Never Divide and Love:
From *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* to
*The Politics of Friendship*

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Abstract
In this paper, I would like to propose a kind of parallel reading of Lacan and Derrida, not in order to confront them with each other and to decide in favor of one of them, but in order to shed light on a certain conceptual configuration or topography that they seem to share. In the first half of the paper I focus on the notion of *neighbor*, proposed by Lacan in his seminar *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. I show how he elaborated this notion with multiple references to Freud and to various literary works, and in relation to the positing and removal of a dividing line relative to love. In the second half of the paper I try to demonstrate that the notion of *friend* occupies a homologous position in the conceptual framework of Derrida’s *Politics of Friendship*, at the center of which we find an in-depth analysis of that distinction between friend and enemy which marks the works of Carl Schmitt. Nevertheless, this homology does not spell identity. I suggest in the conclusion that the divergence between the two thinkers opens up a field for new and potentially important investigations.

Keywords
Lacan, Derrida, Schmitt, love, friend, neighbor, delimitation
My emotional life has always insisted that I should have an intimate friend and a hated enemy. I have always been able to provide myself afresh with both, and it has not infrequently happened that the ideal situation of childhood has been so completely reproduced that friend and enemy have come together in a single individual - though not, of course, both at once or with constant oscillations, as may have been the case in my early childhood.

—Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*

Although it is commonly believed that Derrida shifted, in the course of his life, from an oppositional view of Lacan to a more sympathetic one, opinions differ as to how to describe the nature of this shift. Was this a reconciliation with an erstwhile adversary? Or was it rather a gradual realization on the part of Derrida of his proximity to Lacan, something he had already known at least from the time of the interviews published in *Postions*, where Derrida formulated his “criticism” of Lacan’s view of the metaphysical framework of truth (107-13)? Or could it be that Derrida’s later alliance with Lacan was motivated solely by the circumstances he describes in an interview with Elisabeth Roudinesco as the decline of psychoanalysis (*For What Tomorrow* 107), and therefore does not imply any profound resonances between their thinking?

As Derrida himself mentions, these questions have been situated in “a whole spider’s web of misunderstandings that were then [when Derrida published his “Freud and the Scene of Writing”] beginning to be woven, or even fabricated” (*For What Tomorrow* 276)—fabricated, that is, by the followers of these two thinkers, for whom such questions may often disguise a tentative “reappropriation” (Derrida, *Positions* 107).¹ In this context, the two thinkers’ direct confrontation is to be carefully eluded, insofar as it can lead to a reappropriation of the one by the other. Indeed, it is the same concern, it seems, that already motivated the extreme caution with which Derrida had always dealt with Lacan’s discourse, expressing his

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¹ One might evoke the controversy over the title René Major gave to his own paper and was obliged to retract in the Colloquium “Lacan avec les philosophes” in 1990 as one of the most spectacular examples of this conflict (cf. Major 127-128 and Antonomora 425-452).
objections only as an extension of his own work, as well as the absence of any in-depth counterargument by Lacan.

In what follows I would like to try and find another path, or at least a possible entrance to such a path in this perilous discursive field, at a certain distance from the logic of reappropriation. I would like to see if Lacan and Derrida did not have something in common, not at the level of the answers they gave but at that of their questioning. Indeed, they were both highly sensitive to the difficulties one encounters in articulating the givenness of the other, to a degree that they dared mobilize every available means to address this task, whether or not it belonged to their own field. Curiously enough, each of them is led in his own questioning to focus on a certain impossibility in/of love, an impossibility articulated in terms of a “double delimitation” in the sense that the delimitation of a lovable or friendly “otherness” never comes without the delimitation of the subject.

In the first half of this paper I would like to argue that Lacan came to the problematic of double delimitation in his reading of Freud and especially in his discussion of the notion of “the neighbor”—and furthermore that this problematic was regarded by him as being closely connected to that other dimension of human experience known as “the death drive.” The second half of this paper will then be devoted to a reading of Derrida’s *Politics of Friendship*: here I will try to show how Derrida, in making clear the essential instability of the boundary that separates friend from enemy and the absolute aggressivity unleashed by the absence of delimitation in otherness, nevertheless attempts to conceive of another possible relationship to this otherness, one also beyond delimitation. My goal is to demonstrate that Lacan’s “neighbor” and Derrida’s “friend” have a homologous position in the two thinkers’ respective “questionings,” in that both notions are designed to seize this dimension of otherness prior to any delimitation founding the otherness as such, or this other otherness bound to set off the unpredictable process of double delimitation which, I will suggest, might be articulated by the imperative:

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2 Cf. “In this interval I judged that the best contribution or theoretical “explanation” consisted in pursuing my own work according to its specific pathways and requirements, whether or not this work should encounter Lacan’s and Lacan’s—I do not at all reject the idea—more than any other today” (Derrida, *Positions* 111).

3 The differentiation of otherness (other/Other) lies at the root of Lacanian discourse, and every apparatus he introduced in his theorization, whether it is optical, linguistic or logico-mathematical, is destined to articulate this multiplicity of otherness. As for the notions of the other in Derrida, J. Hillis Miller maintains that “l’autre has long been a key word in Jacques Derrida’s vocabulary” (“Derrida’s others” 325) and that “[g]etting right what Derrida means by l’autre is essential to understanding what he says about ethics, selfhood, responsibility, literature, law, psychoanalysis, sexual difference, politics, religion, translation, and the university” (327).
“Never divide and love.” My hope is that this analysis, taking into consideration Lacan’s discussions in his Seminar posterior to the well-known article on “The Purloined Letter,” discussions rarely mentioned by Derrida, may aid in further opening up the field of comparative Derrida-Lacan studies via a sort of conceptual confrontation.

The Lacanian Concept of “The Neighbor [le prochain]” and “The Judgment-Primary Division [das Ur-teilen]”

A close reading of The Ethics of Psychoanalysis reveals that Lacan brings together two Freudian terms, der Nebenmensh and der Nächste, in a single concept he calls le prochain or “neighbor” in the English translation. Der Nächste, literally “the nearest” in German, appears in “Civilization and its Discontents” when Freud is discussing the commandment “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself [Du sollst den Nächsten lieben wie dich selbst],” which he considers to be impossible to obey. In his commentary on the passage in question, Lacan underscores that neighbor in this sense is to be found within ourselves: it is “that most neighborly of neighbors who is inside me” (Ethics 231), while the “most neighborly” is no other than “this heart within which is that of my jouissance and which I don’t dare go near” (229).

On the other hand, der Nebenmensch, literally “a fellow human-beings,” is the expression we find in Freud’s “Project for a Scientific Psychology” (“Entwurf einer Psychologie”). The notion is introduced by Freud to indicate the being that the

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4 Cf. “Let us adopt a naïve attitude towards it [the love of neighbor], as though we were hearing it for the first time; we shall be unable then to suppress a feeling of surprise and bewilderment. Why should we do it? What good will it do us? But, above all, how shall we achieve it? How can it be possible? My love is something valuable to me which I ought not to throw away without reflection. It imposes duties on me for whose fulfillment I must be ready to make sacrifices. If I love someone, he must deserve it in some way. . . . He deserves it if he is so like me in important ways that I can love myself in him; and he deserves it if he is so much more perfect than myself that I can love my ideal of my own self in him. Again, I have to love him if he is my friend’s son, since the pain my friend would feel if any harm came to him would be my pain too—I should have to share it. But if he is a stranger to me and if he cannot attract me by any worth of his own or any significance that he may already have acquired for my emotional life, it will be hard for me to love him. Indeed, I should be wrong to do so, for my love is valued by all my own people as a sign of my preferring them, and it is an injustice to them if I put a stranger on a par with them. But if I am to love him (with this universal love) merely because he, too, is an inhabitant of this earth, like an insect, an earth-worm or a grass-snake, then I fear that only a small modicum of my love will fall to his share—not by any possibility as much as, by the judgment of my reason, I am entitled to retain for myself. What is the point of a precept enunciated with so much solemnity if its fulfillment cannot be recommended as reasonable?” (“Civilization” 109-10)
young subject encounters in the context of the relationship with his/her mother, who simultaneously embodies “the first satisfying object” [das erste Befriedigungsobjekt], “the first hostile object” [das erste feindliche Objekt] and “the sole helping power” [die einzige helfende Macht] (“Project” 331). The Nebenmensch as such appears at the early stage of the dialectic of desire as a complex, “der Komplex des Nebenmenschen.” This complex constitutes the object of what Freud calls the “Urteilen,” which normally means “judgment” but etymologically “primary division,” [Ur-teilen] namely the division between two radically heterogeneous components: representations [die Vorstellungen] and the Thing [das Ding] (“Project” 328). It is important to note that Lacan opposes the former as that which defines the order of the pleasure principle, to the latter as that which constitutes “a first outside” for the subject (Ethics 62).

In short, there are two main features of “the neighbor” in the Freudo-Lacanian sense. This “neighbor” deranges and neutralizes the boundary line ordinarily supposed to exist between inside and outside, or subject and other, to the extent that it is both extremely proximate and inaccessible. Thus the neighbor is a “complex,” it is plural from the beginning. It turns out clearly from these characterizations that the neighbor cannot be someone, namely an individual more or less similar to us. What Lacan, after Freud, calls “the neighbor [le prochain]” is rather a germinal entity out of which stem the primary emergence of the subject as well as “das Ding as the absolute Other of the subject” (Ethics 62-63), following the “primary division” or that “original division of the experience of reality” (Ethics 62). “Love thy neighbor” in this context command to love these two divided parts as a whole, prior to any dividing line in the experience of reality which would surround a field of imaginarily accessible subject(s), and consequently its “outside.”¹⁵ “Never divide and love”: this is the enormous challenge of “loving one’s neighbor” in the Freudo-Lacanian sense, which inspired Freud with an intense—and almost aggressive—revulsion in “Civilization and its Discontents” (109-10).

¹⁵ The “representations [die Vorstellungen]” in Freud’s sense define a field where the subject finds its own place, to the extent that each of them can be a predicate for multiple subjects, whether it is the ego or the other. To this extent, they represent a primitive articulation of what Lacan called the Symbolic, dimension through which we have relationship to the imaginary other, the other shaped in our own image and thus interchangeable with ourselves, and the neighbor in its ordinary meaning is inscribed in this dimension. As we will see in the following, Freud considers the love of the neighbor as going beyond this dimension, and argues that it implicates a radical negation of this dimension, insofar as this love challenges its fundamental condition.
Love and the Experience of Finitude according to Freud

In “Civilization and its Discontents,” we find two main arguments or two main grievances against the inhuman nature of loving one’s neighbor. How could one possibly love (someone or something) infinitely? On the other hand, how could one love without dividing? Of these two impossibilities formulated in the guise of questions, the former has its origin in the finiteness of our love, which is a function of the finiteness of our lives. Mortal as we are, it is impossible for us to love all beings, because loving one after another we are destined to stop at the moment when death deprived us of any further desire. In this case, the dividing line between what is loved and what is not comes after love, as the necessary consequence of its finiteness. In contrast, the division Freud mentions in the latter question seems to come before love, as its necessary condition.

The object of love must deserve love. Hence the object field is originally divided into two areas, based on the principle of what Lacan would call the Imaginary. Freud says of the neighbor: “He deserves [my love] if he is so like me in important ways that I can love myself in him; and he deserves it if he is so much more perfect than myself that I can love my ideal of my own self in him” (“Civilization” 109). In other words, the subject recasts the object field in his own image, including in this field only those objects similar to him and thus worthy of his love, and pushing away the rest as strangers. Indeed, the latter turns out to be not merely unworthy of my love but to have “more claim to my hostility and even my hatred,” because of their (potential or imagined) aggressiveness (“Civilization” 110).

Freud often talks about the neighbor in this last sense, as posterior to the primary division and thus clearly defined as the object of my hostility. But there are also passages in which the neighbor appears in its original complexity or ambivalence. For example:

[T]heir neighbor is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. (Freud, “Civilization” 111)

The neighbor here is no longer someone essentially and inherently hostile and thus worthy of my hostility, but his mere presence can trigger and provoke an
aggressiveness regardless of his nature, be he friendly or hostile, powerful or powerless (or more precisely, it is rather his “helplessness” that brings on our aggressiveness), and in this case I am rather the “agent” than the “subject” of this aggressiveness which is a provoked one, without the hostility of the neighbor that might justify or explain it. Besides its subjectively ambiguous origin, Freud emphasizes that the aggressiveness in question has something acephalous (“headless,” leaderless) about it, for once released it can easily turn against ourselves. Die Kultur, or civilization, consists in containing this acephalous aggressiveness.

### Acephalous Aggressiveness and the Sadian Phantasm of Annihilation

In the final analysis, Lacan’s focus on the neighbor allows him to realign the two types of aggressiveness between which Freud’s discussion constantly shifts. After the primary division, human aggressiveness finds itself tamed, regulated, oriented in the direction of the “neighbor” as distinguished from those who are similar to us and thus worthy of our love. Freud claims that the “narcissism of minor differences . . . is a convenient and relatively harmless satisfaction of the inclination toward aggression, by means of which cohesion between the members of the community is made easier” (“Civilization” 114). Aggressiveness, in this sense, is only an “opposition,” Gegnerschaft which Freud distinguished from “enmity” Feindschaft (112).

Another kind of aggressiveness is acephalous aggressiveness. Those whose love at any price for their neighbor eventually will dissolve even the primary division, thus finding themselves facing that neighbor who is no longer die Nächste but der Nebenmensch. This neighbor represents the commandment, “Never divide

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6 Freud describes the hostility of the neighbor as follows: “the more secure he feels and the more helpless I am, the more certainly I can expect him to behave like this [i.e. aggressively] to me,” (“Civilization” 110). And vice versa.

7 Cf. “As a rule this cruel aggressiveness waits for some provocation or puts itself at the service of some other purpose, whose goal might also have been reached by milder measures. In circumstances that are favorable to it, when the mental counter-forces which ordinarily inhibit it are out of action, it also manifests itself spontaneously and reveals man as a savage beast to whom consideration towards his own kind is something alien. Anyone who calls to mind the atrocities committed during the racial migrations or the invasions of the Huns, or by the people known as Mongols under Jenghis Khan and Tamerlane, or at the capture of Jerusalem by the pious Crusaders, or even, indeed, the horrors of the recent World War—anyone who calls these things to mind will have to bow humbly before the truth of this view” (“Civilization” 111-12).
and love”: love without any division. But how can this be possible? To love someone necessarily means the exclusion of those who are not loved and the division of the object field. Under this condition, the only way to love without dividing is to love all the beings at once, which is impossible for mortals. Besides, this division allowed us to protect ourselves from the aggressiveness which was turned outward and towards the other side but now, lacking any such division, we have no means of containing this aggressiveness, with the result that things often develop in an unforeseen way. Lacan seems to specify this dimension of subjectivity through the expressions “méchant” or “méchanceté,” which repeatedly crop up when he explains what the neighbor is. For example, he talks about “the presence of that fundamental evil which dwells within this neighbor” [la présence de cette méchanceté foncière qui habite en ce prochain] (Ethics 229). “Evil (méchanceté)” in this context means not only the other’s aggressiveness or maliciousness. Lacan uses this term in the sense of “mauvaise incidence,” which the English translation renders as “bad influence” (Ethics 110), although here it will be helpful to look at the etymology of méchanceté. The term is composed of the ancient form of “choir,” meaning “fall,” and the prefix “mé-,” meaning “bad.” The French expression “tomber mal,” literally “fall badly,” means “come at a bad time.” Similarly, “mé-chanceté” can connote “bad luck” or “ill fortune.” In our context specifically it refers to the neighbor bringing about an unforeseen and often undesirable situation, something other and worse than what is expected, in short, something “paradoxical.” Lacan exemplifies the paradox in question by referring to that dimension of ethics that is brought to light by psychoanalysis.

What is this paradox? It is that the moral conscience, as he [Freud] says, shows itself to be the more demanding the more refined it becomes, crueler and crueler even as we offend it less and less, more and more fastidious as we force it, by abstaining from acts, to go and seek us out at the most intimate levels of our impulses or desires. In short, the insatiable character of this moral conscience, its paradoxical cruelty, transforms it within the individual into a parasite that is fed by the satisfactions accorded it. Ethics punishes the individual relatively much less for his faults than for his misfortunes. (Ethics 110)

8 But what if it is possible to simultaneously love and not to love? The Derridian problematic of “the phantom” seems to be situated in this context.
Lacan calls this dimension of ethics “the critique, by means of psychoanalysis, of wild, uncultivated ethics [la critique par l’analyse de l’éthique sauvage, non cultivée]” (110). He adds, “It is here that analysis sheds some light, and it does so, in the end, on that which in the depths of man might be called self-hate [haine de soi]” (110).

Indeed, Pascal already argued that “the self is hateful [le moi est haïssable].” The psychoanalytic (or at any rate Lacanian) innovation consists in the conceptual configuration within which this self-hatred is to be situated.

**Self-hatred and Liberation through Annihilation:**

A Way to *Jouissance*

Through the Freudo-Lacanian discussion of the neighbor, we have been led to distinguish two levels or two dimensions of our relation to otherness, in correlation with what we called “judgment-primary division (das Urteilen).” In the dimension posterior to this operation, which we will designate as the “cultural” one, the object of love is segregated from that of hatred. To the extent that the object of love is defined on the principle of the Imaginary, it corresponds both to the self and to the other. This segregation prevents acephalous aggressiveness from turning inward (towards ourselves), thus allowing us to live calmly with our family. However, as long as we maintain this system based on the principle of the imaginary, there will always be a remainder excluded from the sphere of the self, one which will hinder us from proceeding further. That is why the self, for those who are longing for a total integration of the object field, becomes hateful, so that they begin to dream of a complete erasure of any division, including the primary one.

This opens another dimension of ethics, that “wild [sauvage]” ethics that Lacan calls “the heart of my *jouissance*.” If we “dare not go near” this, it is because “as soon as I go near it, . . . there rises up an unfathomable aggressivity from which I flee, that I turn against me, and which in the very place of the vanished Law adds its weight to that which prevents me from crossing a certain frontier at the limit of the Thing” (*Ethics* 229). And it is to this very point that we sometimes are brought by the love of our neighbor. As Lacan puts it, “I retreat from loving my neighbor as myself because there is something on the horizon there that is engaged in some form of intolerable cruelty. In that sense, to love one’s neighbor may be the cruelest of choices” (*Ethics* 239). It will effectively be “the cruelest of choices” when the philanthropic (“love of one’s fellow man”) ideal turns into the most radical anarchism and the dream of loving one’s neighbor into the nightmare of extermination.
This is what is dreamt of by Sade, when he expounds in *The Story of Juliette* what is called “the system of Pope Pius VI,” namely the “theory that it is through crime that man collaborates in the new creations of nature” (Lacan, *Ethics* 259). It would nevertheless be wrong to take this “collaboration” as facilitating the cycle of generation-corruption proper to nature,\(^9\) for there is something excessive in the destruction conceived by Sade. For instance, when he writes:

> The service of nature requires far more total destructions . . . destructions much more complete than those we are able to accomplish. Nature wants atrocities and magnitude in crimes; the more our destructions are of this type, the more they will be agreeable to it. To be of even greater service to nature, one should seek to prevent the regeneration of the body that we bury. Murder only takes the first life of the individual whom we strike down; we should also seek to take his second life, if we are to be even more useful to nature. For nature wants annihilation; it is beyond our capacity to achieve the scale of destruction it desires.\(^10\)

Referring to this example, Lacan emphasizes that the death drive is to be situated not in the dimension of nature, where it might seek a return to a state of equilibrium, but in that of history and signifiers, where it manifests itself as “an initial intention,” “a direct will to destruction,” “will to make a fresh start,” “will for an Other-Thing,” “will to create from zero,” ”will to begin again” (*Ethics* 262).

The hyperbolism of the Lacanian discussion on the neighbor has the advantage of revealing that “love thy neighbor” is a commandment that is impossible to follow to the end, because it eventually confronts us with another commandment no less impossible to obey, “never divide and love”: we cannot even imagine what such a totalizing love is like, nor how it can begin. However, if Lacan posits here a very sharp opposition between the cultured and the wild dimensions of ethics, and illustrates vividly the latter through the Sadian phantasm of annihilation, this does not mean that the love of neighbor should lead immediately to this extreme consequence, nor that this is its only conceivable outcome.

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\(^9\) Lacan argues that the “second destruction that Sade was talking about” is “the destruction that calls for subversion even beyond the cycle of generation-corruption” (*Ethics* 286).

As the examples of *Antigone* and courtly love demonstrate, there are many ways to relativize the primary division other than negating it or declaring that the dividing line was but is no more, and these are known as forms of “sublimation.” What will happen indeed if the primary division takes place and at the same time does not take place? And, correlative, what if the other as well as the self is and is not? What if an intermediate mode of being is conceivable? If the confrontation with the neighbor, which is impossible in the Freudo-Lacanian sense, nevertheless comes to pass? It is at this very point that the Lacanian problematic of the ethics of psychoanalysis, articulated around the concept of neighbor, connects with the discussion Derrida develops in *The Politics of Friendship*.

**Derrida’s Analysis of the Ineluctable Delimitation: Fraternity and the Political**

In this book, which constitutes one of his main works of the 1990’s, Derrida addresses the problem of love. He does this, of course, from a different angle than that of Lacan, but so as to problematize, like Lacan, a certain limit immanent to

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11 The Lacanian dichotomy of ethics aims, on the contrary, to spot the space in which every drama of desire is to be played between these two dimensions, or in the passage from one to the other. According to Lacan, this is the space proper to tragedy, and he seeks to articulate it through the example of Sophocles’ *Antigone*. The heroine of this tragedy breaks the “royal law” or “state law,” which imposes a dividing line between two brothers with respect to their burial, in order to obey “the gods and their unwritten and unchanging laws” (454). To this extent, she carries out the commandment “never divide and love,” only to find herself in an aporetic situation which characterizes the tragic in general. She is shut away in a cavern, which is “her bridal room where all are laid to rest in death” (804-5), and which she deplores in these terms: “In my wretchedness I have no home, not with human beings or corpses, not with the living or the dead” (848-50). One can consider her confrontation with such a “neutral” being—“neutral” in its etymological sense—as correlative with her homelessness, as a logical consequence of erasing the dividing line, to the extent that it defines the contour of the self as well as that of the other. In other words, this cavern embodies the world prior to the primary division or the first otherness, a world of the neighbor in the sense of *der Nebenmensch*. Without going into detail, I would like to only mention that the dividing line must be first clearly traced to be then negated and to set off the dialectical progress of this drama, but that it is not always the case; the dichotomy of division (“the division is or is not”) that underlies the dichotomy of ethical dimensions is challenged from the beginning and in every way; the line can become blurred or be otherwise articulated, so as to constitute another starting point for the following process of subjectivation, as is observed in the case of sublimation. This is also the situation of the woman in the setting of courtly love, in which she becomes an object of worship insofar as she is placed in “the field of the Thing, this field onto which is projected something beyond, something at the point of origin of the signifying chain, this place in which doubt is cast on all that is the place of being, on the chosen place in which sublimation occurs” (*Ethics* 264).
love. At the center of Derrida’s investigation we find the notion of *fraternity*, which occupies a similar position to that of loving one’s neighbor. The notion is invoked when the issue is to push further the limit inherent to democracy, namely the need to count votes which presupposes a delimited population, whereas Derrida demonstrates that the appeal for fraternity contains nevertheless hidden limitations concerning gender or genealogy. “Fraternity,” derived from the Latin word *frater* meaning “brother,” implies love between brothers and thus excludes femininity. Derrida also argues that the notion of fraternity in the Greek world presupposed “real kinship” or “reality of the tie of birth,” which was considered to produce “a solid friendship founded on *homogeneity*, on *homophilia*, on a solid and firm affinity (*bébaion*), stemming from birth, from native community” (*Politics* 92).

It follows that, in this setting, the identification of objects worthy of love is something natural, and the dividing line between friends and others is all the more fixed and immovable, since it takes root in reality. However, as Derrida argues by referring to psychoanalysis, the naturalism of friendship is nothing but a “phantasm.” He writes that “a genealogical tie will never be simply real,” and that “its supposed reality never gives itself in any intuition, it is always posed, constructed, induced, it always implies a symbolic effect of discourse” (*Politics* 93). It is “a legal fiction,” to borrow Joyce’s words in *Ulysses*, and this fiction finds its ground in what we call “belief.” In other words, one can observe here a certain “familial” aspect of love, one Derrida calls *fraternization*, which consists in “a renaturalization of this ‘fiction’” (93).

Why is this renaturalization necessary if not due to the fact that the boundary of friendship is constantly shifting, even threatening to disappear, so that it cannot be maintained other than by being anchored to a more solid structure? But then again, why are we in need of this boundary? The Derridian answer to this question is articulated on the basis of the logic of the phobia, or that of the “less terrifying,” to which Melanie Klein had recourse when explaining the origin of the phallic mother, and which Derrida now applies to an analysis of Carl Schmitt. Derrida

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12 Cf. “It is possible to love more than one person, Aristotle seems to concede; to love in number, but not too much so—not too many. It is not the number that is forbidden, nor the more than one, but the numerous, if not the crowd. The measure is given by the act, by the capacity of loving *in act*; for it is not possible to be in act (*energein*), effectively, actively, presently at the heart of this ‘numerous’(*pros pollous*) which is more than simple number (*ou gar oión te òma pros pollous energein*). A finite being could not possibly be present *in act* to too great a number. There is no belonging or friendly community that is *present*, and first present *to itself, in act*, without election and without selection” (Derrida, *Politics* 21).

13 Cf. “I think that the reason why the boy has in the deepest layers of his mind such a
reminds us that Schmitt based the political on the clear distinction between friend and enemy, and that he characterized his own epoch as based on the incertitude of this distinction. Does this incertitude mean that we have lost both friend and enemy? Would this not constitute a political crime, though one which is not “to be defined in the order of the political” (Politics 83), unlike such crimes as assassination, torture or terrorism, namely crimes committed in a given political state for political reasons? Would it not rather be “a crime against the political itself, which puts to death that without which a political crime could no longer be defined or distinguished from other sorts of crimes?” (83). Derrida continues:

Following this hypothesis, losing the enemy would not necessarily be progress, reconciliation, or the opening of an era of peace and human fraternity. It would be worse: an unheard-of violence, the evil of a malice knowing neither measure nor ground, an unleashing incommensurable in its unprecedented—therefore monstrous—forms; a violence in the face of which what is called hostility, war, conflict, enmity, cruelty, even hatred, would regain reassuring and ultimately appeasing contours, because they would be identifiable. The figure of the enemy would then be helpful—precisely as a figure—because of the features which allow it to be identifiable as such, still identical to what has always been determined under this name. An identifiable enemy—that is, one who is reliable to the point of treachery, and thereby familiar. One’s fellow man, in sum, who could almost be loved
tremendous fear of his mother as the castrator, and why he harbours the idea so closely associated with that fear, of the “woman with a penis,” is that he is afraid of her as a person whose body contains his father’s penis; so that ultimately what he is afraid of is his father’s penis incorporated in his mother. The displacement of feelings of hatred and anxiety from the father’s penis to the mother’s body which harbours it is very important, I think, in the origin of mental disorders and is an underlying factor in disturbances of sexual development and in the adoption of a homosexual attitude. This displacement, I think, occurs in this way: the fear of his father’s penis incorporated by his mother is worked over by the well-known mechanism of displacement on to the less disturbing fear of the maternal penis. The fear of the paternal penis incorporated by the mother is so overwhelming, because at this early stage of development the principle of pars pro toto holds good and the penis also represents the father in person. Thus the penis inside the mother represents a combination of father and mother in one person, this combination being regarded as a particularly terrifying and threatening one. As I pointed out earlier, at its period of maximal strength the child’s sadism is centered round coitus between his parents. The death-wishes he feels against them during the primal scene or in his primal phantasies are associated with sadistic phantasies which are extraordinarily rich in content and which involve the sadistic destruction of his parents both singly and together” (Klein, “Early Stages” 131-32).
as oneself: he is acknowledged and recognized against the backdrop of a common history. This adversary would remain a neighbor, even if he were an evil neighbor against whom war would have to be waged. (*Politics* 83)

The aggressivity Derrida is talking about here, which will be released in the absence of the political, reminds us of the one that runs through the works of Sade, and of what Lacan called *méchanceté* or maliciousness proper to the neighbor. To this aggressivity and to “a mobile multiplicity of potential, interchangeable, metonymic enemies” that “some phobia projects” (*Politics* 84), Derrida opposes another aggressivity, less evil and less terrifying, insofar as it is directed towards “an identifiable enemy” and contained within a certain boundary. That is the reason or at least one of the reasons why we demand to set boundaries in our relations to otherness and to distinguish friends from enemies. We find this demand in Schmitt when he claims in *The Concept of the Political* that the figure of the enemy is indispensable for keeping the political alive (50-53). It remains so even though the frontier between friend and enemy might shift and there might be “conversions” between friends and enemies, something which sets off a dialectic of hostility conceived in “a tradition of modernity which . . . goes back at least to Hegel” (*Politics* 83).

**The Theory of the Partisan:**
Tellurization and the Absolutism of Hostility

Of course, there can also be times when we demand the opposite, wanting the dividing line to be disturbed. In military history, this is the case of guerrilla or partisan struggle, to which Carl Schmitt devoted a long analysis in his “The Theory of the Partisan.” Entering history at the time of the Napoleonic Wars in Spain, partisans fight deliberately outside the regular framework set up by sovereign nations, disregarding the division between friendly troops and enemy troops, combatants and noncombatants. In a sense, they willingly assume the position of the neighbor in the Freudo-Lacanian sense, which gives them the great advantage of non-identity in battles, albeit one that they occupy at the risk (*riskant*) of being criminalized and deprived of any legal protection once they are taken captive. This tempts their adversary to satisfy his extreme aggressiveness on them, similar to that which Freud described in “Civilization and its Discontents.”
This situation of a partisan “who no longer respects the normal conditions and the juridically guaranteed boundaries of war” (Politics 138-39), generalized throughout the 20th century and partly regularized by the Geneva Conventions of 1949, does not exclude his tellurian character—one of four criteria that appear in Schmitt’s definition of the partisan, along with irregularity, the intensity of political commitment and increased mobility. Derrida points out here a certain blind spot in Schmitt’s discussion: “He shows no interest in the fact that telluric autochthony is already a reactive response to a delocalization and to a form of tele-technology, whatever its degree of elaboration, its power, or its speed” (Politics 142; italics in original). In fact, Schmitt claims that this tellurian character, this “grounding” of the partisan, is necessary “in order to make spatially evident the defensive character, i.e., the limitation of enmity, and in order to preserve it from the absolutism of an abstract justice” (“The Theory” 13). In other words even the partisan, who seeks to stand radically outside any established delimitations, still needs to be anchored to a very concrete limitation in space. It nevertheless remains possible to observe in this form of struggle a certain absolutism of hostility, one which can be fratricidal and from which no one is exempt, even one’s dearest, as seen in the case of General Salan’s turning against his own government.14

The Place of the Friend to Come: Language

It is true that such a reign of absolute hostility, which might be summarized in the commandment “never divide and hate,” is a bit more realistic than the eschatological vision proposed by Sade. As with Lacan, however, we might tend to doubt whether this is the only course things can take. Here too it is a matter of

14 This is what we can observe in Stalin and in Mao. Derrida argues that “if at last, and in turn, Lenin determines the absolute enemy in a way that is still ‘too abstract and intellectual,’ Stalin, then Mao (‘the greatest practitioner of subversive war’ and ‘most famous theoretician’), know how to provide this same war with its telluric rooting” (Politics 148). However, as he underscores, this “re-tellurization” does not mean a call to order, to the extent that it is the correlative of the fratricidal character of the wars they fought—Tito against Mihailovic, Mao against the Japanese invader (148). Here fraternity does not imply friendship any more. Far from that, “[t]here can be absolute hostility only for a brother.” We find this absolute fratricidal hostility in the case of General Salan, whom Schmitt describes as following: “Salan took the Algerian partisan for the absolute enemy. But all at once, a far worse enemy turned up on his back: his own government, his own commander, his own brother. In his brothers of yesterday he saw, all of a sudden, a new enemy. That is the core of Salan’s case. Yesterday’s brother showed himself to be the more dangerous enemy. In the concept of enmity itself, there must be some confusion associated with the doctrine of war” (“The Theory” 61).
conceiving differently what we called “primary division,” and of finding another “initiation [Anfang]” that would be different from an “origin [Ursprung],” to use the terms of the late Heidegger. Derrida already set out in this direction when he denounced the fiction of a “tie of birth.” This, however, must be situated in the larger perspective of this book on friendship, which is marked from its very beginning by the well-known quote attributed to Aristotle: “O my friends, there is no friend.” With this phrase and also Nietzsche’s, “Enemies, there is no enemy,“ Derrida aims throughout this book to keep the friend in proximity to that intermediate or neutral being whom we have encountered in the form of Lacan’s “neighbor”: once the presence of the friend is affirmed, or even negated, a dividing line is traced that discriminates friend from enemy and launches a dialectical process of antagonism. Thus it is absolutely necessary to find a way of conceiving the absence of division otherwise than by its negation. In order to specify this mode of being, Derrida mobilized a series of philosophemes, such as “perhaps [vielleicht],” “phantom,” “respect” and others, and above all the apostrophe (“O my friends”) that we find explicitly at the beginning of the phrase in question, but which indeed underlies every utterance whatsoever. This apostrophe, in its “performative contradiction,” allows us to maintain the addressee of our utterance beyond the dichotomy of presence and absence. As Derrida puts it:

> When you speak to someone, to a friend or an enemy, does it make any sense to distinguish between his presence or absence? In one respect, I have him come, he is present for me; I presuppose his presence, if only at the end of my sentence, on the other end of the line, at the intentional pole of my allocution. But in another respect, my very sentence simultaneously puts him at a distance or retards his arrival, since it must always ask or presuppose the question ‘are you there?’ (*Politics* 173)

This relation to the addressee holds even in another possible translation of this phrase, which Derrida refers to as “the recoil version,” according to which the initial “ο” of the quote “ο φίλοι” is considered not as vocative but as dative, so that the phrase then means “he for whom there are friends (a plurality or multitude of friends) has no friend” (*Politics* 209). The following passage is important to the

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15 See Derrida, *Politics* 49-74. Derrida claims that this “call to enemy” invented by Nietzsche sets off an interminable conversion from enemy to friend and *vice versa* (59).
extent that here Derrida goes on to argue that the presupposition of the addressee implies what he calls “a minimum of friendship”:

It has often been noted that there is no cut-and-dried reportive utterance. Some “primary” performative value is always presupposed in it . . . Even if, in the recoil version, you stick to the mere assertion of a report . . . , it was indeed necessary that the assertion be addressed and that the address contain some performative force. We do not know to whom Aristotle is said to have said this or that, but it is not only the reader or auditor who is ‘entailed’ by the structure of the utterance. A minimum of friendship or consent must be supposed of them; there must be an appeal to such a minimal consensus if anything at all is to be said. Whether this appeal corresponds, in fact, to a comprehension or an agreement, if only on the meaning of what is said, appears to us secondary with regard to the appeal itself. The appeal is coextensive to the most reportive moment of the report. In short, there is indeed some form of silent interjection, some “O friends” in the recoil version. It rings in the performative space of a call, prior to its very first word. (Politics 214)

In this assertion that a friend is always immanent to language—one which is essentially “anthro-po-logical” in the sense that it seamlessly connects human being and language—as well as in his effort to let the “friend” retain his original status, against both “the appropriating drive” proper to love (Politics 65) and the short circuit between possibility and reality he pointed out in Schmitt (Politics 86), Derrida’s thought parallels Lacan’s reflections from the 1950’s, which, at a time when he was striving to reinvent psychoanalysis, led Lacan to redefine the notion of image in terms of language (cf. Hara, “Du miroir aux Meninas”).

Space of Possible Resonances:
Between “Neighbor” and “Friend”

One can indeed observe in this phase of Lacanian theorization the same opposition between the natural and the historical as the one we encountered in Derrida’s discussion of fraternity. How can we articulate this correspondence in terms of the conceptual framework we have set up? The neighbor as a complex or as a primitive object field should be separated into two fields through a primary
division. In Freud’s “Project for a Scientific Psychology,” these two are the Thing [das Ding] and representations. In “Civilization and its Discontents” we have the neighbor as enemy versus the family as “fellow man” [semblable]. In a way, primary as it is, this division is based on the principle of the Imaginary as a consequence of the delimitation of what is similar to ourselves. As Lacan says, “[w]e are, in effect, at one with everything that depends on the image of the other as our fellow man, on the similarity we have to our ego and to everything that situates us in the imaginary register” (Ethics 241). This would mean that, if the ego were to remain self-identical, the dividing line should be firmly established. However, the ego has no substantial core, as Freud says, because it is itself composed of imagos.

On this point, the Lacanian discussion is twofold. When Lacan talks about the imaginary, referring to ethological observations, Gestalttheorie, and even the mirror stage, the image in question is considered to be biologically anchored to the subject. But this anchorage disappears once the imaginary relation is transposed and redefined in the context of language. Our understanding of the other by way of language is always imaginary, to the extent that we understand what he says in a projective manner, that is, according to the language we speak, and on the basis of the supposition that he is our “fellow man” by virtue of adopting the same language. Nothing seems more “natural” than this “fellowship” by language—but this does not imply its “naturalism,” which would make both the fellow and the enemy natural: the line delimiting and identifying our fellow man is not biologically but institutionally and historically determined. This line could have been different, and so there must have been a moment in which we made a decision, or more precisely, when we were forced to make a decision to be what we are and to define our fellow men and our enemies. In other words, tracing our steps back in the genealogical series of images defined by their similarity, which together compose in fact what we call “ego,” we end up reaching an original point of decision regarding “imaginary” fellowship without any possible reference to a preceding image. Is this a decision in the sense of Carl Schmitt? Is it really the subject who decides when he is forced to do so?

Derrida claims in the foreword to his book that “at the center of the principle, always, the One does violence to itself, and guards itself against the other” (Politics, Foreword ix). He develops this remark more fully in one of the following chapters, where he mentions what he calls “the aporia of the perhaps.” By “perhaps” he means to indicate the dimension of pure possibility which never transmutes into
reality, and which has not yet even attained the status of possibility. But this dimension involves an aporia:

Without the opening of an absolutely undetermined possible, without the radical abeyance and suspense marking a *perhaps*, there would never be either event or decision. Certainly. But nothing takes place and nothing is ever decided without suspending the *perhaps* while keeping its living possibility in living memory. If no decision (ethical, juridical, political) is possible without interrupting determination by engaging oneself in the *perhaps*, on the other hand, the same decision must interrupt the very thing that is its condition of possibility: the *perhaps* itself. In the order of law, politics or morality, what would rules and laws, contracts and institutions indeed be without steadfast (*bébaios*) determination, without calculability and without violence done to the *perhaps*, to the possible that makes them possible? *(Politics 67)*

In other words, decision—derived from *caedere*, meaning “cut”—is marked by an original violence done to that “possibilization of impossible possible” *(Politics 29)*. It takes place in most cases by way of a vivisection of “perhaps.” This agrees with the psychoanalytic vision of subjective origin, in which birth is considered in terms of separation (the birth trauma or the Lacanian “*complexe du sevrage*”) (“*Complexes familiaux*” 30-36). However, is this the only possible relation to “perhaps”? Can we not do otherwise than cruelly treat our friend-to-come, whose intrinsic mode of arrival is “perhaps”? It seems that Derrida challenges a unilaterally “catastrophic” vision of our confrontation with this dimension, which we often come upon in psychoanalytical writings, when he sets, in opposition to Schmitt’s decisionism [*Dezisionismus*] which presupposes “a classical, willful, free subject,” the notion of “passive decision”: a decision without freedom, without

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16 Cf. “[T]he thought of the ‘perhaps’ perhaps engages the only possible thought of the event—of friendship to come and friendship for the future. For to love friendship, it is not enough to know how to bear the other in mourning; one must love the future. And there is no more just category for the future than that of ‘perhaps.’ Such a thought conjoins friendship, the future, and the *perhaps* to open on to the coming of what comes—that is to say, necessarily in the regime of a possible whose possibilization must prevail over the impossible. For a possible that would only be possible (non-impossible), a possible surely and certainly possible, a possible, accessible in advance, would be a poor possible, a futureless possible, a possible already *set aside*, so to speak, life-assured. This would be a program or a causality, a development, a process without an event” *(Politics 29)*.
activity or passivity, but not without responsibility, “an originally affected decision” (*Politics* 68). I quote here a passage which I find crucial for understanding this argument:

In sum, a decision is unconscious—insane as that may seem, it involves the unconscious and nevertheless remains responsible. And we are hereby unfolding the classic concept of decision. It is this act of the act that we are attempting here to think: ‘passive,’ delivered over to the other, suspended over the other’s heartbeat. For a few sentences earlier on, ‘its heartbeat’ had to be necessarily accorded thus: as the heartbeat of the other. Where I am helpless, where I decide what I cannot fail to decide, freely, necessarily, receiving my very life from the heartbeat of the other. We say not only heart but heartbeat: that which, from one instant to another, having come again from an other of the other to whom it is delivered up (and this can be me), this heart receives, it will perhaps receive in a rhythmic pulsation what is called blood, which in turn will receive the force needed to arrive.

The reader will have sensed that this is what I would be tempted to call “lovence”: love in friendship, lovence beyond love and friendship following the determined figures, beyond all this book’s trajectories of reading, beyond all ages, cultures and traditions of loving. (*Politics* 69)

With this notion of lovence [aimance], connoting simultaneously love and magnetism, and thus to be situated “[b]eyond all ulterior frontiers between love and friendship, but also between the passive and active voices, between the loving and the being-loved” (*Politics* 7; see also the footnote there), we find ourselves extremely close to what Lacan tried to think. From the very beginning of his work, when he attempts to found the scientific status of the human psyche, Lacan is led to claim that the desire of the other, in which he saw the core of psychopathological investigation, is in the final analysis a mere “postulate.” The subject never posits this postulate in absolute freedom, but for fear of the complete disorder of his life that would follow the absence of this hypothesis. That is to say, the subject prefers to desire the desire of the other and thus to be capable of knowledge, even uncertain, of the other, rather than to remain at the mercy of the Unknown. This logic at work in the earliest stage of epistemological subjectivation, and baptized by Lacan as the “theory of paranoiac knowledge,” will later be remobilized in his theorization of the
Oedipus complex, where the background of fear is still present (cf. Hara, “Postulat du désir”).

When compared to this Lacanian conceptual framework, the Derridian notion of “lovence” seems to suggest another possibility of articulating this primary joint of passivity and activity. Or more precisely, this notion allows us to situate the Lacanian postulate in a more general context of articulation between passivity and activity without the phobic moment. On the other hand, seen in the light of the Lacanian articulation, the question is how we can conceive the moment of necessity and passivity, immanent to “lovence,” which would not have a background of fear. I would like to conclude by saying that this divergence, which remains in spite of the general correspondence between the conceptual frameworks of Lacan and Derrida, opens up a perspective and a space for fruitful investigations that can keep alive—perhaps—their “stellar friendship.”

Works Cited
About the Author

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