

Forgetfulness Must: Politics and Filiation in Blanchot and Derrida

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I would like to approach the question of politics and filiation by way of a reading of Maurice Blanchot and through a consideration of Derrida's reading of Blanchot in *Politiques de l'amitié*.¹ Although there are numerous important, but passing, references to Blanchot in *Politiques de l'amitié*, Derrida's reading of Blanchot occupies the second half of the final Chapter 'For the First Time in the History of Humanity' and one might justifiably say that it concludes the book, occupying a crucial place in its exposition and argumentation. Indeed, in the original English version of 'The Politics of Friendship', delivered at the American Philosophical Association in 1988, Blanchot occupies a similar place in Derrida's argumentation, where he is first mentioned in the final two paragraphs of the text, and then cited at length and approvingly in the long final footnote.² Although I will have the pages of Derrida's reading of Blanchot constantly in mind in everything I say, I would like to approach the theme of friendship in Blanchot through a reflection on a short text that appeared too late to be mentioned in *Politiques de l'amitié*. This is Blanchot's preface to *A la recherche d'un communisme de pensée*, which is a memoir and testament of his friendship for Dionys Mascolo, which was originally published in 1993 and then republished separately in late 1996 as *Pour l'amitié*.³

In *Pour l'amitié* – a title whose very simplicity ('for friendship' connoting both the sense of 'in favour of', and 'out of friendship for'), as always with Blanchot's titles, evokes a much deeper complexity that allows the entire *Sache* to be discreetly profiled – Blanchot draws a classical distinction between friendship and camaraderie.⁴ At least within the Germanic languages, there is an association between friendship and the semantic chain *Freiheit* and *Friede*, where friendship is the peaceful and reciprocal recognition of the other's freedom. But friendship also resides in the intimacy of trust, in the secrecy of what is only shared between friends. As Kant writes in his *Metaphysik der Sitten*, 'Moralische Freundschaft ist das völlige Vertrauen zweier Personen in Wechselseitiger Eröffnung ihrer geheimen Urteilen und Empfindungen...'⁵ [Moral friendship is the complete trust of two persons in the mutual disclosure of their secret judgements and feelings]. In this sense, the real sin against friendship is a breach of trust.

What also characterises *Freundschaft* is its connection with *Verwandschaft*, as both kinship and twinship, consanguinity and affinity, a filiation and affiliation, where the other who is my friend is my brother, and fraternity is based on an actual or symbolic blood-brotherhood. The intimacy and secrecy of *Freundschaft* can be contrasted to *Kamaradschaft*, camaraderie, which is essentially public and stems from military vocabulary. *Kamaradschaft* is *esprit de corps* and tends towards a transparent collectivity

that is profoundly exclusive, a term that in German is strongly associated with the *Nationalsozialistische Jugendbewegung*.⁶ Derrida himself discusses this opposition in the final chapter of *Politiques de l'amitié* in relation to Nietzsche's remark, 'Es gibt Kamaradschaft: möge es Freundschaft geben'.⁷

Blanchot emphasizes that this distinction between friendship and camaraderie is expressed in the pronouns 'tu' and 'vous', between the comrades with whom one *tutoyer* and the friends with whom one *vouvoyer*. At this late stage in Blanchot's short memoir, the context is 1968.⁸ The distinction is between, on the one hand, the camaraderie of *Les Comités d'action*, which 'n'admettaient [...] différence d'âge' [did not admit [...] age differences] – where, in a street slogan that Blanchot traces to a source in the Talmud, 'il est interdit de vieillir' [it is forbidden to grow old]⁹ – and, on the other hand, the friendship which takes time, a fidelity that is perennial and which demands patience and perseverance – step by step, little by little. *Pour l'amitié* begins thus,

La pensée de l'amitié: je crois qu'on sait quand l'amitié prend fin (même si elle dure encore), par un désaccord qu'un phénoménologue nommerait existentiel, un drame, un acte malheureux. Mais sait-on quand elle commence? Il n'y a pas de coup de foudre de l'amitié, plutôt un peu à peu, un lent travail de temps. On était amis et on ne le savait pas.¹⁰

[The thought of friendship: I think that one knows when friendship ends (even if it still endures), with a disagreement that a phenomenologist would call existential, a drama, an unfortunate act. But does one know when it begins? Friendship does not begin with a bolt from the blue, but rather little by little, the slow work of time. We were friends and we didn't know it.]

Friendship, unlike camaraderie, is bound up with an experience of time's passing, of time not as the explosion of the *Augenblick* or *Jetztpunkt*, or indeed the mystical *scintilla dei* so dear to the various fatal political romanticisms of this century – a Fourieresque romanticism articulated in '68 by the Situationist International – but rather time as the experience of passage, procrastination, temporisation, delay, one might even say *différance*. If camaraderie is an experience of the present, of the present of the *coup de foudre*, the sublimity of the *Now* of revolution for the exclusive elite of comrades, then friendship opens an experience of the future, what we might call a non-ecstatic experience of the future. The time of friendship is strongly linked with the experience of ageing, of senescence, of old friends leaning together like book ends, of being an old friend even when one is relatively young. The temporality of the future in friendship is an experience of slow protraction, the future tense as distension, as stretching out.

So, friendship is rooted in the passage of time, of a certain counting of time which allows one to count on one's friends and to hold them to account, to be accountable. This picks up on an insistent and guiding theme in *Politiques de l'amitié*: the question of *number*, of the demography of friendship. That is, how many friends are there? How many will we be? – 'Combien sont-ils? Combien serons-nous?'¹¹

But the time of friendship is also essentially linked to a non-ecstatic experience of the past. Friendship is the time of recollection, testimony, testament, narration and memoir. Thus, the experience of friendship is deeply bound up with the experience of memory, both of friends recalling the past together, but – more importantly perhaps – of one friend recalling alone, in solitude, what Derrida calls in connection with Blanchot, ‘amitié du solitaire pour le solitaire’.¹² This is also why the experience of friendship – and this is something obvious in Blanchot, but also, as Derrida shows, in Cicero, Montaigne and others – is so intimately connected with the experience of loss, of mourning, where *die Stimme des Freundes* is the voice from beyond the grave. The voice of the friend comes from the beyond the grave, and the voice of the friend who lives on, who sur-vives, speaks to the memory of a person who is no more: ‘O mes amis, il n’y a nul amy’. As Derrida writes, in an unintended response to Blanchot’s perplexity, ‘[...] l’amitié commence par se survivre’ [friendship begins by surviving].¹³ Although the relation between friendship, memory and mortality is more complex than I am allowing, we can at least now provisionally make sense of Ciceronian epigraph to *Politiques de l’amitié*: ‘Quocirca et absentes adsunt [...] et quod difficilius dictu est, mortui vivunt’. Although it is indeed ‘difficult to say’, it is because of friendship that the *dead live* (*mortui vivunt*), and the condition of possibility for friendship is memory. The dead live because they are recalled by friends, they survive after death because they are not forgotten. In this sense, *philia* is *necro-philia*.

However, this experience of friendship as loss, as a work of mourning, where, as Freud says in ‘Mourning and Melancholia’, ‘by taking flight into the ego love escapes extinction’,¹⁴ is also essentially the here and now of writing, the *present* time of inscription, of iterability: the writing of *Pour l’amitié* for Dionys Mascolo, of ‘L’amitié’ for Georges Bataille, of *Michel Foucault tel que je l’imagine*, but equally of *Mémoires, pour Paul de Man*, and of *Adieu à Emmanuel Levinas*. One writes here and now out of friendship, for friendship, in favour of friendship, for the future of friendship. And one does this in saying *adieu*, in trying to evoke the past, in seeking to recollect one’s loss. One is most for the other in taking one’s leave, in parting’s sweet sorrow.

Thus, to summarise these remarks into what we might somewhat ironically call ‘*the unity of the three non-ecstases of temporality*’, the (present) time of writing, the moment of iterability that writes for friendship, for the other (future) is provoked by an experience of loss (past). One writes here and now for the future of friendship by recalling the past. And yet, as Blanchot insists in the most radical moment of his reflection on friendship, and this is where Derrida will follow him one step further, perhaps the greatest suffering [*profonde douleur*] of friendship is the awareness that this effort of memory might have to recognize a more fundamental forgetfulness, ‘C’est là sa profonde douleur. Il faut qu’elle accompagne l’amitié dans l’oubli’ [This is its profound suffering. It must accompany friendship into forgetfulness].¹⁵ In his commentary on this passage, Derrida simply writes, ‘Il faut l’oubli’ [forgetfulness is necessary] and then more abruptly, imperatively, and untranslatably in the next paragraph, ‘Faut l’oubli’ [Forgetfulness must].¹⁶

This imperative, ‘Faut l’oubli’, contradicts the classical Aristotelian-Ciceronian insistence on the link between friendship and memory, where *mortui vivunt* because the dead are recalled to the memory of the friend. In my view, Derrida’s treatment of

friendship is aiming at a different conception of memory and a transformed conception of mortality, what he calls *sur-vivance*. Namely, that if *philia* is *necrophilia* in the classical conception of friendship, then this presupposes that a clear distinction can be made between the living and the dead and presupposes the appropriative activity of memory as that which allows the dead to live. By contrast, *Sur-vivance* is for Derrida something irreducible to the opposition between life and death. It is the dimension of the *spectral*, that which deconstructs the line that divides the living from the dead. One might say that *sur-vivance* is the first opening onto alterity insofar as alterity opens in the relation to mortality. This is not so much *philia* as *necrophilia*, but rather friendship for the other as mortal, where the precondition for friendship is the acknowledgement of mortality. In this sense, the task is one of thinking friendship in relation to a more originary finitude – spectral and sur-viving, the night of Banquo’s ghost and a host of other revenants.

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At the end of *Pour l’amitié*, in an almost pleading tone that evokes the very evanescence of the time of friendship, Blanchot writes,

J’avais eu le projet naïf de discuter avec Aristote, avec Montaigne, de leur conception de l’amitié. Mais à quel bon?¹⁷

[I had the naïve intention of discussing Aristotle’s and Montaigne’s conception of friendship. But to what end?]

After a quotation from Villon, whose sentiment Blanchot distrusts, a quotation that also appears at the beginning of Derrida’s discussion of Blanchot in *Politiques de l’amitié*, ‘Que sont mes amis devenus’¹⁸ [What has become of my friends?], he concludes with an acknowledgement of contradiction,

Vers émouvants, mais menteurs. Ici, je contredis mon commencement. Fidélité, constance, endurance, peut-être pérennité, tels sont les traits de l’amitié ou du moins les dons qu’elle m’accordés.¹⁹

[Moving but deceptive lines. Here, I contradict my starting point. Fidelity, constancy, endurance, and perhaps perennity, such are the traits of friendship or at least the gifts that it has accorded to me.]

But Blanchot has not yet quite concluded, and the contradiction he mentions is more complex than it appears. The classical distinction between *amitié* and *camaraderie*, between ‘vous’ and ‘tu’, also echoes the distinctions between the personal and the political, or the private and the public. And it should be noted that Blanchot has already acknowledged that the political is more personal than the personal, and the public is more private than the private. That is to say, the public realm of *camaraderie* is a zone of *tutoiement* and intimacy which is actually physically closer than the personal relation of friendship expressed in the ‘vous’ (‘nous marchions, bras-dessus, bras-dessous, avec Marguerite [Duras] entre nous [...]’, [we walked arm in arm with Marguerite between us]).²⁰ However, that said, this distinction between *amitié* and

camaraderie is then nicely and brusquely subverted in a closing allusion to Levinas, which is a short afterword to *Pour l'amitié*. Blanchot finally concludes,

La *philia* grecque est réciprocité, échange du Même avec le Même, mais jamais ouverture à *l'Autre*, découverte d'Autrui en tant que responsable de lui, reconnaissance de sa pré-excellence, éveil et dégrisement par cet Autrui, qui ne me laisse jamais tranquille, jouissance (sans concupiscence, comme dit Pascal) de sa Hauteur, de ce qui le rend toujours plus près du Bien que 'moi'.

C'est là mon salut à Emmanuel Levinas, le seul ami – ah ami lointain – que je tutoie et qui me tutoie, cela est arrivé, non pas parce que nous étions jeunes, mais par une décision délibérée, un pacte auquel j'espère ne jamais manquer.²¹

[Greek *philia* is reciprocity, the exchange of the Same with the Same, but never an opening to the *Other*, discovery of the Other [*Autrui*] insofar as one is responsible for them, a recognition of their pre-eminence, an awakening and disillusionment by this Other [*Autrui*], who never leaves me in peace, enjoyment (without concupiscence, as Pascal would say) of their Height, of that which always makes the other closer to the Good than 'me'.

This is my salute to Emmanuel Levinas, the only friend – ah distant friend – who says 'tu' to me and to whom I say 'tu', and this happened not because we were young, but because of a deliberate decision, a pact that I hope I will never fail to observe.]

This extraordinarily rich and provocative passage merits long meditation, but let me provisionally make five comments.

1. The virtues of friendship – the above cited virtues of fidelity, constancy, endurance and perennity – are assimilated into the Greek concept of *philia*. The latter is then defined as reciprocity, as the economic exchange that takes place within the *oikos* and the *agora*, what Levinas would refer to as 'the economy of the Same', where the same and the other form a totality. Thus, in Levinas's terminology, the intersubjective relation of *philia* is *ontological* and must be demarcated from the *ethical* relation to *Autrui*.
2. The reciprocity of *philia* is demarcated from the opening to the other, to *Autre* understood as *Autrui*, which is defined in terms of responsibility or recognition of the pre-eminence of the other, which is to say that it is a relation that exceeds any dialectical *Kampf um Anerkennung*, whether metaphysical (Hegel), 'post-metaphysical' (Habermas, Honneth) or even post-historical (Kojève). The relation to the other is also described – in a striking formulation that could occasion an interesting digression into Lacan – as the 'jouissance de sa Hauteur', an enjoyment that would certainly exceed the pleasure principle and any eudaimonism, and where moral feeling would be an experience of pain (*Schmerz*), as Kant suggests in the Second Critique, or trauma as Levinas suggests in *Autrement qu'être*.²² But what the various formulations in the above quote attempt

to evoke is the experience of a relation to the other irreducible to comprehension, and hence, for Levinas, to ontology. A relation that can be described with the adjective 'ethical'. Although we should note that if Blanchot mentions 'le Bien', then he is careful not to use the word 'ethics'.

3. The consequence of the above is that we appear to have a distinction between *philia* and the relation to the other, between reciprocity and responsibility, between mediation and immediacy, between pleasure and *jouissance*, between Greek and Jew, between the virtues of fidelity, constancy, endurance and perennity, and the experience of disillusionment, awakening, and the absence of tranquillity.
4. But this consequence is then complicated in a parting *salut*, an *adieu* to Levinas, who is the only friend 'que je tutoie et qui me tutoie'. A small, but significant, contradiction can be glimpsed and teased out here: the distinction between *amitié* and *camaraderie* was drawn above in terms of the difference between the 'tu' and the 'vous'. Yet here, in Blanchot's recollection of his friendship for Levinas, we have an account of friendship which takes place in a *tutoiement* that was above reserved for the experience of camaraderie. Blanchot's friendship for Levinas is the distance of 'ah, ami lointain', expressed in the intimacy of a camaraderie, 'le seul ami...que je tutoie et qui me tutoie'. Such a friendship can be described oxymoronically as the utter intimacy of distance, the absolute proximity to the one who is far off. This is a logic that recalls the epigraph to *Pour l'amitié*, 'A tous mes amis, connus et inconnus, proches et lointains' [To all my friends, known and unknown, close and distant].
5. Also note that Blanchot writes that this use of the 'tu' form is a deliberate *decision* on his and Levinas's part, a decision which again is in stark contrast to the whole drift of the other testimonies of friendship in *Pour l'amitié*, 'Mais sait-on quand elle commence?'. The friendship between Levinas and Blanchot, or at least their use of the 'tu' form, begins with a decision, a datable, definable pact, although we are not told what it is, and we are told not why. And yet, who decides to say 'tu'? This introduces a major theme of *Politiques de l'amitié* and in much of Derrida's subsequent work: the question of the *decision*. It is a question of trying to think the decision outside of its traditionally voluntaristic and 'decisionistic' determinations, for example in Carl Schmitt, where the possibility of the decision presupposes the existence of the *sovereign* subject defined in terms of consciousness, activity, freedom and will. Derrida's ambition in *Politiques de l'amitié*, as he makes clear in a footnote to *Adieu à Emmanuel Levinas*, is to think a conception of 'la décision passive' or 'la décision inconsciente', the passive or unconscious decision.²³ In this sense, the decision is not something taken by a subject, but rather the subject is *taken by the decision* made without its volition. In this sense, the moment of the decision is the subject's relation to an alterity within itself, something which corresponds to the structure of the Levinasian subject passively constituted through trauma. Derrida tries to capture this transformed concept of the decision in the following terms,

La décision passive, condition de l'événement, c'est toujours en moi, structurellement, une autre décision, une décision déchirante comme décision de l'autre. De l'autre absolu en moi, de l'autre comme absolu qui décide de moi en moi.²⁴

[The passive decision, condition of the event, is always in me, structurally, an other decision, a rending decision as the decision of the other. Of the absolutely other in me, of the other as the absolute who decides of me in me.]

Returning to Blanchot's words, if it is a 'deliberate decision' on Levinas's and Blanchot's part to say 'tu', then in a sense we might say that the decision was deliberated by the other, the decision came from the other, calling me to respond.

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This is all very nice, but what does it mean? Perhaps the following: that the relation to *Autrui* that is not acknowledged in the Greek conception of *philia*, a relation evoked in and as Blanchot's *salut* to his friendship for Levinas, is an experience of 'friendship' irreducible to the distinction between *amitié* and *camaraderie*. Blanchot's friendship for Levinas is a 'friendship' that takes us beyond friendship into an opening onto the other, *découverte d'Autrui*, that defines, for Levinas, that experience that is called 'ethical'. One might speculate as to why *Pour l'amitié*, this little memoir ostensibly written for Dionys Mascolo, should conclude with this memoir for Levinas, which is for a conception of friendship that undercuts the friendship for which Blanchot writes.

If Blanchot is *pour l'amitié*, then he is for a conception of friendship as yet unthought within, or at least only thought in relation to the ruptures of, the Western tradition. Recalling the 'Avant-Propos' of *Politiques de l'amitié*, this would be a conception of friendship that disrupts fraternity, patriarchy, androcentrism and 'the familial schema'. This friendship beyond the traditional figures of friendship is what Derrida seems to intend with the term *aimance*, which is a compound of *amour* and *amitié*, '[...] l'aimance au-delà de l'amour et de l'amitié selon leurs figures déterminées' [*aimance* beyond love and friendship following their determined figures].²⁵ It would seem that Derrida's non-traditional conception of friendship undermines the distinction between friendship and love.

Let me try and make some of these claims a little more concrete by turning briefly to Blanchot's fascinating reading of Levinas's *Totalité et Infini* in *L'entretien infini*.²⁶ In the latter work, Blanchot gives his first extended *critical* attention to a theme central to his *réécits*, namely the question of *Autrui* and the nature of the relation to *Autrui*. What fascinates Blanchot is the notion of an absolute relation – *le rapport sans rapport* – that monstrous contradiction (that refuses to recognize the principle of non-contradiction) that is the theoretical core of Levinas's work, where the terms of the relation simultaneously absolve themselves from the relation. For Blanchot, the absolute relation offers what might be called a *non-dialectical account of intersubjectivity*.²⁷ That is, a picture of the relation between humans which is not, as I said above, the struggle for recognition where the self is dependent upon the other for its constitution as a subject. For Levinas, the interhuman relation is an event of radical asymmetry which resists the symmetry and reciprocity of Hegelian and post-Hegelian models of intersubjectivity through what Levinas calls, in a favourite formulation of Blanchot's, 'the curvature of intersubjective space'. For Levinas, the radical alterity of the ethical relation is only conceivable on the basis of the absolute separation between self and other.

For Blanchot, Levinas restores the strangeness and terror of the interhuman relation as the central concern of philosophy and shows how transcendence can be understood in terms of the interhuman relation. But, and here we move onto the discreet but powerful critique of Levinas in *L'entretien infini*, Blanchot carefully and – to my mind – rightly holds back from two Levinasian affirmations. Firstly, that the relation to alterity can be understood *ethically* in some novel metaphysical sense and secondly that the relation has ‘*theological*’ implications, i.e. that the ethical relation is directed *à-Dieu* in some substantive metaphysical sense. So, in embracing Levinas’s account of the relation to *autrui*, Blanchot places brackets around the terms ‘ethics’ and ‘God’ and hence holds back from the metaphysical affirmation of the Good beyond Being. Blanchot holds to the ambiguity or tension in the relation to *autrui* that cannot be reduced either through the affirmation of the positivity of the Good or the negativity of Evil. The relation to the Other is neither positive nor negative in any absolute metaphysical sense, it is rather what Blanchot calls *le rapport du troisième genre*, or *un rapport neutre*.

Now, and this is my point, it is this relationless relation or *rapport du troisième genre* that seems to define, for Blanchot, the non-traditional conception of friendship. It is this conception of ‘friendship’ that cuts across, runs beneath or deconstructs the traditional conceptions of *philia* and *camaraderie*, informing both whilst being reducible to neither. That is to say, the relation to the other is the quasi-transcendental condition for both *amitié* and *camaraderie*, ‘quasi’ because it announces the conditions of both their possibility and impossibility. Such a conception of ‘friendship’ cuts across or deconstructs the distinctions between the private and the public, between the personal and the political.

In passing, I would also claim that it is this conception of ‘friendship’, as the relationless relation to the other, that Derrida defines as *justice*, when, in ‘Force of Law’ and *Specters of Marx*, he illustrates the undeconstructibility of justice with the following quotation from *Totalité et Infini*, ‘La relation avec autrui – c’est à dire la justice.’²⁸ ‘But’, as Derrida insists, we can call justice ‘by other names’ – and the *messianic* is one of those other names. In this way, one can begin to construct a linguistic chain – *aimance*, justice, the messianic, *démocratie à venir*, unconditional hospitality – within which the terms seem to have a similar, but not identical, conceptual function. These terms function as what Hent de Vries would call ‘non-synonymous substitutions’, and what I have elsewhere called ‘palaeonymic displacements’.²⁹ That is to say, they are not chosen arbitrarily as mere nicknames. Rather each of them is chosen seriously in relation to the weight of the traditions out of which they arise, and in this sense *palaeonymy is the responsibility for what we might call a heritage*, even – and perhaps most of all – when it is that heritage that is being deconstructed.

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My hypothesis about Blanchot’s non-traditional conception of friendship would seem to be confirmed if one turns to his 1971 collection, *L’amitié*, what Derrida calls ‘one of the great canonical meditations on friendship’.³⁰ In Blanchot’s memoir for Bataille, we can see how his reconstructed account of Levinas’s notion of the relationless relation begins to define his concept of friendship. Let me cite Blanchot’s text with the emphases that Derrida adds when he quotes it in *Politiques de l’amitié*,

L'amitié, ce rapport sans dépendance, sans épisode et où entre cependant toute la simplicité de la vie, passe par la reconnaissance de l'étrangeté commune qui *ne nous permet pas de parler de nos amis, mais seulement de leur parler* [Derrida's emphasis], non d'en faire un thème de conversations (ou d'articles), mais le mouvement de l'entente où, nous parlant, ils réservent, même dans la plus grande familiarité, la distance infinie, cette séparation fondamentale à partir de laquelle ce qui sépare devient rapport.³¹

[Friendship, this relation without dependence, without episode, into which, however, the utter simplicity of life enters, implies the common strangeness which *does not allow us to speak of our friends, but only to speak to them*, not to make of them a theme of conversations [or articles], but the movement of the understanding in which, speaking to us, they reserve, even in their greatest familiarity, the infinite distance, this fundamental separation starting from which that which separates becomes relation.]

Friendship, then, is this relation without dependence, a relation thought on the basis of a radical separation, the pre-ethical separation described in Section II of *Totalité et Infini*, 'Interiority and Economy'. In this sense, friendship is what speaks across an infinite distance, what Blanchot calls a few lines further on, '[...] l'intervalle, le pur intervalle [...] de moi à cet autrui qu'est un ami [...]' [the interval, the pure interval [...] from myself to that other who is a friend].³² The words of friendship are 'paroles d'une rive à l'autre rive' [words from one shore to another],³³ a metaphor that directly evokes Levinas's repeated insistence on the other speaking from 'un autre rive'. This is why we cannot speak *of* our friends but only speak *to* them, namely that any conception of friendship that totalized the relation to the other would reduce it to the ontological reciprocity of *philia*. In Levinasian terms, the ontological relation that comprehends the other must presuppose his or her ethical incomprehensibility. This is perhaps why Blanchot describes friendship, in the same passage from 'L'amitié', as 'l'interruption d'être' [the interruption of being].

As I said above, *die Stimme des Freundes* is spectral and speaks from beyond the grave. It is *to* this memory and out of this loss that I speak – 'Thou art a Scholler; speake to it Horatio'. Thus, the relationless relation of friendship opens in the relation to death, not the tragic heroism of death as possibility where *Dasein* assumes death as the condition of possibility for authentic selfhood, but where death is radically impossible, it is that which divests me of possibility and authenticity. This is what Blanchot calls in 'L'amitié', 'la démesure du mouvement de mourir' [the excessiveness of the movement of dying].³⁴ If death is not a self-relation, if it does not result in the autarky of authentic selfhood, then this means that a certain plurality has insinuated itself at the heart of the self. It is the facticity of dying that structures the self as being-for-the-other, which also means that death is not revealed in the relation to my death, but rather in the very otherness of death, the other's death.

And this is why Blanchot writes at the end of 'L'amitié', in its very last words which were partially cited above,

But thinking knows that one does not remember: without memory, without thinking, it struggles already in the invisible where everything falls back into indifference. That is its profound suffering. It must accompany friendship into forgetfulness.

That is, if friendship is what speaks *to* the other, to the dead friend whom I mourn, then *il faut l'oubli* or *Faut l'oubli*. Forgetfulness must. Why? Paradoxically it is in order to remember that this speaking *to* is a response, a responsibility to that which I can never adequately respond, a speaking *to* that speaks *out of* the impossible experience of *le mourir*.

This brings me back to what I said above about the relation of friendship to originary finitude and the question of *sur-vivance*. Namely, that if *philia* is *necrophilia* in the traditional conception of friendship, then this presupposes a clear distinction between the living and the dead and assumes the appropriative work of memory as that which allows the dead to live: *mortui vivunt*. *Sur-vivance* is a spectrality irreducible to the opposition between life and death – the very experience of *das Unheimliche* in Freud. With these thoughts in mind, I think we can better understand what I claimed above about *sur-vivance* as the first opening onto alterity insofar as alterity opens in the relation to mortality. It is a question of an *aimance* for the other *as* mortal, where the precondition for a non-traditional conception of friendship is an acknowledgement of both the ubiquity of finitude and its ungraspability. One is only a friend of that which is going to die.

Notes

This is the text of a talk given at a conference on 'Politics and Filiation', held at the Manhattan Campus of the State University of New York Stonybrook in November 2002 and sponsored by the College International de Philosophie in Paris. The respondent was Jacques Derrida. It builds on analyses of Blanchot, Derrida and Levinas given in my earlier work, see in particular the final chapter of *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity* (London and New York, Verso, 1999).

¹ Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994). For references to Blanchot, see pp. 55, 56–57, 73, 89, 100, 219, 234, 295/46, 46–47, 55, 70, 82, 194, 207 and 264.

² See Jacques Derrida, 'The Politics of Friendship', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 85:11 (November 1988), pp. 632–644 (pp. 643–44). These passages are an abbreviated version of some of the closing pages of Chapter 10 of *Politiques de l'amitié*, cf. pp. 322–29, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 290–96.

³ Dionys Mascolo, *A la recherche d'un communisme de pensée* (Paris: Editions Fourbis, 1993); and Maurice Blanchot, *Pour l'amitié* (Paris: Editions Fourbis, 1996). Translations are my own.

⁴ Maurice Blanchot, *Pour l'amitié*, pp. 31–34.

⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, Part II, pp. 46–47.

⁶ J. Hoffmeister, *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe* (Hamburg: Philosophische Bibliothek, 1955), p. 238; and *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 4, p. 683. See also in this regard a helpful article by Erich Heintel, 'Vom Sinn der Freundschaft', in *Von der Notwendigkeit der Philosophie in der Gegenwart*, ed. H. Kohlenberger and W. Lütterfelds (Vienna: Oldenbourg, 1976), pp. 190–221; see especially pp. 192–93 and 199–200.

⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*, p. 316/ p. 284. Nietzsche's words are also cited towards the end of the original English version of 'The Politics of Friendship', p. 643.

⁸ It would be necessary to read Blanchot's remarks on 1968 together with *La Communauté inavouable* (Paris: Minuit, 1983), a text itself mentioned by Derrida in a series of footnotes to *Politiques de l'amitié*, pp. 56–57, 89/ p. 46–47 and 70; and see especially p. 337, fn.1./ p. 304, n.32.

⁹ Maurice Blanchot, *Pour l'amitié*, p. 31.

¹⁰ Maurice Blanchot, *Pour l'amitié*, p. 9.

- ¹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*, p. 14/ p.x.
- ¹² Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*, p. 328/ p. 295.
- ¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*, p. 324/ p. 291.
- ¹⁴ 'Mourning and Melancholia', *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Freud Library, ed. and trans. James Strachey, 20 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), XI, p. 267.
- ¹⁵ Maurice Blanchot, *L'amitié* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 330.
- ¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*, p. 328/ p. 295.
- ¹⁷ Maurice Blanchot, *Pour l'amitié*, pp. 33–34.
- ¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*, p. 322/ p. 290.
- ¹⁹ Maurice Blanchot, *Pour L'amitié*, p. 34.
- ²⁰ Maurice Blanchot, *Pour L'amitié*, p. 33.
- ²¹ Maurice Blanchot, *Pour L'amitié* p. 35.
- ²² On this question, see above Chapters 8 and 9.
- ²³ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu à Emmanuel Levinas* (Paris: Galilée, 1997), p. 52, n.2
- ²⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*, p. 87.
- ²⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*, p. 88/ 69.
- ²⁶ Maurice Blanchot, *L'entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), pp. 70–105.
- ²⁷ Maurice Blanchot, *L'entretien infini*, pp. 100–101.
- ²⁸ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et Infini* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1961), p. 62; *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 89. Cited in Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx* (Paris, Galilée, 1993), p. 48. See also 'The Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'', in D. Cornell, M. Rosenfeld and D. G. Carlson, eds, *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 22.
- ²⁹ I refer to Hent De Vries's paper given at a conference on *Politiques de l'amitié* held in Tilburg in 1997.
- ³⁰ For the Derrida quote, see 'The Politics of Friendship', p. 643. Derrida uses the same formulation to describe Blanchot in *Politiques de l'amitié*, pp. 322/290.
- ³¹ Maurice Blanchot, 'L'amitié', in *L'amitié*, p. 328; Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*, p. 327/ 294.
- ³² Maurice Blanchot, 'L'amitié', p. 328.
- ³³ Maurice Blanchot, 'L'amitié', p. 329.
- ³⁴ Maurice Blanchot, 'L'amitie', p. 329.

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