the risk of 'changing the course of' or 'throwing off balance [*dérouter*]' the tradition of *Lysis*—that is, *the entire history of friendship in the Western tradition*—and 'carrying it elsewhere [*entraîner ailleurs*]', in the same way that *Lysis*, as Derrida reminds us, begins by 'a

turning away [*détourner*]', by Socrates's diversion from the straight path to the Lyceum from the Academy (23/6-7). Derrida's analyses of the dominant discourses on friendship (beginning from Plato's *Symposium*, *Timaeus* and Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics*) demonstrate that what is valued is constancy, stability, steadfastness, reliability and faithfulness—a stabilization. The history of friendship privileges the values of equality, equity, familiarity [*oikeiôtēs*] and rarity. Moreover, what becomes apparent is the emphasis on the values of presence, reciprocity, fusion, union, identification and symmetry.

### *Aimance*

Aristotle deems friendship to be an action, an act, and Aristotelian discourse on friendship privileges the lover, the one who actively loves. In order to think friendship, 'one must start with the friend-who-loves, not with the friend-who-is-loved' (26/9). Aristotle calls this an 'irreversible order'. It also follows that 'it is impossible to love (active voice) *without knowing it*' and without declaring it (26/9). Though, 'friendship can be *lived* and *thought* without the least reference to the be-loved [l'être-aimé]' (26/9). Being loved, as far as friendship is concerned, remains an 'accident' (1239a33-4). However, even though 'one cannot love without living', it is quite possible for 'the being-loved of the lovable' to be 'lifeless; it can belong to the reign of the non-living, the non-psychic or the soulless {*sans âme*} [*en apsúkhô*]' (1237a 27-30) (27/10). As Aristotle remarks in *Eudemian Ethics*, 'one also loves inanimate beings [*ápsukha*]' (1237a40, 1239b1-2). Indeed, as Derrida points out, it is precisely through this possibility, 'the possibility of loving *the dead one* [d'aimer le mort] that a certain *aimance* comes to be decided [*vient à se décider*]' (27/10). This example given by Aristotle—loving the other beyond death—functions as a limit case for friendship. One has to be alive in order to love, but it is quite possible to be loved even if one is not among the living. Defying or falling outside 'the reciprocalist or *mutualist* schema of requited friendship (*antiphileîn*)' the beloved can be without-soul (27/10). The example, Derrida states, '*perhaps* [...] introduces a virtual disorder in the organization of Aristotelian discourse', making tremble the hierarchy that Aristotle calls 'natural' (*phúsei*), the hierarchy between those inclined to love and those who prefer to be loved (27/10).

The criterion for the distinction between loving and being loved in Aristotle's discourse is set up, Derrida says, by 'an apparently invisible line' passing through 'the beloved and the lover, the animate and the inanimate, the psychic and the a-psychic'. If 'loving only belongs to being endowed with life or breath (*en empsúkô*)', Derrida explains, then 'being loved, on the other hand, always remains possible on the side of the inanimate [*en apsúkhô*], where a *psukhé* may already have expired' (29/12). Rather than drawing its breath from life and the animate, *philia* is impelled and stirred by survival. *Philia* survives death, and it lives 'at the extreme limit of its possibility', 'from within this resource of survival [*survivre*]' (30/13). This *philia* between two survives. 'It cannot survive itself [*se survivre*] as act, but it can survive its object [*survivre à son objet*], it can love the inanimate'. Thus, Derrida comments, *philia* 'springs forward [*s'élançe*], from the threshold of this act [of loving], toward the possibility that the beloved might be dead' (30/13). 'A first, and irreducible dissymmetry' is found here. In an 'unpresentable topology' this dissymmetry is shared out [*partagée*]: it is folded [*se plie*], turned over [*se retourne*] and split [*se dédouble*] in the 'shared' friendship that we coolly call 'reciprocal' (30/13).

### She Bears My Death

I am not the survivor. It is not I who bear her death, the death of the other; *I* do not survive it. It is not primarily *I* who endure the pain of the other's death. It is *she* who bears my death. I cannot or must not survive the loved one, for *she* 'already bears *my* death [*porte déjà ma mort*]' to the extent that she already bears my death, a death that is not 'mine', a death that is in advance expropriated, I do not and cannot survive the friend (30/13). The other, the friend, the loved one, 'precedes' me (30/13). She is the one who first bears mourning, bears it within or comprehends it, as Derrida says elsewhere, like a specter that is greater than the living heir.

### Survival

'*Philia* begins', Derrida stresses, 'with the possibility of survival [*survivre*]' (31/13). Surviving is 'the other name for a mourning whose possibility is never to be awaited, because one does not survive without mourning, (without bearing mourning, without going into mourning) [*porter le deuil*]' (31/13). The 'anguished apprehension [*appréhension*]

*angoissée*] of mourning insinuates itself *a priori*, anticipates itself; it haunts and plunges the friend, before mourning, into mourning' (31/14, tr. mod). What's more, surviving itself is 'the essence, the origin and the possibility, the condition of friendship', it 'is the bereaved [*endeuillé*] act of loving' (31/14, tr. mod).

### Testamentary Survival

'All graphemes are of a testamentary essence' states Derrida very early on in *Of Grammatology* (OG, 69). Testamentary is the desire that 'something survive, be left, be transmitted' that will not come back to me 'but that, perhaps, will remain'.<sup>6</sup> What remains? 'The trace remains'.<sup>7</sup> No doubt, not an ontological entity, not an existence, an essence, a substance, a subject, or an object, a trace remains. I leave traces behind, traces leave me and traces will survive me. Does that which survives remain? The trace remains yet it remains *without* remaining, in the way that remaining does not mean being-present, enduring substantially and permanently, but leaving traces. When one dies, does one disappear? Does one simply go away? The deceased are dead but not insignificant. There is death and absence, yes, but marks or traces are left behind. Even though it belongs to the structure of the trace that it can always be erased, the trace is 'readable', and must remain so. This is what Derrida means when he writes that my death is the condition of the production of the trace. 'Each time a trace, however singular, is left behind', Derrida writes in *The Beast and the Sovereign, vol. II*, its 'machinality virtually entrusts the trace to the sur-vival in which the opposition of the living and the dead loses and must lose all pertinence' (BSII, 192/130). The opposition has no pertinence because what sur-vives does not and cannot belong to what is on either side of this opposition. What sur-vives can only be living-dead. It sur-vives by dying alive. Beyond the mere survival of memories and gestures, the specter of the other, her *image*, remains. What is *remaining* and what is its relation to *surviving*, then? If there is remaining, this remaining is, surely, not *being-present*.

### Remaining

In 'The Question Concerning Technology' Heidegger notes that Socrates and Plato already think the essence of something in the sense of what 'endures [*Währenden*]'.<sup>8</sup> And they think of what endures as

what remains permanently [*Fortwährende*] (*aei on*) (38/336). And what endures permanently is what persists throughout all that happens in what remains. That which remains [*Bleibende*], they discover, in turn, in the aspect [*Aussehen*] (*eidōs, idea*), for example the Idea 'house'. Therefore, Heidegger surmises, 'all essencing endures [*Alles Wesende währt*]' (39/336). Yet, what Derrida refers to as remaining, is not enduring or perdurance. Nor is sur-vivance to endure *after* death. The remains of the other sur-vive. As I have argued elsewhere, the notion of survivance and its complex temporality need to be thought in relation to *restance*.<sup>9</sup> Both remaining and surviving are bound up with a certain spectrality, a ghostly returning (*revenance*) and haunting. Anterior to life and death, survivance makes life and death possible. As Derrida says in *Specters of Marx*, 'life and death, would themselves be but traces and traces of traces' of a survivance (*SM*, 17-18/xx). And survivance is never present, as it dislocates the living-present, which divides itself, bearing death and that which would survive it. Another name for a mourning, survivance *is* lifedeath.

### Between and Beyond

Unlike the English words 'love' and 'friendship', *l'amour* and *l'amitié* in French share a common root—*aimer*. *L'aimance* as a present participle finds its place between the active and the passive, between identity and difference, the same and the other, bringing *l'amour* and *l'amitié* closer to each other, linking and separating them. 'Beyond all ulterior frontiers', Derrida asserts, 'between love and friendship, but also, beyond the passive and the active voices, between loving and being-loved, what is at stake is *aimance* [*il y va de l'aimance*]' (23/7). *Aimance*, like difference and other terms in Derrida's vocabulary ending with the suffix *-ance*, is structurally *both* between *and* beyond, between love and friendship and beyond them. *Aimance* gently and lovingly contests the primacy given to either love or to friendship in the Western tradition, putting pressure on the very conceptual differences between the two terms. Broadly speaking, we can say that friendship has been claimed by philosophy, whereas love belongs to the realms of poetry and literature. Anterior to the difference between love and friendship, Derrida urges, 'one should learn how [*il faut savoir comment*]', 'it would be better, it is best, [it is] *more worthwhile* to love *aimance* [il vaut mieux aimer l'aimance]' (tr. mod.) (23/7).

*Aimance* describes a relation that would be untimely and infinitely disproportional. ‘The request or offer, the promise or the prayer of a “je t’aime” must remain unilateral and dissymmetrical’, Derrida affirms (PA, 248/220). This infinite ‘disproportion is indeed the condition of *sharing* [*partage*] in love as in friendship’ (248/220). Mutuality, harmony or agreement would reduce this infinite disproportion (248/220). ‘Love and friendship [can] associate, or cohabit, or alternate, or naturally enrich themselves among those who love each other’ (PA, 248/220), supposing that ‘such a difference [between love and friendship] could ever manifest itself in its rigorous purity’ (220-1/248-9). For, according to Derrida, the thinkers of friendship discussed in *Politics of Friendship* ‘derive love and friendship from the same passion [*dérivée de la même passion*]’ (248/220).

### ***Aimance* is Melancholic**

Love is melancholic. Derrida declares in a recently translated interview, ‘Abraham’s Melancholy’, that ‘love is *a priori* melancholic’ (36/158).<sup>10</sup> ‘As soon as one enters into a relation’, Derrida says, ‘of love—or friendship, incidentally—into a human relation in general [...] one knows that one of the two will die before the other’. That is the condition or the horizon of love or friendship, of *aimance* between two finite beings. This melancholia, however, is not the pathological condition referred to by Freud in his famous essay. Melancholia is not an affect and, unlike mourning, it is not an attempt for the recovery of the self after the other’s loss. This melancholia, melancholic love, does not wish to deny loss or to hope for recovery, but can only hope to preserve, somehow, the other’s loss—as loss. *Aimance*—a friendship without presence, loving at a distance, in withdrawal, in separation.

### **Narcissism Allows for Love**

Aristotle, emphasizing the active lover, disapproves of those who ‘prefer to be loved’ and ‘seek honors, distinction, signs of recognition’ (27/10). Such ‘narcissistic’ behavior, we might say, would upset the ‘natural [*phusei*] hierarchy’ set up by Aristotle (27/10). Loving will always be more, be better, be other than being loved. ‘Loving will always be preferable’ (28/11). The example that Aristotle gives involves the mothers in Antiphon’s *Andromache* who love their children without seeking to be loved. For, wanting to be known seems to be an ‘egoist’

feeling, 'a turning toward oneself [*tourné vers soi*], [...] for the love of self [*l'amour de soi*] (*autou heneka*)' (28/11). Instead, Aristotle insists on 'maternal joy or enjoyment [*jouissance*]: extolling mothers who rather than being happy to receive, accept being *neither* known *nor* loved in return (28/11). Aristotle subsequently moves on from maternal enjoyment to death, praising those who love their dead, who know them but are not known (1237a40; 1239b1-2).

In 'There is No *One* Narcissism', one of the interviews gathered in *Points ...*, Derrida remarks that there isn't just one narcissism, but narcissism consists of several strata, layers or degrees. In the *Les temps modernes* interview (2012) just mentioned above, Derrida explicates that what he has in mind is 'a narcissism', he says, 'that allows for love [*permet l'amour*], that conditions love in a certain way [*conditionne l'amour d'une certain façon*]: I carry the other in me' (36/159). In love, Derrida says, there is no more world, in dual love, love between two, what disappears is the world. Could this be taken as a justification for or endorsement of the work of the scholar who argued for 'the right to narcissism'? Despite the dominant moralizing condemning narcissism throughout American culture, she explained that 'no concept of narcissism will be univocal' (95), that 'the naïve denunciation of narcissism' itself had to be denounced and called for finding a 'new way of conceiving of narcissism and its eventual rehabilitation' (95).<sup>11</sup> She called for what must have appeared 'short of scandalous' (97), for 'this other narcissism' (95), in which, contrary to Aristotelian friendship that proceeds from self-love [*philautia*], the other is in oneself already, an out-of-joint oneself. She recognized Derrida's thinking of another narcissism, 'a narcissism that is never related to itself except in the mourning of the other' (*PA*, 214/187).

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'The Time is Out of Joint' in *Deconstruction is/in America*, edited by Anselm Haverkamp (New York, New York University Press, 1995), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'The Time is Out of Joint' in *Deconstruction is/in America*, edited by Anselm Haverkamp (New York, New York University Press, 1995), 30.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris, Galilée, 1994), 29; *Politics of Friendship*, translated by George Collins (New York, Verso, 1997), 12. Abbreviated as *PA*. The way Derrida uses 'porter à aimer', when he says 'Je me sens porté à aimer



l'autre mort' best corresponds, I think, to the entry no. 46 in *le Littré* for *porter*: 'Avoir disposition à, inclination pour'.

- <sup>4</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Heidegger's Ear: Philopolemology (Geschlecht IV)' (Indiana University Press, 1993); 'L'oreille de Heidegger (Philopolemologie (Geschlecht IV)' in *Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris, Galilée, 1994). The English edition, *Politics of Friendship*, translated by George Collins (London and New York, Verso, 1997), does not include the previously translated essay.
- <sup>5</sup> George Collins renders *aimance* as 'lovence'. David Wills in a very helpful reading of *Politics of Friendship* suggests 'lovingness' as a possible translation. See 'Full Dorsal: Derrida's *Politics of Friendship*', *Postmodern Culture* vol. 155, no. 3 (May 2005), *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/pmc.2005.0032. *L'aimant*, of course, refers to a magnet, something that I had overlooked in this context. My thanks to Elizabeth Rottenberg for reminding me of it. Samuel Weber's 'L'aimance comme l'attraction de l'autre' in *Le jour d'après. Dédicaces à Abdelkébir Khatibi* (Casablanca, Afrique Orient, 2010) emphasizing *l'aimance de l'autre*, the attraction of the other and attraction to the other, brings out this other meaning of *l'aimance* as attraction, pull or attractive force. The secret of *l'aimance*, Weber writes, would be a magnetism as the condition of every relation, be it friendly or loving.
- <sup>6</sup> 'Dialogue entre Jacques Derrida, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe et Jean-Luc Nancy', *Rue Descartes* 52 (2004), 86-99, p. 93.
- <sup>7</sup> 'La trace reste'. Jacques Derrida, *Trace et archive, image et art* (Bry-sur-Marne, INA Editions, 2014), 49.
- <sup>8</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'Die Frage nach der Technik' in *Vorträge un Aufsätze* (Pfullingen, Günther Neske, 1954), 38; 'Question Concerning Technology' in *Basic Writings*, revised and expanded edition, edited by David Farrell Krell (New York, Harper Collins, 1993), 335.
- <sup>9</sup> See my *The World after the End of the World: A Spectro-poetics*, forthcoming.
- <sup>10</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'La mélancholie d'Abraham', *Les temps modernes* 699-670 (July/August, 2012/13), 30-66; 'Abraham's Melancholy', translated by Ellie Anderson and Philippe Lynes, *The Oxford Literary Review* 39, 2 (2017), 153-188, p. 158. This melancholy is, of course, not that malady opposed to mourning by Freud, but melancholia as refashioned by Derrida.
- <sup>11</sup> Pleshette DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism: A Case for an Im-possible Self-Love* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2014).