

“Cixous and Derrida -
A faithful *aimance* to come through writing”

Name	Nicoline Simons, 3014185
Supervisor	Birgit Mara Kaiser
Second Reader	Kiene Brillenburg Wurth
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Introduction

Friendship is a question numerous philosophers, like Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Michel de Montaigne, Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Nietzsche, have thought and written about for centuries: about its conditions and possibilities, the difference between *eros* and *philia*, the types of friendships one can have, what it means to mourn a friend, the ethical aspects of friendship, the difference between a friend and an enemy, whether friendship is possible between humans and non-humans and whether this particular word and/or concept exists in every culture and language? These are just some examples of the questions asked in this regard, which show the many points of view from which to look at this issue that seems to resist a univocal and universal definition.

In this thesis, I will, first of all, focus on the philosopher and writer Jacques Derrida as following a line of thinkers who distanced themselves from a 'stable' form of friendship based on brotherhood and likeness, goodwill and mutual recognition of excellence and superiority, in order to imagine a form of friendship that is hospitable to both brother *and* sister, as well as to the 'other' as singular and different. Derrida does so in his work *Politiques de l'Amitié* (1994), translated as *Politics of Friendship* (*PoF*) (1997), in which he interrogates a so-called 'fraternalized' conception of friendship by tracing "the thread of the paradoxes between friendship and politics, to look for a prevailing canonical model which in our culture from the Greeks to now, in Greek culture, in Roman culture, in

Jewish, Christian and Islamic culture, has been dominant, has been prevailing and hegemonic".¹ I will show that, as opposed to this 'fraternalized' form of friendship that values stability, proximity and similarity, Derrida calls for a friendship, an *aimance*, 'to come' that is grounded in faith and lovingly recognizes the friend as different.

Hence, in the first part of this introduction, I will explain why Derrida, in *PoF*, speaks of a 'fraternalized' mode of friendship and politics. In part two of this introduction, I will situate Derrida among the philosophers who started to rethink this 'fraternalized' mode and explain his idea of a faithful and loving friendship to come. In chapter one of this thesis, I will focus on Derrida's *PoF* in order to explain the tradition of 'fraternization' and the new form of friendship that Derrida imagines. In this introduction however, I will concentrate more on other sources, since these sources allow me to situate the traditions of thinking about friendship in a larger historical and philosophical context.

Moreover, in this thesis, I will examine the lifelong friendship between Jacques Derrida and the writer and feminist Hélène Cixous as an example of the new form of friendship that Derrida imagines in *PoF*. After all, as Jewish writers from Algeria, Derrida and Cixous have much in common and yet, they have always laid more emphasis on how they differ, than on what makes them similar. As I will demonstrate in the third part of this introduction, this stress on difference rather than sameness

¹ Derrida, Jacques, "Politics and Friendship: A Discussion with Jacques Derrida," Interview by Geoffrey Bennington, Centre for Modern French Thought, University of Sussex, (December 1, 1997): 3, accessed March 3, 2017, <http://www.oddweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Derrida-Politics-and-Friendship-interview.pdf>.

ties in with Derrida's notions of deconstruction and *différance*, which engenders a 'prophetic' mode of writing, as well as with Cixous's writing practices of *écriture féminine* and writing towards the unknown and the elsewhere. Thus, this is a faithful friendship that passes mostly through writing, voice and text, since, for Derrida and Cixous, this allows an engagement with the friend that maintains and respects the irreconcilable distance, the differences, the breaches between other and other, their respective secrets. Because of the importance of writing, I will examine the lifelong friendship between Derrida and Cixous through the portraits they have written about each other, *H.C. pour la vie, c'est à dire...* (2002) and *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en jeune saint juif* (2001), as well as through a work, *Voiles* (1998), that brings two of their texts into conversation with each other: Cixous's *Savoir* and Derrida's *Un Ver à Soie*. This allows me to demonstrate what binds and separates these friends.

Thus, this thesis consists of one theoretical chapter, in which I will explain the theoretical notions, from Derrida's and Cixous's side, that are relevant regarding their faithful *aimance* to come through writing, and three chapters in which I will focus on the literary texts through which this friendship passes: *H.C. pour la vie* in chapter two, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida* in chapter three and *Voiles* in chapter four. I will use close reading as a method to analyze these texts.

1. A friendship and politics of 'fraternization': the figure of the friend as a brother

In *PoF*, Derrida traces a genealogy of philosophers, writers and other thinkers, who have constructed a form of friendship that imagines friends like brothers, which became the model for a 'fraternized' form of politics, and philosophy, as I will show in chapter one. More precisely, Derrida states that "the model of this friendship is a friendship between two young men, mortals, who have a contract according to which one will survive the other, one will be the heir of the other, and they will agree politically".² Besides fulfilling a function of survival, Derrida wonder why, in many cultures, the figure of the friend "semble spontanément appartenir à une configuration *familiale, fraternaliste* et donc *androcentrée* du politique"³ As John D. Caputo explains, Derrida's main problem in *PoF* is not so much with the actual brother or with natural brotherhood and familial relations as such, yet with the "*generalization* of that model, with the exemplarity of the figure of the brother, which Derrida calls 'fraternization'".⁴ Hence, in *PoF*, Derrida argues that

Le concept du politique s'annonce rarement sans quelque adhérence de l'État à la famille, sans ce que nous appellerons une *schématique* de la filiation : la souche, le genre ou l'espèce, le sexe (*Geschlecht*), le sang, la

² Derrida, "Politics and Friendship," 3.

³ Derrida, Jacques, *Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), 12.

⁴ Caputo, John D., "Who is Derrida's Zarathustra? Of Fraternity, Friendship, and a Democracy to Come," *Research In Phenomenology* 29, no. 1 (August 1999): 188, *Academic Search Premier. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, accessed March 3, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24654822>.

naissance, la nature, la nation - autochtone ou non, tellurique ou non.⁵

In other words, it is the politicization of the figure of the brother as a friend which is "taken as the political model par excellence" that concerns Derrida in this text. After all, this model excludes everyone who does not belong to this model, like women, men of 'inferior' status and foreigners or people without a belonging, whether this is a familial, national, geographical, religious or ethnic one. This is not to say, of course, that there did not exist (traditions of) friendships among or with women or among men of different statuses, yet, as Derrida explains, "there was no voice, no discourse, no possibility of acknowledging these excluded possibilities".⁶

In *PoF*, Derrida traces the tradition of 'fraternization' back to Antiquity, since as "soon as you read the canonical texts in political theory starting with Plato or Aristotle you discover that friendship plays an organising role in the definition of justice, of democracy even".⁷ As Claire Colebrook explains in her article "Friendship, Seduction and Text: Cixous and Derrida" (2008), the Greek *polis* was a "society of brothers as men bonded through a polity made up of familial units, excluding women and slaves and recognising each other *as men* in so far as they are liberated from the labours and captivations of the *oikos*".⁸ In other words, according to Colebrook, in the Greek *polis*, familial relations served as a

⁵ Derrida, *Politiques*, 12-13.

⁶ Derrida, "Politics and Friendship," 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*

model for male citizens to mutually recognize each other, *like* brothers, based on values of similarity, commensurability and equality in terms of property and propriety, thereby excluding women and slaves from the political field.

This mode of friendship is linked to what Patricia Martínez García calls "Aristotelian *philia*", understood as love of the self for who is alike, love for the own species, which, for Aristotle, functioned as a way to maintain a sense of unity and communality among the citizens of the *polis*.⁹ This is not to say, as David Konstan states, that the Greeks were not also "intensely rivalrous", competing "for the same office (*telos*)".¹⁰ However, ideally speaking, "classical friendship provided a locus of personal intimacy as powerful and fulfilling as the love between close kin".¹¹ Hence, this affirms Derrida's idea that one can retrace the figure of the friend who is *like* a brother, like a close family member, to ancient Greece. Thus, at the end of his study, Konstan concludes that friendship, as "an arena of non-compulsory, altruistic sentiment and intercourse between equals" nestles "comfortably within the various ties and obligations towards family, neighbors, demesmen and fellow citizens that defined the social world of the polis".¹² This conclusion aptly summarizes the problems concerning this first mode of friendship, which situates the

⁹ García, Patricia Martínez, "Penser l'autre autrement: communauté, amitié, écriture. Le dialogue impossible: Maurice Blanchot - Louis-René des Forêts," in *L'Etranger tel qu'il(s) écrit*, ed. Ana Clara Santos and José Domingues Almeida (Porto: Universidade do Porto. Faculdade de Letras, 2014), 13, <http://ler.letras.up.pt/uploads/ficheiros/12323.pdf>.

¹⁰ Konstan, David, "The Classical City," in *Friendship in the Classical World, Key Themes in Ancient History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 92, accessed March 5, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511612152.003>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

friend in a tribal society organized by mostly aristocratic familial structures, thereby favoring friendships among equals in terms of ownership and excellence, i.e., among men who are alike and like brothers, thereby ignoring the idea that the friend could be someone who is radically different: a sister, an opponent or someone from outside the border of the *polis*, someone without a place of belonging.

Konstan also argues that, for Aristotle, the loving bond between *philoï*, close friends, involves "altruism, reciprocity, and mutual recognition".¹³ Thus, in Aristotelian *philia*, friends have to mutually recognize each other as such, affection needs to be returned. In *PoF*, Derrida therefore denounces this tendency to inscribe the loving bond between friends into an economy of calculation and exchange by rethinking friendship as a gift, a *don*, that does not require reciprocity. Moreover, from the perspective of reciprocity and mutual recognition, it is difficult, if not impossible to imagine a close friendship with someone who cannot respond, because s/he is, for example, not living anymore. In chapter two and three of this thesis, we will see that Cixous and Derrida, on the contrary, do believe it is possible to continue a faithful *aimance* beyond life or death, which is why they consider the medium of writing or text as essential.

¹³ Konstan, "The Classical City," 69.

2. Rethinking friendship as a way to rethink the relation of other to other

In order to rethink this 'brotherly' form of friendship based on similarity and proximity Derrida adopts, in *PoF*, a notion from his friend Abdelkébir Khatibi, *aimance*, in order to underline the significance of love, difference and separation in friendship. In chapter one, I will take a closer look at this notion. In her article, Colebrook therefore situates Derrida among other twentieth-century thinkers, like Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Antonin Artaud and Michel Foucault, who have reimagined "a friendship that has gone through agonistics" and that "would be beyond calculation, determination, systems and rationalisation".¹⁴ According to Colebrook, this new form of friendship does not take the brother, but the philosophical friend as a figure, who "would be properly recognised as having an existence beyond the seductive lure of like-mindedness and beyond the banal relations of need, mirroring, agreement and common sense".¹⁵ Hence, the figure of the philosophical friend allows friends to recognize each other as radically different from each other, as well as to remain different, to stay an opponent. In this thesis, I will demonstrate that this right to stand apart is also vital for Derrida and Cixous, although the fact that they differ, does not mean that they are not also connected in many ways.

Colebrook states that the desire of the aforementioned thinkers to

¹⁴ Colebrook, Claire, "Friendship, Seduction and Text: Cixous and Derrida," *Angelaki* 13, no. 2 (2008): 109, accessed March 4, 2017, 109, 110, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09697250802432229>.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

imagine a form of friendship that would respect the other's alterity is related to their wish "to imagine a non-Hegelian form of 'relation without relation,' where the self is liberated from its definition through an other (liberated from mastery) and can therefore approach others as *other*".¹⁶ Hence, this shows that rethinking friendship is a vehicle for rethinking the relation of self to other, or, rather, of other to other, which avoids the tendency to start from the perspective of the self. Thus, in chapter one, I will demonstrate that the tradition of 'fraternization', as well as its opposite, the tradition of 'hostilization', that Derrida interrogates in *PoF* is a way to critically explore the history of thinking in terms of similar friends or opposing enemies, in order to move beyond this dichotomy and imagine *inimitié* in friendship and *amitié* in enmity.

According to García, Derrida's notion of alterity is highly inspired by the ideas of Emmanuel Levinas and Maurice Blanchot, who both considered the other as radically different and separated from the self and as someone who refuses assimilation, identification and representation:

Conçu comme séparation, différence, extériorité radical, l'autre est, pour Blanchot comme pour Levinas, ce qui refuse l'assimilation et ne se laisse pas traduire ou reconduire en identité, représenter par analogie ; autrement dit : cela qui se soustrait à la totalisation conceptuelle ou identitaire du discours ontologique.¹⁷

¹⁶ Colebrook, Claire, "Friendship, Seduction and Text," 109.

¹⁷ García, "Penser l'autre," 10.

Thus, this conception of the *wholly* or irreducible other, which Derrida discusses and develops in later texts like *Sauf le nom* (1993), *Spectres de Marx* (1993) and *Le Monolinguisme de l'autre* (1996), starts from separation, irreducible inequality, singularity and strangeness, instead of resemblance, equality, proximity and filiation. According to Thea Bellou, Derrida's ethics of respect and responsibility for the singularity of the other as *wholly* other comes at a time

when Western thought is being accused of Eurocentrism by post-colonial theorists; when identity politics has become implicated in practices of exclusion; and when morality and ethics are being viewed increasingly not in universalistic or proceduralist terms, but through the notion of ambivalence and in relation to our responsibility for the other.¹⁸

Hence, Derrida's ethics of alterity coincides with a more general appeal to the Western world for a more open, hospitable and responsible attitude towards 'others', an attitude that is thus essentially opposed to the aforementioned ancient Greek tradition, as well as to a Hegelian and utilitarian understanding of the other as a necessary 'tool' to identify the self. Moreover, García argues that, by underlining the irreconcilable distance between other and other, Blanchot and Levinas "unsettle the dialogical myth understood by a whole hermeneutic tradition (Gadamer,

¹⁸ Bellou, Thea, "Introduction," in *Derrida's Deconstruction of the Subject: Writing, Self and Other* (New York: Peter Lang AG, 2013), 24, accessed March 5, 2017, *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*.

Heidegger, Habermas) as a producer of unifying consensus".¹⁹ This is to say that, for thinkers like Levinas, Blanchot and Derrida, a dialogue would show the differences and discrepancies between human beings, the unbridgeable gaps and breaches, instead of resulting in a synthesis that aims at finding common ground and nullifying these differences.²⁰

At this point, one might wonder how to develop a loving bond, an intimate friendship, with someone who will always, as Blanchot expresses it, speak "from the other shore"?²¹ According to Caputo, Blanchot's answer to this question would be that it is

the very withdrawal of the friend that draws us out of ourselves toward the friend, in a ceaseless, albeit futile, act of going where we cannot go, in the happy futility of a pursuit that Blanchot calls *le pas au-delà*, the step (*pas*) beyond I can not (*pas*) take, the 'passage' that is always made and always blocked.²²

Derrida adopts this idea of withdrawal or *retrait*, of longing for and moving towards the impossible, which is what drives his main argument in *PoF* of a democracy and a friendship 'to come', that is, to come *structurally*. This is to say that Derrida does not consider friendship as a given, as something that is *present*, but as something to arrive, an event, an impossibility that might happen in the future, making its discourse one

¹⁹ García, "Penser l'autre," 10.

²⁰ Ibid., 10-11.

²¹ Caputo, "Who is Derrida's," 196.

²² Ibid.

of promise, expectation and prayer.²³ In chapter two and three, I will show how the idea that the friend is someone who will continue to arrive, manifests itself in the portraits Derrida and Cixous have written about each other.

Because of the uncertainty that this friendship 'to come' entails and the faith that it requires, Caputo argues that the eyes that might, some day, welcome the event of friendship are not 'seeing' eyes, "but the eyes of faith, eyes blinded by praying and weeping for an impossible friendship to come".²⁴ In chapter 1.2.2., I will therefore link *PoF* to an earlier text of Derrida, *Mémoires d'aveugle: l'autoportrait et autres ruines* (1990), in which he focuses on drawings of blind men in order to defend an ethics of blindness and tears. Through this ethics of blindness and tears, Derrida asks one to see differently, which is something he shares with Cixous, as I will explain in chapter 1.3. and chapter 4.

Derrida's appeal for 'faith' and his 'prayer' for a friendship to come might sound rather 'religious'. Yet, Caputo stresses that, for Derrida, having faith in God's coming, in God "as the specter of what is to come", in the arrival of the Messiah, means to have faith in a justice to come.²⁵ In other words, for Derrida, notions like religion, community and relation follow the "logic of the *sans* - of the 'relation without relation' (Levinas), 'community without community' (Blanchot), and even of religion without

²³ Caputo, "Who is Derrida's," 190.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Caputo, John D., "Apostles of the Impossible On God and the Gift in Derrida and Marion," in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, ed. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 199-200, accessed March 5, 2017, *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*.

religion' (*The Gift of Death*)".²⁶ This is to say that Derrida asks to have an absolute belief in what might happen, yet without the security of an already existing relation (like the family), without a community with walls to include or exclude, without a religion with institutions that each claim to possess the 'ultimate truth', to know *the* way to God. In chapter one, I will show that Derrida's prayer for a faithful friendship to come is his response to the stability and security that a 'fraternalized' form of friendship asks for. Moreover, I will link his appeal to live with the uncertainty of what *might* come to his call for another form of politics and philosophy that is hospitable to what is unknown, uncertain and changeable.

3. A faithful friendship to come through writing

As I have remarked at the beginning of this introduction, the idea of a loving and faithful friendship to come through writing ties in with Derrida's and Cixous's ideas on writing. From Derrida's side, his notion of *arche-écriture* or 'proto-writing' corresponds to the idea of a friendship to arrive, because it sets in motion a similar 'prophetic' movement, since "the written is possible only on account of this 'originary' deferral of meaning", entailed by "the breach that the written introduces between what is intended to be conveyed and what is actually conveyed".²⁷ In other words, there is a limit to what language can transfer, can communicate;

²⁶ Caputo, "Who is Derrida's," 187.

²⁷ Reynolds, Jack, "Jacques Derrida (1930–2004)," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed April 06, 2017. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/derrida/#SH3a>.

there will always remain some gap to fill in, an opening that evokes wonder and confuses, raises another question, thereby deferring meaning. From the perspective of Derrida's aforementioned later texts, it is this 'originary' breach that protects the secret of the *wholly* other, who has developed a singular idiom, a 'monolingualism', which does not, however, fully transfer or represent his or her singularity, nor can it be completely understood, that is to say assimilated, by another. In chapter 1.3, I will elaborate on why Derrida's ideas on writing and deferral allows for a faithful *aimance* to come through writing.

From Cixous's side, the movement towards what has not happened or is unlikely to happen, towards the future, the impossible and the unknown, i.e. other places, other people, other selves, is also what motivates her writing. In this respect, in her essay "Coming to writing" (1991), she states that everything begins with "a face, with all the mysteries inscribed and preserved on it", which evokes "the feeling that the other is there, so close, exists, so far away; the feeling that somewhere, in some part of the world once it is through the door, there is the face that promises, the answer for which one continues to move onward".²⁸ Thus, for Cixous, the face is a surface that invites the one who looks at it to keep interrogating, to continue looking for new aspects, to read it again, endlessly, which is why she argues that "The flesh is writing, and writing is never read: it always remains to be read, studied,

²⁸ Cixous, Hélène, "Coming to Writing," in "Coming to Writing" and Other Essays, ed. Deborah Jenson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 1.

sought, invented".²⁹

Regarding the notion of movement, Elizabeth Anderson argues that the functions of place and movement in Cixous' work inhere within her understanding of writing, which Anderson calls a "sanctuary that moves".³⁰ According to Anderson, "language becomes a sanctuary for Cixous", a holy place and refuge, yet these refuges "are not closed spaces, but are open to the movements of writing towards the future".³¹ However, as Anderson shows, the idea that this sanctuary is located in language is also reversed by Cixous, when she writes in *Stigmata* (1998): "But god, I say, is the phantom of writing, it is her pretext and her promise. God is the name of all that has not yet been said".³² Hence, coming both from a Jewish background that they inscribe and transform in their writings, Cixous and Derrida link their faith in and openness towards the future to the arrival of God or the Messiah to come, although the latter's future is one of justice, while Cixous, as a literary writer, seems more driven by the arrival of the unsaid, the unseen or the unimagined.

Anderson also links the importance of movement in Cixous' work to her sense of belonging as one of "continual departure and non-arrival".³³ This, of course, needs to be understood in the context of her departure from Algeria and France as a country in which she never arrived, an

²⁹ Cixous, "Coming to Writing," 24.

³⁰ Anderson, Elizabeth, "Writing as Sanctuary: Place, Movement and the Sacred in the Work of Hélène Cixous," *Literature and Theology* 27, no. 3 (2013): 364, accessed April 6, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/litthe/frt004>.

³¹ Ibid., 375.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 376.

experience she describes in the essay 'My Algeriance'.³⁴ It is this sense of dislocation or displacement, as well as the experience of expulsion by the Vichy regime that Derrida and Cixous, as Jewish writers from Algeria, share. Although their origins and linguistic background differ (Derrida has Sephardic roots and considers French as his sole linguistic *habitat*, whereas Cixous also has Ashkenazi origins and reads and writes in several languages) and they come from different intellectual backgrounds, they share what Cixous calls "'*nos blessures*, 'ournoblewounds': wounds [*blessures*], but ours [*nos*] (...). We have been able to understand each other to the tenth of a word, because the work of stigmatization, of the scar, was originally inscribed in the life-book of both of us".³⁵ This is why Cixous, in *Rootprints*, writes that they "are from the same garden", thereby alluding to, according to Derrida, "the Jardin d'Essai", a botanical park in Algiers which "represents a sort of paradise lost".³⁶ Thus, Derrida and Cixous do not acknowledge each other's excellence or superiority, thereby following the Greco-Jewish-Christian tradition of brotherhood, but rather recognize a shared sense of vulnerability and wounding related to a violent (post)colonial past of migration, displacement and exclusion. In chapter three, I will show that these wounds continue to return in Cixous's portrait of Derrida, as well as the wounds or markings brought about by the rituals of circumcision and the tallit.

³⁴ Anderson, "Writing as Sanctuary" 366.

³⁵ Armel, Alette, Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous and Ashley Thompson et. al., "From the Word to Life: A Dialogue between Jacques Derrida and Helene Cixous," *New Literary History* 37, no. 1 (2006): 5, accessed April 6, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20057924>.

³⁶ Ibid.

Prior research has not yet focused on the particular question of a faithful friendship to come through writing by looking at the loving bond between Cixous and Derrida. This is to say that, in his article, Caputo does not discuss the role that writing, or the specific notion of *arche-écriture*, might play in a friendship that projects itself into the future through text and voice. He does discuss the relation between faith, the promise and writing in his book *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida : Religion Without Religion* (1997), yet this study does not connect these issues to the question of friendship or to the friendship between Cixous and Derrida. Although Colebrook does concentrate on the loving bond between Derrida and Cixous as a 'new' form of friendship that goes beyond the friend as the rival or the brother, her approach results in a new gendered 'coupling'. This is to say that, for Colebrook, Cixous "Coupled to Derrida" is "presented as both one who enables Derrida to liberate himself from a band of brothers (a philosophy that must be overcome by a more open literature) and as one who returns herself, in her own writings, to the family".³⁷ In other words, according to Colebrook, Derrida has been able to free himself from philosophy's objective of truth claiming via the path of literature, 'seductive' theory, and through Cixous as a woman. Colebrook considers this development as the "becoming-woman of the philosopher" or a "becoming-writer through the reception of

³⁷ Colebrook, "Friendship, Seduction and Text," 122.

voices” and the formation of a “purely fictional I”.³⁸ Instead of translating the friendship between Cixous and Derrida into yet another gendered binary, I will take a closer look at how their respective views on writing and text foster a faithful and intimate friendship that leaves space for the other’s singularity, while, at the same time, allowing for a different kind of recognition and sense of security.

In their writings about each other and their friendship, Cixous and Derrida have a tendency to foreground their differences, instead of their common grounds, which makes sense from the ethics of singularity. Yet, it is also interesting to start from what separates them in order to look closer at what they share, at what draws them to each other: how to comprehend Derrida’s remark that “Hélène reads me in an incomparable manner. She immediately finds the best access, the most secret, to the forge and to the form, to the meaning and unconscious body of what I write”.³⁹ Or to wonder what Cixous means when she says “From the beginning, what I have *seen* is his language, in which I knew my thought could wander”.⁴⁰ Cixous has spoken and written frequently about the first time she heard Derrida’s voice, while he performed the oral part of the *agrégation de philosophie* at the Sorbonne.⁴¹ She describes this as a moment of non-seeing,

a primal scene *par excellence*, which has marked the whole weaving of

³⁸ Colebrook, “Friendship, Seduction and Text,” 121.

³⁹ Derrida, “From the word,” 4.

⁴⁰ Cixous, “From the word,” 3.

⁴¹ Ibid.

the rapport between us. A rapport of absolute confidence, of unbounded friendship, which passed principally through the voice, through the text. We trusted each other with our eyes closed!⁴²

Hence, through this quote, the question of confidence, of trust and faith returns, since Cixous is speaking of an absolute confidence between them, the ability to trust each other with their eyes closed, and the text as a medium through which this absolute trust passes. Moreover, one might wonder how to relate this seemingly 'immediate' sense of confidence to Derrida's idea that friendship is not a given, but something to arrive, something that requires a time of stabilization in order to become stable and secured? And, of course, how the text as a medium of rupture and distance can also be a place of confidence, intimacy, trust and faith?

These questions are significant to those who wish to rethink or reimagine a more ethical way of relating: how to become close and intimate with someone, while also keeping a distance in order to let the other be, how to develop faithful relations of trust and confidence, to feel secured and safe, (*geborgen*), in a loving bond that is open towards the future, towards change? Thus, what interests me, is that Cixous and Derrida seem to be able to develop a loving and faithful friendship through the text, by writing in a singular *langage* and 'wandering' in the

⁴² Michaud, Ginette, "Derrida & Cixous: Scenes of Hyperreading (...and something else)," *Parallax* 13, no. 3 (2007): 65. doi: 10.1080/13534640701433626, accessed April 6, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13534640701433626>.

monolingualism of the friend, which allows them to feel secured, *geborgen*, to share the same garden, as well as to feel free to diverge, to fly.

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Chapter 1 A faithful *aimance* to come through writing

1.1. Why a *politics* of friendship?

Before focusing on the main topic of this thesis, the question of a faithful friendship through writing, voice or text, it is important to pursue in greater depth why Derrida addresses friendship as a political issue, how the loving bond between friends, usually regarded as something belonging to the sphere of the personal, the private, the intimate, becomes the model for a 'fraternalized' form of politics? Or, to put it in a slightly different way: how and why does Derrida, in this work, connect two spheres, friendship and politics, that are not often discussed or analysed in relation to one another?

As explained in the introduction, in *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida deconstructs, what he calls, a 'fraternalized' mode of friendship and politics by interrogating the works of philosophers who created, followed or are in some way influenced by the tradition that politicizes the figure of the brother as a friend. Instead, he proposes both another form of politics and another kind of friendship, a 'democracy to come' and a 'friendship to come', two notions that are based on a strong and comparable ethical demand and that share a 'messianic', future-oriented structure. In order to understand why Derrida examines this all too close relation between politics, democracy and friendship and why he argues that having faith in

the promise, in what might come or arrive is essential to both politics and friendship, I will start with the question 'why a *politics* of friendship' and discuss this in relation to its opposite, the idea of a '*politics* of hostility'. Moreover, I will show how Derrida denounces the position, or rather non-position and absence, of the feminine in both these traditions. In the second part of this chapter, I will move to the notion of a loving bond through blind faith, while I will focus, in the third part, on why Derrida and Cixous consider writing as the most appropriate medium for this faithful bond to pass through.

1.1.1. A politics of friendship versus a politics of hostility

In a discussion with Geoffrey Bennington on behalf of the Centre for Modern French Thought (1997), Derrida states that he did not write *PoF* to draw up a political theory or meet the demand for a deconstructive politics, but "to try with others to re-think what the political is, what is involved precisely in the dissemination of the political field".⁴³ For, according to Derrida, as "soon as you read the canonical texts in political theory starting with Plato or Aristotle you discover that friendship plays an organising role in the definition of justice, of democracy even".⁴⁴

Concerning the definition of justice, he reads and comments multiple examples to support this argument, for instance, when he cites Aristotle's

⁴³ Derrida, Jacques, "Politics and Friendship: A Discussion with Jacques Derrida," Interview by Geoffrey Bennington, Centre for Modern French Thought, University of Sussex, (December 1, 1997): 2, accessed April 28, 2017, <http://www.oddweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Derrida-Politics-and-Friendship-interview.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3.

proposition to place friendship above law and politics, based on the idea that this particular tie would be more just than justice itself, after all “Quand les hommes ont amis il n’y a plus besoin de justice, tandis que s’ils se contentent d’être justes ils ont en outre besoin de l’amitié, et la plus haute expression de la justice est, dans l’opinion générale, de la nature de l’amitié”.⁴⁵ In other words, from Aristotle’s point of view, there is no need for justice if all men would be friends, that is to say act justly, fairly, virtuously towards one another. Derrida notes that this makes friendship a form of justice beyond justice, “Justice au-delà de la justice”, and links this to Jules Michelet’s idea of fraternity as “droit par-dessus le droit”.⁴⁶ Hence, there seems to be question of a paradox regarding the figure of the friend as a brother, because this figure is both constitutive of and superior to the political. Derrida subsequently argues that in all forms of government or constitution, whether one looks at a monarchy, aristocracy, timocracy, republic or democracy, “on voit apparaître une forme d’amitié coextensive aux rapports de justice”.⁴⁷ This constitutes one of the examples of how Derrida, in *PoF*, leaps from Greek Antiquity into nineteenth century France in order to make his general claim, to create a genealogy of thinkers who advocated, what he calls, a fraternalized form of friendship, with its values of reciprocity, equality, likeness and commensurability, as a (transcendent) basis for law, justice and democracy.

⁴⁵ Derrida, Jacques, *Politiques de l’amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), 309.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Regarding the question of democracy, he also argues against a brotherly, canonical and 'phallogocentric' form, in which the rights to equality, freedom and justice depend on citizenship and borders, on who is included and excluded from the borders of the nation-state. In this respect, he notes:

From the beginning, democracy has been associated with values, with axioms, which belong to this canonical concept of friendship: that is brotherhood, family, roots in a territory (autochthony), the nation-state depending on a territory, soil and place, and so on.⁴⁸

This is why he argues that in both democracy and friendship, "even in classical friendship, what is involved is reciprocity, equality, symmetry"; in other words, the tendency, in democracies, to grant rights merely to those of similar, 'familial' roots, belonging to the same territory, can be retraced to a mode of friendship that considers the friend as alike, as a brother, as familial.⁴⁹ In order to retrace the history of this brotherly mode of friendship, he starts by discussing two classical philosophers, Cicero and Aristotle, who are more on the side of the same, than on that of the other. He criticizes Cicero for projecting or recognizing "dans l'ami vrai son *exemplar*, son double idéal, son autre soi-même, le même que soi en mieux".⁵⁰ This notion of the true friend as an exemplary, ideal, bettered version of the self is why Derrida speaks of a narcissistic form of

⁴⁸ Derrida, "Politics and friendship," 4.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Derrida, *Politiques*, 20.

friendship that becomes “la condition même de la survie,” a friendship that “projette son espoir au-delà de la vie”.⁵¹ To put it differently, what this self-centred friendship promises is the survival, the reproduction of the self through the friend, who will protect the heritage of the departed. In this respect, Irving Goh sharply remarks that Cicero’s idea of friendship thus entails a perverted longing for one’s own death, “because it is only then that the friend’s work of mourning, where the friend remembers and embellishes the life and work of the self, can possibly be set in motion”.⁵²

As Goh notes, where Cicero is concerned with the death and the survival of the self, Aristotle focuses more on the death of the other, “that is, the beloved friend”.⁵³ More precisely, according to Derrida, friendship, knowledge, death and survival are all inscribed into the same configuration in Aristotle’s work *Eudemian Ethics*.⁵⁴ This is to say that, for Aristotle, it is more important to love than to be loved. Derrida notes that Aristotle’s argument for this idea seems simple: “il est possible d’être aimé (voix passive) *sans le savoir*, mais il est impossible d’aimer (voix active) *sans le savoir*”.⁵⁵ Thus, it is more important to love, since the subject who actively loves, *knows* this, while the object of affection might not *know* that s/he is being loved. As the italicized parts indicate, Derrida’s problem is with Aristotle’s emphasis on the significance of an active voice that knows, which is *naturally* preferable and superior to the

⁵¹ Derrida, *Politiques*, 20.

⁵² Goh, Irving, “Rejecting Friendship: Toward a Radical Reading of Derrida’s *Politics of Friendship* for Today,” *Cultural Critique* 79 (Fall 2011): 102, accessed April 28, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/culturalcritique.79.2011.0094>.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Derrida, *Politiques*, 23.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 25.

passive voice, the object, who might be ignorant of the fact that it is being loved. As Goh notes, Derrida argues that this objectification of the beloved friend, therefore, "announces his or her death, even though the beloved friend is not yet dying or dead": s/he is being loved regardless of whether s/he knows it or wants to receive it and thus "the other can be presumed to be inanimate or else already dead".⁵⁶ Derrida notes, in this respect, that, since the beloved friend is not necessarily a living and willing creature, s/he "portait la mort dans son être-aimé, à même son être-aimable, dans la portée de la référence à son être-aimé même".⁵⁷ Hence, both Cicero's and Aristotle's friends are inheritors, survivors who protect and continue the legacy of the self, although Cicero's 'self' would long for his own death in order to be remembered by his friend, while Aristotle's friend carries death within its own being, since s/he is the inferior and possibly inanimate part of the binary opposition of 'to love/being loved'. Derrida remarks that this opposition is inconsistent with Aristotle's appraisal of symmetry and reciprocity in friendship, yet the dissymmetry is, in a way, balanced through heritage, because the friend who carries and inherits my death becomes the next survivor, who will have a friend who carries and inherits his death.⁵⁸ However, Derrida argues that Aristotle's stress on the importance of actively loving the friend, who could be death or inanimate, also allows for the ultimate possibility of *philia*, that is, to imagine the limit or absence of a horizon of

⁵⁶ Goh, "Rejecting Friendship," 102.

⁵⁷ Derrida, *Politiques*, 29.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

a loving friendship.⁵⁹ After all, "Je ne pourrais pas aimer d'amitié sans m'engager, *sans me sentir d'avance engagé à aimer l'autre par-delà la mort. Donc par-delà de la vie.*"⁶⁰ In other words, Derrida also turns Aristotle's argument into a different direction, which makes it not only possible, but necessary to love the other beyond his or her death, to love the living friend, knowing that s/he will pass, whether this would be an actual passing away or a passing, a crossing to an other side, a choice to stand apart, to divert from the friend. In chapter two and three, I will come back to the idea of continuing to love the friend, or other deceased loved ones, beyond death, while analyzing *H.C. pour la vie, c'est à dire...* and *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en jeune saint juif*.

Nevertheless, generally speaking, Cicero's narcissistic form of friendship and Aristotle's binary pair of 'to love/being loved' are both caught up in a struggle for survival, thereby moving in an entirely different direction than Derrida's ethics of singularity and separation. In order to go beyond the difference between a passive and an active voice, between loving and being loved, and, in fact, to pass the very distinction between friendship and love, *philia* and *eros*, Derrida introduces, what he calls, a third or a first way: "*l'aimance*".⁶¹ In a footnote, he remarks that he borrowed this neologism from a friend that he admires: the Moroccan writer and sociologue Abdelkebir Khatibi.⁶² For Derrida, *l'aimance* constitutes "*l'amour dans l'amitié, l'aimance au-delà de l'amour et de*

⁵⁹ Derrida, *Politiques*, 29.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 23.

⁶² Ibid.

l'amitié selon leurs figures déterminés, par-delà tous les trajets de lecture de ce livre, par-delà toutes les époques, cultures ou traditions de l'aimer".⁶³ Thus, through this notion, Derrida expresses his desire to imagine a tie or a connection that is, first and foremost, loving and that, maybe, shouldn't immediately be given a name, one name, like *amitié*, thereby modelling it on a familiar figure, but should be characterized on its own terms, after a while. Because of this significance of *amour* and *aimer* in *amitié*, it might be better to speak of an *aimi(e)*, than an *ami(e)* in the case of the writing *aimance* between Cixous and Derrida. In part 1.1.3., I will show how Derrida's penchant for imagining new concepts that do justice to the singularity of a person, a situation or a bond, is related to his idea of the promise of a friendship to come.

Another problem with a democratic understanding of equality is the fact that it is "an equality which can be calculated, countable: you count the number of units, of voters, of voices of citizens".⁶⁴ In this respect, Derrida shows that the question of the number is also an issue in philosophical writings about friendship. One of the examples he cites comes from Cicero's *Laelius de Amicitia*, in which the latter speaks of true and perfect friendship "telle que l'ont connue les rares personnages que l'on cite (*qualis eorum, qui pauci nominantur, fuit*)".⁶⁵ As we will see, in the work of Aristotle and Montaigne, one finds the same idea that a perfect friendship is rare and unique. To return to the link with politics,

⁶³ Derrida, *Politiques*, 88.

⁶⁴ Derrida, "Politics and friendship," 4.

⁶⁵ Derrida, *Politiques*, 19.

Derrida argues that a democratic understanding of equality, like friendship, involves numbers, a majority versus minorities and processes of selection and exclusion. Moreover, speaking from the ethical point of view of singularity, he argues that “you have to reconcile this demand for equality with the demand for singularity, with respect for the Other as singular, and that is an aporia”.⁶⁶ In other words, there is a seemingly unresolvable tension between the democratic principle that all citizens are equal, in the sense that they have equal rights and obligations, and Derrida’s understanding of an other as radically other, singular and separated from other human beings.

However, from a deconstructionist point of view, Derrida is not merely interested in how friendship as a bond of goodwill and symmetry, consensus and reciprocity becomes political or fraternal; he also looks on the opposite side of *amitié*, tracing the thinkings of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche and Carl Schmitt, who politicize and fraternalize *inimitié* or hostility, even absolute hostility. Derrida discusses Nietzsche as a philosopher who, in his work *Menschliches Allzumenschliches* (1878), announces the possible arrival of ‘new philosophers,’ that is, of those who will break with the Greek and Christian canon of friendship, and with that, also with a certain politics and a certain type of democracy.⁶⁷ To put it more concretely, these new philosophers do not strive for a politics and a friendship of consensus, similarity and reciprocity, but accept and even prefer the enemy over the

⁶⁶ Derrida, “Politics and friendship,” 4.

⁶⁷ Derrida, *Politiques*, 52.

friend, opposition, distance and *inimitié* over agreement and proximity. In chapter 1.1.3, I will discuss in more detail how Derrida uses and adapts Nietzsche's defend of the enemy, in order to open up a possible future for another kind of friendship, philosophy and politics.

Besides Nietzsche, Derrida pays particular attention to the philosophical work of Schmitt, which he inscribes into the same tradition of sympathy for the adversary, or rather, of the necessity of the enemy. After all, for Schmitt, "l'être-politique du politique surgisse, dans sa possibilité, avec la figure de l'ennemi".⁶⁸ As Derrida explains, Schmitt's idea that the political rises, comes into being thanks to the existence of enemies and war, is based on his assumption that the specific political distinction, "(die spezifisch politische Unterscheidung)", can be traced back to the difference between the friend and the enemy "(die Unterscheidung von Freund und Feind)".⁶⁹ Schmitt focuses on the enemy rather than on the friend, since one can only know what a friend is in relation to his opposite.⁷⁰ Derrida stresses that Schmitt's reasoning is, thus, based on "une opposition déterminée, l'opposition même": what his determination supposes is precisely the logic of opposition.⁷¹ From his desire to deconstruct, to go beyond a binary way of thinking, Derrida notes that he wishes to move to "the possibility of an experience of friendship before or outside of this oppositional or 'polemological' logic,

⁶⁸ Derrida, *Politiques*, 104.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

and thus also of the purity that this logic seems to demand".⁷² He animates this possibility with his notion of a democracy and a friendship to come, to which I will return later. Derrida states that Schmitt's emphasis on the significance of the enemy is a result of his fear of depoliticization, which the latter considers to be an essential risk for modern humanity, who would ignore the figure of the enemy.⁷³ In his work *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt describes the stages of, what he calls, neutralization and depoliticization, thereby observing a shift that took place during the seventeenth century "from the traditional Christian theology to 'natural' science".⁷⁴ He argues that at the basis of this shift "lies an elemental impulse that has been decisive for centuries, i.e., the striving for a neutral domain", a domain "in which there would be no conflict and they [Europeans] could reach common agreement through the debates and exchanges of opinion".⁷⁵ When it comes to contemporary societies, Schmitt claims that they have adopted technology as "the absolute and ultimate neutral ground".⁷⁶ Although Schmitt seems close to Derrida in the sense that both thinkers stress the importance of negativity, opposition and antagonism in an age of technology, technocratization and neutralization of difference, Derrida distances himself from Schmitt, since the latter "ne définit pas tant le politique par

⁷² Derrida, Jacques, "Politics of Friendship," *American Imago* 50, no. 3 (Fall 1993): 375. Extracted from *PCI Full text*, published by ProQuest Information and Learning Company, accessed April 30, 2017, <http://www.istud.it/newsletter/san/derrida.pdf>.

⁷³ Derrida, *Politiques*, 104.

⁷⁴ Schmitt, Carl, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 89.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 90.

la négation oppositionnelle qu'il ne le définit cette dernière par le politique".⁷⁷ Hence, where the line of Aristotle, Christian brotherhood and the French democratic and secular tradition of *fraternité* used friendship and brotherhood as vehicles to define and organize the political, Derrida criticizes Schmitt for doing the exact opposite: politicizing the enemy, oppositional negation, antagonism, which are defined solely in political and utilitarian terms, as means to protect the political sphere from neutralization.

Up until this point, I have demonstrated why and how Derrida, in *PoF*, deconstructs the tradition of politicizing the friend as a brother, thus, as similar, familiar and close, a tradition he situates in ancient Greek philosophy: in Cicero's notion of the friend as the ideal self and in Aristotle's preference of loving over being loved, both of which manifest a strong longing for the friend's death rather than a loving recognition of him or her as a singular living being. I have also discussed the other tradition that Derrida interrogates in *PoF*: the practice of politicizing the enemy and the opposite of friendship, *inimitié*, which he associates with Hegelian negativity and dialectics and with Nietzsche's call for the foe and the new philosophers to come. In chapter 1.1.3., I will take a closer look at Nietzsche's appeal. Regarding the friendship between Cixous and Derrida, the latter's interest in the enemy is not to say that he would prefer hostility or war over love or *aimance*, rather that he allows for a certain *inimitié* or disagreement to colour a friendship, for differences to

⁷⁷ Derrida, *Politiques*, 160.

be recognized in a *loving* way. At the end of this chapter, I will show that Derrida shares this love and respect for the other as different and distinct with Cixous. In the coming three chapters, I will show in which way the texts they wrote about each other and in co-creation with one another lovingly portray the other's differences and characteristics.

1.1.2. Fraternization, 'hostilization' and the double exclusion of women

Besides this point of criticism, Derrida problematizes the fact that both these historical traditions, the 'politics of friendship' and the 'politics of hostility', have ignored and silenced women. He speaks, in this respect, of the 'double exclusion' of women, "qu'on voit à l'oeuvre dans tous les grands discours éthico-politico-philosophiques sur l'amitié, à savoir d'une part l'exclusion de l'amitié entre femmes, d'autre part l'exclusion de l'amitié entre un homme et une femme".⁷⁸ This historical double exclusion of friendships among women and between men and women is an important point, because it shows that friendship is not only a politicized notion used by statesmen and philosophers to include the friends who are close and familiar and exclude those of foreign and unknown origins; it is also a gendered concept that has been purified of women and the feminine. In this respect, Derrida discusses Michel de Montaigne as an example of how male philosophers have banished women and the qualities and institutions (marriage) associated with the 'feminine' from

⁷⁸ Derrida, *Politiques*, 310.

amitié. Derrida devotes an entire chapter to Michel de Montaigne, who writes in his famous essay on friendship that “*Celui qui m’accompagne, si c’est un ami pour l’ami que je suis, c’est un homme*”.⁷⁹ Derrida shows how Montaigne’s choice to be accompanied exclusively by a male friend derives from his concept of *amitié*, which is influenced by Aristotle’s idea of “l’ami comme une seule âme (singularité) mais en deux corps (duplicité)”.⁸⁰ According to Derrida, Montaigne cultivates this strange “double singularity” of one soul in two singular bodies by imagining the most divine form of friendship as perfect, indivisible, sovereign and exemplary, like the one he had with the humanist writer and poet Étienne de la Boétie.⁸¹ Montaigne considered neither marriage, nor women in general to be suited for this sovereign and indivisible bond, since he regarded the first as “un libre marché (...) un marché sans immanence, sans autonomie et sans le désintéressement qui sied à l’amitié”.⁸² In other words, for Montaigne, marriage is a contract of commercial interest and commerce and financial gain are not in accordance with the disinterestedness that suits friendship. However, for the sixteenth century philosopher, the female soul poses an even bigger challenge to a perfect and solid friendship, since it “ne semble assez ferme pour soutenir l’estreinte d’un noeud si pressé et si durable”.⁸³ Besides the female soul that he judges to be too weak and fickle, Montaigne remarks that in a

⁷⁹ Derrida, *Politiques*, 205.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 203.

⁸¹ Ibid., 203, 204.

⁸² Ibid., 205. (footnote)

⁸³ Ibid.

male-female friendship the soul as well as the body are involved, which makes this bond “plus pleine et plus comble”, more full and more overfull, packed, crammed.⁸⁴ Thus, Derrida notes that Montaigne, in this way, not only moves away from the possibility of a friendly, loving and nonsexual bond between a man and a woman, but excludes any ‘divine’ tie “qui n’unisse pas deux hommes, deux ‘compagnons’ dans la *figure* ou le *serment* des frères, sinon dans la fraternité dite naturelle”.⁸⁵ This is why Derrida inscribes Montaigne into the classical heritage of fraternization, of thinking in terms of the superiority of two men who are united as brothers, either by vow and affiliation or by natural brotherhood. From a larger perspective, Derrida’s critical interrogation of Montaigne’s gendered conception of *amitié* shows that rethinking this fraternalized form of friendship also means to include women and everything that has been associated with the ‘feminine’ for centuries in friendship, that is, everything that has been excluded from the category of the ‘masculine’, like fickleness and instability (or a certain openness to change and movement, to flight?) and weakness (or vulnerability, having the courage to be affected?). In chapter 1.3.2., we will see that the positive translations between brackets are inspired by Hélène Cixous, yet, contrary to Cixous, I do not think that it is easier for women to develop these qualities. After all, ascribing fickleness and weakness to the feminine in order to force a stable, solid and virile ‘masculine’ identity is not to say that the rejected features are in any way essentially ‘feminine’

⁸⁴ Derrida, *Politiques*, 205.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

or can be related to the female body. I will return to this issue in chapter 1.3.2. Moreover, we will see that the involvement of the body that Montaigne fears and despises becomes one of the essential elements in the writing loving bond between Cixous and Derrida, who write and share the joy, excitement, pain and grief experienced by their bodies.

According to Derrida, Montaigne's essay on friendship not only celebrates male friendships, but also politicizes the figure of the friend as a brother. Or, more precisely, in "*De l'Amitié*", one finds a comparable tension between the political and the apolitical, a paradox that we have already encountered in the thinkings of Aristotle and Michelet. That is to say, on the one hand, Montaigne argues that this unique and superior friendship is apolitical, i.e. transcends politics, law and justice, yet, on the other hand, Derrida notes that friendship becomes political once one supposes reason and virtue *a priori* to the friend.⁸⁶ After all, he argues, reason and virtue belong to the sphere of *res publica* and one cannot "penser une raison vertueuse ou une vertu rationnelle qui ne soit dans son essence homogène à la meilleure raison d'État".⁸⁷ Hence, Derrida states that the friends of which Montaigne speaks are citizens, citizens in the sense that they are men of virile virtue and one tends to harmonize this manly virtue with the reason of friendship, as well as with the reason of an imperative State.⁸⁸ Thus, according to Derrida, Montaigne continues the legacy of politicizing the figure of the friend as a brother, although he

⁸⁶ Derrida, *Politiques*, 211.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

dreams of an *amitié* that is apolitical or transpolitical.

This short analysis of how Derrida approaches Montaigne's essay shows how interrelated, interwoven, interdependent, in one word, inter-, friendship, philosophy and politics are. Derrida, therefore, stresses that one cannot dissociate the concept of philosophy from that of friendship, "point d'amitié sans quelque *philosophía*, point de philosophie sans *philia*"; philosophers are the friends (*philoí*) of wisdom (*sophía*), they form a couple, "l'amitié-philosophie", to which Derrida adds a third hyphen and term: politics.⁸⁹ Hence, in order to capture the close interrelatedness of these concepts, Derrida hyphenates them. In *PoF*, he treats Montaigne as a pivotal example of how, throughout history, a number of influential male philosophers, of virtuous friends of wisdom, friends like brothers, friends of virtue and reason, of *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*, have ignored, silenced or excluded women from this hyphenated trio, i.e., 'friendship-philosophy-politics'. He remarks that Schmitt would ask us, instead, to change friendship into hostility, to "penser la guerre, donc la mise à mort, et finalement ce qu'il appelle l'*hostilité absolue* comme chose de la philosophie".⁹⁰ Hence, Schmitt's idea of war as a prerequisite for politics creates a feminine desert of another kind, one that is certainly populated, yet by men of war, combat, strategy, education and theology:

des hommes, des hommes, des hommes, depuis des siècles de guerre, et
des costumes, des chapeaux, des uniformes, des soutanes, et des

⁸⁹ Derrida, *Politiques*, 168.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

guerriers, des colonels, des généraux, des partisans, des stratèges, et des politiques, des professeurs, des théoriciens du politique, des théologiens. Vous chercheriez en vain une figure de femme, une silhouette féminine, et la moindre allusion à la différence sexuelle.⁹¹

As Heather Devere remarks in her article "The Fraternization of Friendship and Politics: Derrida, Montaigne and Aristotle" (2005), Schmitt's "identification of politics with war means that, as women are usually not associated with war, they then also become excluded from politics".⁹² Thus, whereas Montaigne deliberately bans women from the most perfect and sacred form of friendship, because their souls would be too capricious and weak and their bodies too seductive, Schmitt's emphasis on hostility and war silently ignores the participation of women, as well as sexual difference in general.

Although Derrida, addresses these issues as feminist concerns, *PoF* remains a philosophical and conceptual work, which means that he never speaks of his friendship with Cixous, nor of any any other real life friendship, in order to illustrate how to include the sister, how to have a 'sacred' bond with a woman through, for example, his most beloved medium: the text. This is why, in the second chapter, I will also pay attention to if and how this appeal to welcome the sister, and what has been repressed and rejected as 'feminine' by men like Montaigne, comes

⁹¹ Derrida, *Politiques*, 179.

⁹² Devere, Heather, "The Fraternization of Friendship and Politics: Derrida, Montaigne and Aristotle," *Critical Perspectives on Communication, Cultural & Policy Studies* 24, no. 1&2, (2005): 76.

back in the more literary texts he wrote about and with Cixous.

1.1.3. Towards a democracy to come and a friendship to come

Like I explained in the beginning of this chapter, Derrida criticizes the fact that democratic values, such as equality, freedom, justice and respect for each other's individuality, are restricted to the borders of the nation-state, to a certain national or supranational territory. However, this does not mean that Derrida is simply 'against democracy'. On the contrary, in *PoF*, he appeals for "more democracy" to unlock, to open, to displace this prevalent concept, and this is not my initiative (...); it is what is happening today. Today this model of brotherhood, man, friendship is being deconstructed in the world".⁹³ Thus, what Derrida is defending here, is a democracy beyond borders, a fraternity "au sens propre", which would be

la fraternité universelle, spirituelle, symbolique, infinie, la fraternité de serment, etc. et non la fraternité au sens strict, celle du frère « naturel » (comme si cela existait jamais), du frère viril, par opposition à la soeur, du frère déterminé, dans cette famille, dans cette nations, dans cette langue-ci.⁹⁴

Like Hubert Faes demonstrates in his article "Une amitié sans fraternité?" (2010), this notion of an universal and infinite brotherhood can be

⁹³ Derrida, "Politics and friendship," 5.

⁹⁴ Derrida, *Politiques*, 268.

comprehended in relation to Derrida's demand for an 'absolute hospitality', that is to say, the need to welcome the other unconditionally, before knowing who he or she is.⁹⁵ Hence, in his work *De l'Hospitalité* (1997), Derrida argues that absolute hospitality requires that I open my door not just to the stranger, but to the absolute, unknown and anonymous other and "that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names".⁹⁶ Faes remarks that Derrida does not ignore the fact that this form of hospitality requires laws and some form of organization, rather he stresses the necessity to constitute these laws based on an unconditional hospitality.⁹⁷ In chapter 1.2., while focusing on Derrida's work *Mémoires d'aveugle: l'autoportrait et autres ruines* (1990), we will see that this notion of welcoming the other, the anonymous, unknown stranger, unreservedly, without seeing and knowing whether s/he is a friend or an enemy, is crucial to the main topic of this thesis: a faithful friendship.

Moreover, Derrida argues that this would be a 'democracy to come', which does not mean, in the first place, "a new regime, a new organisation of nations-states," but rather

that this democracy we dream of is linked in its concept to a promise. The

⁹⁵ Faes, Hubert, "Une amitié sans fraternité?," *Transversalités*, no. 113 (2010): 91, accessed May 1, 2017, <http://www.cairn.info/revue-transversalites-2010-1-page-83.htm>.

⁹⁶ Derrida, Jacques and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 25.

⁹⁷ Faes, "Une amitié," 91.

idea of a promise is inscribed in the idea of a democracy: equality, freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of press - all these things are inscribed as promises within democracy.⁹⁸

To express it differently, Derrida speaks of a democracy to come, because he refuses to consider it as a given, a completed and perfected concept or regime that requires few alterations or no change at all; on the contrary, democracy is a promise, in the sense that one needs to continue to interrogate it, in order to improve it, longing and fighting for more equality *and* more respect for each other's singularity, for more justice and more freedom. This is why he states that

la démocratie reste à venir, c'est là son essence en tant qu'elle reste: non seulement elle restera indéfiniment perfectible, donc toujours insuffisante et future mais, appartenant au temps de la promesse, elle restera toujours, en chacun de ses temps futurs, à venir.⁹⁹

Hence, in this emphasis on future (im)possibilities, rather than on the present state of things, one recognizes the logic of the 'metaphysics of presence', one of Derrida's fundamental concepts with which he condemns and rejects the significance the canonical philosophical tradition attaches to presence, the present and to ontology.¹⁰⁰

Yet, a democracy to come does not mean one can calmly wait for it

⁹⁸ Derrida, "Politics and friendship," 5.

⁹⁹ Derrida, *Politiques*, 339.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

to arrive automatically, straightforwardly, without putting any effort into it. In fact, Derrida appeals for quite the opposite: it has “to come immediately. We don’t have to wait for future democracy to happen, to appear, we have to do right here and now what has to be done for it. That’s an injunction, an immediate injunction, no delay”.¹⁰¹ Thus, although the idea of a democracy to arrive could be interpreted as an invitation to withdraw and do nothing, Derrida proposes another kind of retreat: to abandon our desire for present certainties, knowing right here and now what the future will bring, and to, nevertheless, take the responsibility to imagine a future that might be more just and to act upon it.

1.2. A faithful friendship to come

1.2.1. From Aristotle’s stability of *bébaios* to Nietzsche’s undecidability of *vielleicht*

As I explained in the introduction, Derrida’s notion of a ‘friendship to come’ follows the same logic as his idea of a ‘democracy to come,’ that is, a thinking in terms of non presence, of longing for an (im)possibility to arrive, which makes its discourse one of promise, expectation and prayer, as Caputo notes.¹⁰² Thus, for Derrida, like democracy, friendship is never

¹⁰¹ Derrida, “Politics and friendship,” 5.

¹⁰² Caputo, John D., “Who is Derrida's Zarathustra? Of Fraternity, Friendship, and a Democracy to Come,” *Research In Phenomenology* 29, no. 1 (August 1999): 190, *Academic Search Premier. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, accessed May 1, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24654822>.

a present given, nor a choice, but a responsibility, the responsibility to respect the other as different and as distanced from the self as an other, while, at the same time, longing to cross this distance. These arguments can be situated within his ethics of negation and separation, which considers an other as radically separated from an other, who cannot be fully known or understood, only by means of a process of deferral. In this respect, he argues in *PoF*: "Si je vous donne l'amitié, c'est parce que s'il y en a (peut-être), elle n'existe pas, *présentement*. En tout cas, je n'en dispose pas".¹⁰³ Hence, when Derrida states that he does not dispose of any friendship *presently*, because the friend, the other, resides on another shore, this distance and separation is *precisely* what makes us want to move closer.

Moreover, comparable to his idea that a democracy to arrive is an injunction, a command, he considers friendship as an appeal that obeys to the following logic:

"Vous-mes-amis-soyez-mes-amis-et-bien-que-vous-ne-le-soyez-pas-encore-vous-l'êtes-déjà-puisque-je-vous-appelle-ainsi".¹⁰⁴

Thus, this 'logic,' which is more of a performative contradiction or a prayer, starts with an imploration, please be my friends, then acknowledges that this is not yet the case, but, in fact, it is, since I am calling you my friends. The double meaning of the verb 'appeler' is

¹⁰³ Derrida, *Politiques*, 262.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

essential in this regard, as it can be used both to name and to make an appeal, or, more precisely, to name the friend through an appeal, thereby performing the wish, the promise that s/he might become one in the future.

In order to comprehend in more detail how Derrida arrives at this call or prayer of friendship, we need to return to Nietzsche, to a specific passage he wrote in *Menschliches Allzumenschliches*, in which he states that maybe,

Peut-être alors l'heure de joie viendra-t-elle un jour elle aussi où chacun dira:

'Amis, il n'y a point d'amis!' s'écriait le sage mourant;

'Ennemis, il n'a point d'ennemi!' s'écrie le fou vivant que je suis.¹⁰⁵

Derrida discusses this passage as a rewriting of the apostrophe "O mes amis, n'y a nul amy," which Montaigne cites in his essay on friendship, ascribing it to Aristotle.¹⁰⁶ Since Derrida compares Nietzsche's rewriting to Montaigne's citation in order to demonstrate what Nietzsche changed or inverted exactly, it is important to, first of all, explain how Derrida interprets the apostrophe he found in Montaigne's *De l'amitié*. Throughout *PoF*, he uses this citation of a citation like a prism through which he explores the numerous sides and the many oppositions and contradictions that the philosophical tradition of thinking about friendship brings about,

¹⁰⁵ Derrida, *Politiques*, 45.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

like friend/enemy, sameness/difference, proximity/distance, hospitality/hostility. He considers it as a performative contradiction, because it performs a declaration that seems impossible: how can one address friends, affirm their existence, ('O my friends'), while at the same time negating them ('there is no friend')? In his article "Derrida and Friendship," (1999), Fred Dallmayr discusses this seemingly impossible declaration, as Derrida analyses it in the homonymic essay he wrote six years before *PoF*, "The Politics of Friendship". In this essay, Derrida argues that the apostrophe cited by Montaigne "turns us toward the past," since it directs our attention to "the 'always already' given presuppositions of being and discourse, by signalling toward that 'which must be supposed so as to let oneself be understood'".¹⁰⁷ According to Dallmayr, these presuppositions are necessary to "understand each other or be attentive to any appeal," which is why Derrida speaks of an "anterior affirmation of being-together," "a sort of minimal community," or "minimal friendship".¹⁰⁸ Of course, like Dallmayr remarks, this minimal form of friendship or community "is not really operative or effective in the present, but rather strictly immemorial and hence inaccessible".¹⁰⁹ This might sound rather abstract, but Derrida's point here is that the affirmation of a minimal sense of relation, the fact that one, for example, has learned the same language, speaks a language at all, is able to

¹⁰⁷ Dallmayr, Fred, "Derrida and Friendship," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 2, no. 4: 110, accessed May 2, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13698239908403293>.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 110-111.

address oneself to another and to respond to a call, does not give any guarantees, yet it holds a promise, it opens up a space, a dialogue that might create a loving tie, or not. Thus, instead of focusing on the present, on a present state or on what friendship *is*, Derrida's concern is with "the absolute [vista] of an unrepresentable past as well as future," with the idea that, although we are able to relate to one another, on a minimal, basic level, this is not to say that we will become friends, yet this might happen some day, because I already expressed it, in the past, as a vow. Hence, as Dallmayr describes it, the ways in which Derrida remoulds the apostrophe cited by Montaigne "privileges the future anterior and [which] envelops friendship within 'the performativity of a prayer'".¹¹⁰ To state it in another manner, for Derrida, through a prayer, a promise or a call, one desires a wanted future into semi-being; one acknowledges that a future state or situation, like friendship, does not exist yet, but one firmly believes that, through praying, promising or calling, this future will arrive, some day and, always, maybe. In his article "Good will and the hermeneutics of friendship: Gadamer and Derrida" (2002), John D. Caputo states that this is what Derrida calls "the structure of 'messianic teleiopoiesis,'" which Caputo considers as "a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy: you my friends, be my friends, be the friend to come (messianic), and although you are not yet my friends you are already my friends for that is what I am calling you; by calling you my friends, I am

¹¹⁰ Dallmayr, "Derrida and Friendship," 111.

bringing it about (teleiopoiesis)".¹¹¹

For Derrida, Nietzsche's rewriting of Montaigne's citation demonstrates even better how this structure of 'messianic teleiopoiesis' functions, since Nietzsche explicitly proposes another time and modality. After all, while the dying sage repeats the apostrophe cited by Montaigne in the past tense, "Amis, il n'y a point d'amis!", there is an 'I', the living fool, who addresses himself to the reader in the present tense.¹¹² This present can be maddening, since it does not give any certainties regarding the future, which Nietzsche indicates with the word maybe, a crucial change in modality: "Peut-être alors l'heure de joie viendra-t-elle un jour".¹¹³ Hence, the folly of what might come, that is, the day that there will, possibly, be no more enemies, only friends, is a disconcerting thought, particularly while thinking it from the present. According to Derrida, the instability and the indetermination of the *vielleicht*, the maybe, of which Nietzsche speaks, constitutes the opposite of what Aristotle calls *bébaïos*, that is, stability or constancy. He discusses the latter in relation to Aristotle's notion of 'first friendship,' that is to say, the most highly esteemed and ideal kind of friendship that is not based on utility or pleasure.¹¹⁴ For Aristotle, what is most important in this first friendship is a kind of faith ("foi") that is stable, established, certain,

¹¹¹ Caputo, John D., "Good will and the hermeneutics of friendship: Gadamer and Derrida," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 28, no. 5, 2002: 516. PDF.

¹¹² Derrida, *Politiques*, 46.

¹¹³ Ibid., 45-46.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 32.

assured (“*bébaios*”).¹¹⁵ I would rather not call the loving bond between Cixous and Derrida a ‘first friendship,’ since this kind of categorization and hierarchization constitutes the opposite of what Derrida is aiming at in *PoF*. Yet, as I have showed in the introduction, both Derrida and Cixous speak of their friendship as a unique and faithful bond for life, and, therefore, it is interesting to look at how Derrida deconstructs and reworks Aristotle’s notion of *bébaios* in order to show how a friendship becomes stable and how to cope with instability and insecurity. First of all, he states that the kind of stable assurance represented by this notion determines a temporal and nontemporal modality, a kind of becoming timeless, omnitemporal, which, ironically, takes time: “Il faut du temps pour parvenir à une stabilité ou à une certitude qui s’arrachent au temps”.¹¹⁶ Moreover, for Derrida, *bébaios* marks the passage from a kind of assured certainty and calculable reliability to the reliability of the vow and of the act of faith.¹¹⁷ He argues that the truth about both friendship and politics lies there, “dans l’obscurité, et avec elle la vérité du politique, telle qu’elle peut être pensée en grec: non seulement dans le mot *bébaios* (...) mais dans toute la culture, la technique, l’organisation politique et le “monde” grec qui le portent”.¹¹⁸ In other words, the truth about (first) friendship lies in a kind of omnitemporal stability that is the result of a passage through time, a passage marked by undecidability and insecurity, during which one has to depend on the trustworthiness of the vow and of

¹¹⁵ Derrida, *Politiques*, 32.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 34.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 33.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 34.

faith. Hence, during this period of stabilization, this test of time, one is not sure whether someone will become a genuine friend or not; one has to deal with a suspense of belief that demands the kind of faithfulness and hopefulness that I have discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Thus, what is vital for Derrida, is the idea that friendship, as well as democracy, arrives from a certain openness towards the uncertainty that a transition through time entails, towards the suspense of what may come, that is, the event, something that interrupts, a revolution, chaos, something we could call friendship or 'the other,' after all

Que serait un avenir si la décision était programmable et si l'aléa, si l'incertitude, si la certitude *instable*, si l'assurance du 'peut-être' ne s'y suspendait à l'ouverture de ce qui vient, à même l'événement, en lui et à coeur ouvert?¹¹⁹

This sentence clearly shows how Derrida's conception of another kind of friendship and democracy follows from a different idea about how one should relate to the unknown, whether this is another living being or the future. While Aristotle represents a genealogy of thinkers that longed for certainties, measurements, categorizations and hierarchies, as well as for the friend who is alike, Derrida argues that the only assurance one has is this 'may be' or 'might be,' an idea which one might suspect of leading nowhere, to a form of nihilism, but which actually counteracts it, because

¹¹⁹ Derrida, *Politiques*, 46-47.

it is structured around a messianic promise and is hospitable towards an other as distinct, singular.

Hence, the passage cited above also demonstrates the wider implications of *PoF*, which should be read alongside texts like *De l'hospitalité* (1997), *Spectres de Marx* (1993), *Sauf le nom* (1993) and *Donner la mort* (1992), all of which, from an ethical point of view, demand a different attitude towards the unknown or unknowable, towards what is not yet certain and stable, not yet perceptible and towards the suspense that this form of undecidability brings about. This receptiveness and hopefulness vis-à-vis what and who might come *unexpectedly* and *unpredictably* might sound rather disturbing or even frightening in a globalized world characterized by constant change, movement and relocations, in which one strongly relies on (new) technologies that are supposed to provide a sense of security through measurements, predictions, audits, monitoring, screening and evaluations. From a political perspective, Derrida asks us to be hospitable, to open our doors, and borders, to those we do not know yet, to those in need, which, again, might sound like a quite foreign message considering the growing global wave of xenophobic, nationalistic tendencies and protectionist policies. Besides that, Derrida's ethics of faith and promise would call upon politicians to, on the one hand, make promises in the proper sense of the word, instead of giving 'guarantees' disguised as promises in order to give their electorate a false sense of security and a reason to vote on them, and ask citizens, on the other hand, to believe that the politicians who

represent them will act upon those promises, while accepting that things might turn out differently. To put it differently, the ideas of promising without guaranteeing and of waiting without expecting could change the atmosphere of distrust and suspicion associated with politics, with the so-called 'establishment,' as well as the idea of politicians 'breaking promises'. After all, a true promise is hopeful but modest, as I will show later, it waits patiently without expecting the thing or person it waits for to arrive for certain. Hence, Derrida's appeal requires a radically different style of communication and a form of trust that are quite challenging, maybe even impossible, yet, therefore, all the more necessary to imagine in the world we live in today.

1.2.2. A loving bond through blind faith

The notion of the unpredictability of a true event that might arrive suddenly and in whose surprising arrival one must have faith, brings us back to the concepts of *aimance* and friends as *aimi(e)s* as explained in chapter 1.1.1.: love in friendship or a new and unforeseen loving bond that goes beyond the well known figures of *philia* and *eros*, *amitié* and *amour*. In this respect, Goh states that "Derrida posits his *nouvelle aimance* in terms of a momentary or transitory experience, something that happens once in time".¹²⁰ Indeed, Derrida describes his notion of *aimance* in terms of a singular event that might happen, some day, since he writes that:

¹²⁰ Goh, "Rejecting friendship," 111.

Peut-être, un jour, ici ou là, sait-on jamais, quelque chose peut arriver entre deux qui s'aimeraient, et s'aimeront d'amour (est-ce encore le mot juste?) de telle sorte que l'amitié, *pour une seule fois*, peut-être (...) deviendra le nom propre, le mot juste pour cela qui serait alors arrivé.¹²¹

However, Goh considers Derrida's interpretation of *aimance* as an event for which one should hopefully wait and pray as problematic, for "in speaking so lovingly of *l'aimance*, it very quickly resurrects an all too hopeful promise or possible horizon of 'friendship'".¹²² This is why he wonders: "With this horizon of 'friendship,' how truly is the other 'free in his movement, out of reach of my will or desire, beyond my intention?'"¹²³ In other words, Goh is concerned that Derrida's prayer for a(n) (im)possible horizon of friendship has an all too imposing effect that would limit the addressee's freedom to reject it. Yet, he ignores the fact that Derrida's *aimance* is, first and foremost, an ethical appeal that assumes the existence of a minimal form of relation and community, but that also insists on the separateness of singular beings. After all, and Goh notes this as well, though he draws a different conclusion, Derrida's faithful call for an *aimance* to come is a question of "*attendre sans s'attendre*", a matter of waiting without expecting the other to accept. As David Wills remarks in his article "Full Dorsal: Derrida's *Politics of Friendship*" (2005), "'I love you' is spoken into a type of void, performed

¹²¹ Derrida, *Politiques*, 85.

¹²² Goh, "Rejecting friendship," 111.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 112.

as a promise or prayer to which one cannot expect an answer".¹²⁴ Thus, always speaking from an other side, the addressee is free and more than able to reject a(n) (im)possible horizon of friendship; the problem is not so much how to keep the distance, but how to cross it, how to move nearer, to experience intimacy, while respecting some form or amount of distance?

In order to imagine what this promise of a possible, yet not imperative faithful friendship would look like, or rather, how it would move, Wills describes the distinction between Derrida and the philosophers he criticizes in terms of "choreographic figures" by arguing that the latter "would contend that friendship presumes the figure of an *inter-view*, a reciprocal perception, a face to face symmetry whose inimical converse would be the back to back that initiates a duel", while Derrida proposes "a repoliticized friendship", which "would look like a dissymmetrical something, back to front, dorsal rather than frontal".¹²⁵ This is why he speaks of a "politics of friendship as dorsality", which is his way to indicate that friendship "involves turning one's back", thus, it assumes the right to stand apart, the right not to be seen and known immediately and completely from the front.¹²⁶ However, the dorsal figure would also "involve a catastrophic turning 'towards' the other (...) an *act*

¹²⁴ Wills, David. "Full Dorsal: Derrida's *Politics of friendship*." *Postmodern Literature* 15, no. 3 (May 2005), accessed May 3, 2017, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/186565>. Only available in HTML, no page numbers.

¹²⁵ Wills, "Full Dorsal".

¹²⁶ Ibid.

of trust that lets the other come in the figure of *surprise*".¹²⁷ Wills calls this love, friendship and politics of dorsality a "posthumanist politics" and argues that a "prosthetic politics" would perhaps even be a more effective concept, since, according to him, *PoF* "has to be understood within the structure of *revenance* and *survivance*, of spectrality and inanimation".¹²⁸ In order to support this argument, he refers to Aristotle's preference of loving over being loved. As I have demonstrated in chapter 1.1.1., Derrida not only deconstructs this binary pair, but also insists on the ultimate possibility of such a *philia*, which is to love the beings or objects, that is, the deceased or the inanimate, who might be unaware, as far as we know, of the fact that they are being loved. Thus, Wills speaks of a 'prosthetic' love, friendship and politics in order to articulate the idea that friendship, any kind of friendship, whether human-human, human-animal, human-inanimate or all variations among these pairs, is never natural, homogeneous and symmetrical, even not in the case of two 'brotherly' friends, but involves the act of a turning that might be dissymmetrical, i.e., that might not immediately or might never find a response from the other.

My problem with Wills' back to front figure is, first of all, that it still seems to assume one 'self' who patiently and hopefully waits for 'the other' to turn toward him/her. Secondly, Wills' idea that friendship *involves* turning one's back overlooks the basic principle of Derrida's notion of singularity, namely that an other is essentially and radically

¹²⁷ Wills, "Full Dorsal".

¹²⁸ Ibid.

other *prior* to any horizon of friendship. Hence, there is no need to turn one's back, since there is always already distance and separation, even in the case of a so-called symmetrical face-to-face meeting: one can meet the face of the other and recognize little to nothing. Besides that, Wills comprehends *PoF* within the structure of spectrality and revenance, while the focus of this thesis is on a closely related structure: the messianic. Of course, like Neal DeRoo remarks in the chapter "From Deferring to Waiting (for the Messiah): Derrida's Account of Futurity" (2013), both Derrida's notions of spectrality and messianicity are based on the assumption of the "noncontemporaneity with itself of the living present", yet while the specter or *revenant* accounts for the returning of someone or something repressed or ignored in the present that has become past, messianicity explains the sudden and surprising arrival of someone or something radically other from *l'à-venir* or the future-to-come.¹²⁹

Therefore, I would like to focus on another figure, examined by Derrida in *Mémoires d'aveugle: l'autoportrait et autres ruines* (1990), that ties in better with the focus of this thesis, i.e., the idea of trustfully waiting, praying, even begging for an *aimance* to arrive from the future-to-come: the blind man. In *Mémoires d'aveugle*, Derrida analyzes drawings and paintings representing blindness which were presented at an exposition at the Louvre between October 26, 1990 and January 21,

¹²⁹ DeRoo, Neal, "From Deferring to Waiting (for the Messiah): Derrida's Account of Futurity," in *Futurity in Phenomenology: Promise and Method in Husserl, Lévinas, and Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 120.

1991, as part of a series of expositions known as *Parti Pris*.¹³⁰ One of the main arguments of this text forms the idea that artists are fascinated by the blind, because they remind them that the very act or 'origin' of drawing does not consist of seeing and representing, but of a certain form of blindness, that is to say, at the beginning, there is merely a hand that ventures its way across an empty, blind page. This is why drawing or painting requires one to abandon the desire to see, to know everything, to represent something or someone as thoroughly and completely as possible; it asks one, instead, to see differently, visionary, from the inside.¹³¹ This is why he states that he wants to talk about the difference between "croire et voir, croire voir et entrevoir - ou pas", about scepticism as something of seeing eyes and believing as a matter of necessity for blind eyes.¹³² One of the drawings he examines, in this respect, is Antoine Coypel's "Study of the blind", on the basis of which he argues that the blind "portent tous les mains en avant, leur geste oscille dans le vide entre la préhension, l'appréhension, la prière et l'imploration".¹³³ Derrida emphasizes the fact that the blind *need* to move forward, thereby exposing themselves inevitably to the risk of being deceived, misguided or abused; in this respect, he remarks that "ils calculent, ils comptent avec l'invisible".¹³⁴ Hence, the figure of the blind man, who advances in the dark, thereby stretching out his arms in the

¹³⁰ Derrida, Jacques, *Mémoires d'aveugle: l'autoportrait et autres ruines* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1990), 7.

¹³¹ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 10.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 12.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

invisible void, waiting, hoping, begging to find the hand of a seeing person who could be helpful and loving, like a true *aimi(e)*, or turn out to be as deceiving as an enemy, exemplifies and concretizes what it means to have an absolute sense of faith in, to be unconditionally hospitable to an *aimance* that might arrive. Especially, since Derrida, in *Mémoires d'aveugle*, also uses this figure to explain what it would be to write without seeing, which is interesting regarding the medium this thesis focuses on: writing and text. When Derrida speaks of writing without seeing, he does not mean that his eyes are closed, rather that they are "ouverts et désorientés dans la nuit; ou le jour, au contraire, les yeux fixés sur *autre chose* en regardant ailleurs".¹³⁵ Hence, he describes this form of writing as though a blind man's hand

s'aventure solitaire ou dissociée, dans un espace mal délimité, elle tâte, elle palpe, elle caresse autant qu'elle inscrit, elle se fie à la mémoire des signes et supplée la vue, comme si un oeil sans paupière s'ouvrait au bout des doigts.¹³⁶

As these citations demonstrate, what is most essential for Derrida is that writing with one's eyes disoriented in the night or in broad daylight would ask the writer to look, hear and sense differently, to be receptive to what is not (yet) visible or not fully perceptible, that is, something one suddenly remembers from an 'inner eye' or that comes to one's attention

¹³⁵ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 11.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

as a penumbral glimpse. As DeRoo points out, in *Spectres de Marx* (1993), Derrida speaks, in this respect, of a certain receptiveness to the night visibility of the specter or “to the Other who must come, who will come, and who must be treated with hospitality”.¹³⁷ Hence, the notion of writing without seeing as discussed in *Mémoires d’aveugle* is another way, for Derrida, to argue that one should be open and hospitable toward the specter or the other to arrive.

At the end of *Mémoires d’aveugle*, Derrida argues that, in fact, eyes are not destined to see, but to weep and to implore:

L’aveuglement révélateur, l’aveuglement apocalyptique, celui qui relève la vérité même des yeux, ce serait le regard voilé de larmes. (...) Il implore: d’abord pour savoir d’où descendent les larmes et de qui elles viennent aux yeux.¹³⁸

In her article “Hard, Dry Eyes and Eyes That Weep: Vision and Ethics in Levinas and Derrida” (2006), Chloé Taylor argues that, what she calls, ‘Derrida’s ethics of blindness and tears’ is inspired by Emmanuel Levinas, who considered seeing and vision as violent and unethical. As Taylor explains it, “Levinas equates seeing and knowing (sa/voir) (...) and, as Derrida points out, also equates *savoir* and *voir* with *avoir*, with a

¹³⁷ DeRoo, “From Deferring,” 122.

¹³⁸ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 127, 128.

possessing or pre-possessing of the other".¹³⁹ From this perspective, looking at or gazing upon the other could never result in amazement or curiosity (who is the one in front of me?), but will always consist of a self imposing his or her knowledge, an idea of who the other is or should be, upon him or her. As Taylor expresses it, according to Levinas, we "never respond to what we see rather than imposing our knowledge on it. (...) We never see difference, we only see the same, the same as ourselves or the same as our expectations of the other".¹⁴⁰ To put it differently, following Taylor's reading of Derrida, an ethics of blindness would allow one to let the other come as other, while an ethics of weeping, of veiling tears would redirect our attention from the rational human who sees and, therefore, knows and is knowable to a sensitive and receptive (human) being who shows his or her vulnerability through tears of suffering or joy and who might not be fully knowable through wide-open eyes. Culturally speaking, weeping might be considered as 'feminine', but Derrida presents crying through eyes as typically human; whereas other animals cry vocally, he claims that "*only human eyes can weep*", thereby quoting the English poet Andrew Marvell to support this argument.¹⁴¹

At this point, one might wonder why this notion of seeing differently through veiling tears is relevant to a friendship like that of Cixous and Derrida, which passes through writing, text and voice? My answer would

¹³⁹ Taylor, Chloe, "Hard, Dry Eyes and Eyes That Weep: Vision and Ethics in Levinas and Derrida," *Postmodern Culture* 16, no. 2 (2006), accessed May 3, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1353/pmc.2006.0021>. Only available in HTML, no page numbers.

¹⁴⁰ Taylor, "Hard, Dry Eyes".

¹⁴¹ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 128.

be that the vulnerability and the sensitivity of the (human) body that Derrida's ethics of veiling tears gestures to, can be related to the bodily form of writing of which both Derrida's and Cixous's works testify. Despite the differences in this respect, these writings are both responsive to and hold themselves responsible for the marks, scars and wounds that are brought about by the violent repression or effacement of something or someone other, whether this 'other' constitutes the inferior part of a binary opposition, a human being of another ethnicity, religion, nation or gender or a non-human being. In the last part of this chapter, I will examine further this relation between writing, faith, not seeing or seeing differently, messianicity and Derrida's and Cixous's attention to what has been violently repressed, erased, effaced or overlooked in order to force a clear definition, concept or identity. In the next three chapters, we will see that this idea of writing and reading with eyes that see differently and can cry, thereby veiling sight and revealing vulnerability, plays a significant role in the texts Derrida and Cixous wrote about and which each other.

1.3. The quest for the impossible and the unknown *aimi(e)* through writing

1.3.1. Derrida's prophetic writing *aimance*

In the last part of this chapter, I will focus on the question why Derrida and Cixous consider writing as a medium of absolute faith in and

messianic promise of the arrival and cherishing of a(n) (im)possible loving bond. Although this theoretical chapter has mainly focused, up until this point, on Derrida's concepts and notions, I think it is also important to discuss some of Cixous's ideas on writing and developing a loving bond through text and writing.

Throughout his career, Derrida has treated the questions of faith, promise and the messianic as part of the larger issue of how language and the written have been used by Western metaphysics to develop a kind of identity construction that functions dialectically or through binary oppositions, i.e., according to which the so-called 'self' can only be defined, be fully present, in opposition to 'the other' or to others, that is to say, everything and everyone the 'I' wishes to dissociate himself/herself from, including the qualities of his or her personality that threaten the self's forced unity and homogeneity. In chapter 1.2., through my analysis of Montaigne and Schmitt, I have showed how certain male philosophers have created this idea of what is 'masculine' and 'virile,' at the expense of the 'feminine', which becomes a sort of abject category. Thea Bellou explains that this binary form of identity construction is why Derrida, in his early work, "aims to deconstruct identitarian philosophy, and to make the 'other' constitutive of a new kind of writing and thought that does not eliminate alterity by conceiving of Being as full presence".¹⁴² Bellou argues that this is why he condemns the "autobiographical and

¹⁴² Bellou, Thea, "Introduction," in *Derrida's Deconstruction of the Subject: Writing, Self and Other* (New York: Peter Lang AG, 2013), 18, accessed March 5, 2017, *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*.

confessional mode" as "the privileged entry to writing of the self" and proposes, instead, a "prophetic mode" of writing.¹⁴³ Derrida rejects the first mode, because it reduces writing to mere representation, that is to say, to the voice that "'hears itself speak'" and of which writing is merely the written account.¹⁴⁴ Unlike this confessional mode that uses the written to represent 'the self', Bellou argues that the prophetic mode "gestures toward the other", is "structured as a promise" and "stages with the other an encounter based on asymmetry and dissymmetry rather than on co-present engagement".¹⁴⁵ Thus, from Derrida's side, writing becomes a medium of unconditional faith through this prophetic mode, which holds the promise of an approach and an encounter, of lovingly acknowledging differences and differentiating resemblances.

Bellou connects this mode to a "'new' thinking of the other" that Derrida addresses in later texts like *Le monolinguisme de l'autre*, *L'Animal que donc je suis* and *Spectres de Marx*, in which he argues that "our prime engagement is with the other: it belongs to and comes from the other; and inscribes all relations between self and other as non-relations".¹⁴⁶ This preoccupation with the 'other' stems from Derrida's own experiences with being regarded as 'other', as speaking, writing and living in French, without being allowed to call this language his own, as he points out in *Monolinguisme de l'autre*. In fact, this title plays on the double use of the genitive: it indicates that this 'monolingualism' of the

¹⁴³ Bellou, "Introduction," 19.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 18-19.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 19-20.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 23.

other not only belongs *to* the other, but also comes *from* the other. From this perspective, self-affirmation or self-representation through writing would not be possible, "because both the self and subjectivity have already been written, and are already contaminated with a 'conception' of writing that makes possible both the production and the writing of the self".¹⁴⁷ In other words, language and the written do not belong to any *one* in particular, but precede or, rather, create the subject, who is formed through the language that s/he follows and who transforms this language into a monolingualism of his or her 'own'. Being friendly to, that is, being unconditionally hospitable to 'the other' also means to write the multiple, maybe not yet visible or perceptible sides of 'one'self, which is why Bellou argues that Derrida rejects autography in favor of heterography, since "the self is determined by heterogeneity and heteronomy rather than by homogeneity and autonomy".¹⁴⁸ At the end of this chapter and in the next three chapters, we will see that Derrida shares this love of the heterogeneous, the multiple, the plural with Cixous. Besides that, as I remarked at the end of chapter 1.2.2., both their corpora testify of a certain physicality or corporality; Cixous and Derrida both allow their bodies to be present in their texts, they mould them, respond to them, like their writings move them physically, mentally or spiritually. Derrida, as Cixous puts it, writes "his body as a stigmatized body, a body of blood and signs", thereby bringing philosophy into this world as "a being of flesh and blood in sex in sweat, in sperm and in

¹⁴⁷ Bellou, "Introduction," 20.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 19.

tears, with all his physical and psychic circumcisions and scarifications".¹⁴⁹ Hence, as the word 'circumcision' indicates, Derrida writes the stigmatized body of a man, whereas Cixous writes the wounds and marks of the silenced and oppressed female body, as well as its pleasures or *jouissances*, like I will demonstrate in chapter 1.3.2.

Bellou argues that both the confessional and the prophetic mode of writing "are irreducibly religious", since the former "depends upon presencing and presenting", while the latter holds "the promise of an unveiling, of revelation to come, but one that is forever deferred and delayed".¹⁵⁰ In fact, the question if and to what extent Derrida's notions of the promise, the messianic, his specific idea of faith can be called 'religious' or how they can be distinguished from their meanings in worldly religions are issues discussed by numerous scholars. However, since this question is not the central focus of this thesis, I will limit myself to one of Derrida's own statements on this subject and to Caputo's interpretation. In his article "Good will and the hermeneutics of friendship: Gadamer and Derrida" (2002), Caputo cites parts of a discussion, in which Derrida argues that attesting to someone would mean to ask the other to "believe me" and this "'trust me, I am speaking to you' is of the order of faith, a faith that cannot be reduced to a theoretical statement, to a determinative judgement; it is the opening of the address to the

¹⁴⁹ Armel, Aliette, Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous and Ashley Thompson et. al., "From the Word to Life: A Dialogue between Jacques Derrida and Helene Cixous," *New Literary History* 37, no. 1 (2006): 8, accessed May 3, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20057924>.

¹⁵⁰ Bellou, "Introduction," 19.

other".¹⁵¹ He subsequently stresses that this kind of faith is "not religious, strictly speaking; at least it cannot be totally determined by a given religion".¹⁵² The key word in this passage is 'given', as it explains why Derrida's notion of faith might be called religious, but without believing in any actual existence of (a) God, Messiah or a friend. Hence, he asks for an undoubted and impossible faith in the structural arrival of the Messiah or the *aimi(e)*, even though one might never actually behold it with one's own eyes. In his book *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* (1997), Caputo argues that this prayer for the (im)possible to come can already be found in Derrida's notion of deconstruction, which Caputo considers as a "movement of transcendence", it "means excess, the exceeding of the stable border of the presently possible".¹⁵³ According to Caputo, deconstruction can be regarded, thus, as a religion in the sense that it is "a pact with the impossible, a covenant with the unrepresentable, a promise made by the *tout autre* with its people, where we are all people of the *tout autre*".¹⁵⁴ However, like I remarked in the introduction, Derrida's religion follows the logic of the 'sans', it is a pact

sans the concrete, historical religions (...) *sans* the concrete messianisms of the positive religions that wage endless war and spill the blood of the other, and that, anointing themselves God's chosen people, are

¹⁵¹ Caputo, "Good will," 514.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Caputo, John D, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1997): xix, accessed April 8, 2017, *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., xx.

consummately dangerous to everyone else who is not so chosen.¹⁵⁵

To put it differently, throughout his entire career, Derrida's concern has been with a different, more hospitable approach to the other as the unknown and as the ultimate unknown, that is, God, death and the other as *tout autre*; writing becomes a vehicle through which to explore this new relation to the unthinkable, to the unknowable and I consider both the textual or linguistic notions that Derrida proposed in the beginning of his career, deconstruction, *différance* and *arche-écriture*, and the more ethical stand he performs in later texts, as part of this quest for the (im)possible arrival of a loving friendship.

1.3.2. Writing the (female) body and the unknown with Hélène

Cixous

Like I remarked in the introduction, Cixous and Derrida share a comparable background: as Jewish thinkers and writers growing up in Algeria, they both know what it feels like to live in a garden that is guarded from 'outsiders', to speak languages they cannot call 'their' mother *and* native tongue, to live on territories, in nations and in languages that mark and wound them as other. These forms of exclusion and rejection, based on nationalistic, racist or religious motives, also inspire Cixous to rethink the relation of self to other, or of other to other, and to engender a new practice of writing, *écriture féminine*, that

¹⁵⁵ Caputo, *The Prayers*, xxi.

welcomes and appreciates, even finds delight and pleasure in receiving other or various voices, faces, sensations and dreams. In the book *Hélène Cixous: Live theory* (2004), Ian Blyth affirms this idea by arguing that

at the heart of *écriture féminine* lies the desire to set up a non-acquisitional space - a space where the self can explore and experience the non-self (the 'other') in mutual respect, harmony and love.¹⁵⁶

In this description of what drives Cixous to develop a 'feminine' practice of writing, one recognizes a desire we have already encountered in the analysis of Derrida's texts: the longing for a space in which distinct individuals can acknowledge and enjoy their differences, instead of ignoring, effacing or experiencing them in a negative way. Moreover, in the essay 'Sorties' (1975), Cixous notes that she is looking

for a scene in which a type of exchange would be produced that would be different, a kind of desire that wouldn't be in collusion with the old story of death. This desire would invent Love (...) there would have to be a recognition of each other ... each would take the risk of the *other*, of difference, without feeling threatened by the existence of an otherness, rather, delighting to increase the unknown that is there to discover, to respect, to favor, to cherish.¹⁵⁷

Again, Cixous's desire for a particularly *loving* recognition of each other,

¹⁵⁶ Blyth, Ian and Susan Sellers, *Hélène Cixous: Live theory* (London: Continuum, 2004), 15.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

the risk involved in opening up to an other and the unconditional faith that this requires, ties in neatly with Derrida's 'blind' faith in an *aimance*, a loving friendship, to come. Besides that, like Derrida, Cixous is convinced of the idea that this loving bond can best "be explored through writing", since she considers writing as "that 'somewhere else that can escape the infernal repetition' of the patriarchal system".¹⁵⁸ To express it differently, Cixous describes writing as an unknown place, a somewhere else, an *ailleurs*, a sanctuary from which to explore, sense, imagine anew the binary relation between men and women. As I remarked in the introduction, in her article "Writing as Sanctuary: Place, Movement and the Sacred in the Work of Hélène Cixous" (2013), Elizabeth Anderson calls Cixous's writing a 'sanctuary-that-moves': a place of refuge that is open to movement, to change, what Cixous calls "flight" and that is, therefore, not always a safe place "because of the risk of vulnerability in encountering other persons as well as the divine".¹⁵⁹ Later, we will see why this risk of vulnerability, of letting oneself be touched, moved, is also the risk of the divine, that is, of creation, of poetry. As Anderson points out, Cixous's penchant for the elsewhere, her openness to movement and departure is a result of the sense of non belonging she has always felt, since the day she was born "'with the thought that I could have been born somewhere else, in one of the twenty countries where a living fragment of my maternal family had landed after it blew up on the Nazi minefield'", as

¹⁵⁸ Blyth and Sellers, *Live Theory*, 23.

¹⁵⁹ Anderson, Elizabeth, "Writing as Sanctuary: Place, Movement and the Sacred in the Work of Hélène Cixous," *Literature and Theology* 27, no. 3 (2013): 365, accessed May 5, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/litthe/frt004>.

she writes in *Stigmata*.¹⁶⁰ Thus, Cixous's sense of belonging elsewhere is not only the result of her own displacements, but also of her awareness of her Jewish roots, of the routes taken by her family in search of a refuge. Hence, from Cixous's side, as a 'sanctuary-that-moves,' writing becomes a medium that allows for the (im)possible arrival at a place where differences are greeted lovingly; a scene where one can feel safe and secured, but that is also hospitable to, what Derrida's Nietzsche would call, the 'maybe', that is, something or someone that would upset the stability that Aristotle's *bébaios* asks for.

Yet, whereas Derrida's concern is with the deconstruction of Western Metaphysics and identitarian philosophy in general, Cixous's project is explicitly a feminist one; she focuses, in particular, on how binary oppositions prioritize men and the masculine, while repressing women and the feminine. To express it in another manner, Derrida rethinks the relation between other and other, whether this constitutes a man and a woman, a woman and a woman, a (wo)man and an animal etc., while Cixous, especially in her early texts, aims at liberating the female body through a 'feminine' approach to and practice of writing. Although this aim is admirable and opens doors in many ways, for both women and men, I would like to take a distance from some of her assumptions. As Blyth remarks, Cixous does not regard *écriture féminine* as "the sole domain of women", but she does claim that "it is easier for

¹⁶⁰ Anderson, "Writing as Sanctuary," 373.

women to adopt such a 'feminine' approach to writing".¹⁶¹ This is to say that women would be more receptive to the qualities that *écriture féminine* praises, such as the multiple, the plural and the variable, because, as she writes in *The Newly Born Woman* (1986), "'woman's' sexuality is infinitely plural, various and changing: it is 'endless body ... without principal 'parts'", whereas man's sexuality is "static and singular," since it is "'gravitat[ing] around the penis'".¹⁶² Furthermore, in the essay 'The author in Truth' (1991), she claims that women would be more inclined to welcome the other as other, since they "'have an experience of the inside, an experience of the capacity for other, and experience of nonnegative change brought about by the other, of positive receptivity'".¹⁶³ Although Cixous is right to assume that physical and gendered differences account for distinct sexual or parental experiences, my problem with this type of argumentation is that it comes close to essentializing and generalizing sexual difference, because it underlines the differences between men and women, while neglecting the variety *among* men and women. By using words such as 'woman's' sexuality', she suggests that *all* women enjoy the gift of giving birth to an other, which raises the question whether one can speak of a distinct, singular other at all in the case of a pregnancy, which she associates with 'positive receptivity', as though a woman cannot experience 'her' unborn child as an intruder or feel the 'masculine' urge to appropriate the child and to

¹⁶¹ Blyth and Sellers, *Live Theory*, 15.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 31.

refuse to break the symbiosis. Thus, while analyzing the texts Derrida and Cixous wrote about and with each other, I will be very careful to call something, an idea, a characteristic, a change in perspective, 'feminine', 'masculine' or 'becoming-(wo)man'. I will, rather, read these texts as written by a *singular* man and a *singular* women, who also live or have lived in gendered and racialized realities and in whose texts some (wo)men might recognize something of themselves, or not. In other words, I consider Derrida and Cixous as radically other; the difference in sex and gender constitutes just one aspect that separates them. Moreover, for me, the most important questions are not 'who was first' or 'who influenced who and when', in other words, whether Cixous follows or has been influenced by Derrida's deconstruction of identitarian philosophy or whether Cixous's notion of *écriture féminine* allows Derrida the philosopher to 'become-woman', like Claire Colebrook puts it in her article.¹⁶⁴ I read Cixous and Derrida in dialogue with each other, a dialogue that does not follow a clear chronology or track record of influence, a friendship that has multiple beginnings and partings, as we will see in chapters 2 and 3.

Despite these reservations, understood in the context of its time and as a writing practice that focuses on experiencing joy and pleasure through the (female) body instead of shame and lack, *écriture féminine* allows Cixous to find a way to liberate women, and men, from the

¹⁶⁴ Colebrook, Claire, "Friendship, Seduction and Text: Cixous and Derrida," *Angelaki* 13, no. 2 (2008): 121, accessed May 5, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09697250802432229>.

internalized shame of their bodies, as well as from the restrictions and rules imposed upon it by a patriarchal society. This is to say that Cixous asks women to write their bodies, to “pay attention to all the nonverbal, unconscious, instinctual drives and sensations of their bodies - they must accent language with the patterns, reverberations and echoes emerging from these states”.¹⁶⁵ Regarding Cixous’s interest in the unconscious and the nonverbal, Blyth explains that this stems from her desire to break loose from the Lacanian Symbolic, i.e., the order of language, the Law of the father and of lack, in order to move toward the spheres of plenitude, the Imaginary and the Real, which, according to Lacan, are only accessible through the Symbolic, through language. This longing for and trying to find a way to experience and express the nonverbal, the outside of language, is quite different from Derrida’s perspective, who has always resisted the idea that one cannot escape language, which he considers both as a lack (there is always something one does not say or repress in uttering a statement) and a promise, the promise of another word, another meaning or interpretation to return, to arrive and the promise of the secret, singularity, to be protected. Despite this difference in response to the question whether one can or cannot go beyond the Symbolic order, Blyth argues that Cixous, in her poetic writing, also tries “to convey the hidden, the unspoken, it draws upon the extra resources that lurk in the outer fringes of language”.¹⁶⁶ Hence, Cixous is extremely attentive to the “excess of signification, present in even the most quotidian of words”,

¹⁶⁵ Blyth and Sellers, *Live Theory*, 33.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

which is why she is convinced that she, as a writer, “must play language quick and true like an honest musician, not leap over a single word-beat”.¹⁶⁷ In the next chapter, we will see that Derrida is also highly aware of language’s surplus of signification, which manifests itself in a tendency to zoom in and ponder on one single word or phrase, which he folds back and forth, moulding and remoulding it in all kinds of forms and directions. Yet, while Cixous’s writer plays words rapidly and vividly, the rhythm of Derrida’s texts seems much slower, as if he writes the endless deferral of meaning into the fabric of his texts.

More importantly, in her poetic writing, Cixous also longs for the unknown, the unexpected, the unthinkable, the impossible, the other to come, which Derrida would call messianic. Blyth remarks, in this respect, that Cixous’s more recent essays

show an increased interest in the economy of the ‘unknown’, in the act of writing as-it-is-happening, in the impossibility of ‘capturing’ and preserving the passing instant, and in the role of dreams in the creation of her texts”.¹⁶⁸

Hence, Cixous’s interest in writing the unknown is more relevant to the central question of this thesis than her notion and practice of *écriture féminine*, since it ties in with the issues of faith and hope in the arrival of a loving friendship through writing, as discussed by Derrida. Therefore,

¹⁶⁷ Blyth and Sellers, *Live Theory*, 69.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

while analyzing the texts that Derrida and Cixous wrote on and with one another, I will concentrate more on Cixous's interest in the unknown and on her desire to capture the passing present through writing. Regarding these particular aspects of her poetic work, "The Last Painting or the Portrait of God" (1991) is an interesting text to look closer at. She opens it by expressing her wish to be "like a painter (...) to write like painting, because she believes that 'paint-writing' would allow her to write "in the present absolute. In the happening of the instant (...) to slip into the depth of the instant itself".¹⁶⁹ However, she also acknowledges the impossibility of achieving this, the struggle involved in "seeing time. Painting time. Painting the marriage of time with light".¹⁷⁰ After all, "The sun moves so quickly", "Life is so rapid" and "we are so slow", "We who write are so slow".¹⁷¹ Therefore, all a writer can do, according to Cixous, is to paint "tomorrow, one paints what will be, one paints 'the imminence of'", an argument that is comparable to the prophetic, future-oriented mode of writing supported by Derrida.¹⁷² To put it differently, the dilemma that Cixous describes here constitutes the very question of language and time that is also addressed by Derrida: the necessity of writing after the present, toward the future, while desiring, wishing, praying to be able, some day, to capture in words what one sees as it *happens in an instant*, the gap, thus, between the moment of seeing and

¹⁶⁹ Cixous, Hélène, "The Last Painting or the Portrait of God," in *Coming to Writing" and Other Essays*, ed. Deborah Jenson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 104.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 110-111.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 113.

sensing and the moment of writing, the discontinuity of the speed of the mind or the senses and the speed of the hand. Cixous remarks that the painter, or some painters, might be quicker in capturing light or living movement than the writer, who "must paint with brushes all sticky with words", yet the painter is faced with the same gap, the same discontinuity.¹⁷³

As I have showed, Derrida also discusses this aporia or enigma, that is, the discontinuity in time between seeing and drawing, seeing and writing in *Mémoires d'aveugle*, in which he argues that this is why drawing or painting demands the artist to look differently, with eyes disoriented in the night, from an inner eye. Cixous beautifully illustrates this idea of seeing differently, making it almost tangible, when she writes that she loves "paintings the way the blind must love the sun: feeling it, breathing it in, hearing it pass through the trees, adoring it with regret and pain, knowing it through the skin, seeing it with the heart".¹⁷⁴ Hence, the blind, according to Cixous, "see the sun in a different way", which she compares to how she, "in writing, paints[s] in a different way. I paint in the dark. But this is my blind way of calling forth light".¹⁷⁵ In other words, for Cixous, writing in the dark is a way to see and write the sun, to see and write light and life, but in another manner: visionary. In the essay "Coming to writing", she states, in this respect: "I want to see everything. (...) Maybe I have written to see", to see "from the tips of the fingers that

¹⁷³ Cixous, "The Last Painting," 114.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 106.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

transcribe by the sweet dictate of vision. From the point of view of the soul's eye: the eye of a womansoul. From the point of view of the Absolute, in the proper sense of the word: separation".¹⁷⁶ Hence, the juxtaposition of the soul's eye (*l'oeil d'âme*) with the eye of the womansoul (*l'oeil dame*) repeats the kind of essentializing argument I have distanced myself from. I would rather argue that this is a particular woman and poet, Cixous, that wishes to write from the vision of *her* soul, to see everything, every living thing, while living, but with *her* eyes closed, turned inside, to *her* soul. Or, as Cixous herself puts it: "My writing watches. Eyes closed".¹⁷⁷ To make it a bit more confusing and contradictory, for Cixous, this writing or painting in the dark, from her soul's eye, goes hand in hand with looking "at things from very, very close up", zooming in on the most tiny details, since she also writes "because I am nearsighted: it's also, I think, through nearsightedness, thanks to my nearsightedness, that I love".¹⁷⁸ In chapter three, I will show how Cixous reads and loves Derrida, her *aimi*, through the same nearsightedness in *Jacques Derrida en jeune saint juive* and in chapter four, I will look at how Cixous grieves the loss of her myopia in *Savoir*.

Thus, for Cixous, the impossibility of writing things as they happen is not a reason to despair, but to hope and to have faith. Hence, she argues that she calls someone a poet, that is, "any writer, philosopher, author of plays, dreamer, producer of dreams, who uses life as a time of

¹⁷⁶ Cixous, Hélène, "Coming to Writing," in *'Coming to Writing' and Other Essays*, ed. Deborah Jenson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 4.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷⁸ Cixous, "The Last Painting," 109.

'approaching'".¹⁷⁹ Approaching, that is to say, to paint the same waterlilies over and over again, like the Japanese painter Katsushika Hokusai did, and to hope that "when I am a hundred and ten, for my part, be it a dot, be it a line, everything will be alive", "to repeat the words 'I love you' until they become spirit", "to attempt a portrait of God. Of the God. Of what escapes us and makes us wonder. Of what we do not know but feel. Of what makes us live".¹⁸⁰ What do these quotes have in common? The hope a poet should cherish, according to Cixous, for the impossible, to try again and again, until the very last painting or portrait, to paint or write through sensing instead of knowing, to abandon oneself as a knowing subject and to wonder what escapes us, to let the unknown pass through us. Cixous argues that this is the path of the poet who searches for "the second innocence, the one that comes after knowing, the one that no longer knows, the one that knows how not to know".¹⁸¹ She states that this path requires patience and courage: "the courage to be afraid of being hurt" and the courage "of reaching joy, acute joy".¹⁸² As I have argued, the end of *Mémoires d'aveugle* can also be read as a defense of vulnerability, of having the courage to use our eyes to express feelings of suffering and joy. Hence, we will see that Derrida and Cixous, in their writing *aimance*, also recognize their own and each other's vulnerability, their scars and wounds, as well as the capacity to be affected by the other, by the unknown, but beloved friend or *aimi(e)*. In

¹⁷⁹ Cixous, "The Last Painting," 114.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 128-129.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 114.

¹⁸² Ibid., 121.

fact, whether one paints, writes fiction or poetry or writes to a friend, in all cases, one asks of the other, the reader or the *aimi(e)*, to respond, to recognize, to countersign the written. This is why Cixous, in "The Last Painting", performs a call that reminds of Derrida's idea of the obligation and the need to address oneself to the other through writing, of becoming *aimi(e)s* through writing:

I'm calling. (...) I'm calling: Mimosa! I'm calling you. (...) So I beg you: please, see the mimosas that I see. Imagine the mimosas. See what you don't see, out of love for me. (...) Everything I evoke depends on you, depends on your trust, on your faith. (...) My words will remain dead words. Without your breath on my words, there will be no mimosas.

Hence, in this passage, Cixous also highlights her dependency as a writer on the other, her obligation "to count on God, or on you, or on someone" to see the mimosa she sees, to countersign what she imagines through writing.¹⁸³ Hence, the various mentioned references and appeals to God demonstrates that Cixous has an understanding of faith, hope and God comparable to that of Derrida, in the sense that they both consider God as the unknown, the unthinkable, the impossible to be achieved, maybe, some day, like the promise Hokusai made, hoping to behold the day that everything will be alive. Regarding the main issue of this thesis, the faithful *aimance* between Cixous and Derrida through writing, poetry and

¹⁸³ Cixous, "The Last Painting," 106.

friendship, as rethought by Derrida and Cixous, thus, seem to share a similar approach to the other as the unknown, the impossible, the unexpected. Receiving and experiencing the other differently, un-knowing him or her, would mean to take the same risk of vulnerability that a true poet, according to Cixous, does: to allow oneself to be moved instantaneously, by and through the instant, whether this is a moment of pain or suffering or of joy and pleasure. All the more interesting to see, in the next chapter, how this idea returns in the literary texts they wrote about and with each other.

Conclusion Chapter One

In this chapter, I have analyzed and discussed several of Derrida's and Cixous's texts in relation to one another in order to show which theoretical notions, from both sides, are important regarding the main question of this thesis: their faithful and loving *aimance* to come through writing.

In chapter 1.1.1. and 1.1.2., I have showed how Derrida, in *Politics of Friendship*, deconstructs the traditions of 'fraternization' and 'hostilization' that politicize, respectively, the figure of the brother as a friend and the enemy and that both exclude, ignore or silence women and the category of the 'feminine'. Hence, Derrida's new conception of friendship is hospitable to everything that the traditions of 'fraternization' and 'hostilization' have repressed, disregarded and/or associated with the

feminine: the unknown, the unconscious, the invisible, the vulnerability of the body, its pleasures and sufferings, its weaknesses and the factor time and the change, undecidability and insecurity that it entails. Derrida situates the 'origins' of the tradition of 'fraternalization' in ancient Greece and, based on his readings of Cicero and Aristotle, rejects a form of friendship that strives for symmetry (men recognizing their equals in terms of property and propriety), familiarity (friends like brothers) and stability (*bébaïos*). Instead, he proposes another conception of friendship, a *nouvelle aimance*, that considers the friend or *aimi(e)* as radically other and that acknowledges this otherness in a loving manner, while also longing to approach the friend, to come closer, to diminish the distance. Moreover, Derrida insists on resisting our desire for stability by arguing that a friendship becomes stable, only, through a passage of time that is usually marked by undecidability, possible change and insecurity, in one word, by Nietzsche's 'maybe'. In order to cope with this insecurity, Derrida argues that one should have faith in the promise of a(n) (im)possible loving friendship to come; instead of longing for the future death of the self or the friend, like Cicero and Aristotle did, Derrida hopes and prays for the 'living' *aimi(e)* to arrive from the future-to-come, whom one should love, though, beyond his or her death.

In the second part of this chapter, I have argued that Derrida's description, in his work *Mémoires d'aveugle*, of Antoine Coypel's "Study of the blind" portrays most vividly the sense of imploration, insecurity and 'blind' faith that Derrida's prayer for a possible loving bond to arrive

demands. In this work, Derrida also explores his 'ethics of blindness', that is to say, the (im)possibilities of non seeing or seeing differently, from an inner eye, writing with one's eyes open and disoriented in the night. This form of writing welcomes the invisible or the not (yet) perceptible, like an *aimi(e)* that might arrive from the future-to-come. Through an ethics of veiling tears, Derrida shifts the attention from seeing and knowing, from the *ratio*, to weeping and believing, to the vulnerability of the (human) body, a shift that also manifests itself in a bodily form of writing, which he shares with Cixous.

In the third part of this chapter, I have tried to create a dialogue between Derrida's and Cixous's ideas on writing, in the light of the main question of the arrival and fostering of a loving and faithful friendship through writing. We have seen that Derrida, in his later texts, aims at rethinking the relation of other to other, an objective that inspires him to propose an ethics of un-knowing and non-seeing the other, or of seeing him or her differently, an ethics that passes through a bodily and messianic mode of writing that gestures toward the other as someone or something unknown and not fully knowable. This prophetic mode allows, or rather, *might* allow other and other to recognize each other in a loving way, to acknowledge what binds and separates them, to write their vulnerable bodies: its sufferings, joys, passions and pleasures.

From Cixous's side, her notion of *écriture féminine* is also a way of introducing a new writing practice in order to reimagine the relation of other to other, in this case, of woman to man, the feminine to the

masculine. Although this practice allows women, as well as men, to write the vulnerability of their gendered bodies, to be attentive to all its unknown and unconscious desires, I have distanced myself from the essentialist idea that it would be easier for the female body to do so. In fact, Cixous's desire for the unknown and for writing 'as it happens in an instant' is of more interest to the main question of this thesis. In this regard, I have showed that Cixous considers the (im)possibility of capturing the moment through writing as a reason to hope, to have faith that one might achieve, some day, the seemingly impossible task of knowing how not to know, of writing while watching from her soul's eye. Moreover, I have concluded that the courage of exposing oneself, of allowing oneself to be vulnerable, that is, to be moved by the other as the unknown, and the risk that this involves, is what Derrida's '*nouvel(le) aïmi(e)*' shares with Cixous's poet. Now, the next question is: how does this idea manifest itself in the texts they wrote about and co-created with one another?

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Chapter 2 *H.C. pour la vie, c'est à dire...-*

In chapter one, I have showed why, from a theoretical and conceptual perspective, the lifelong friendship between H el ene Cixous and Jacques Derrida can be called a 'faithful *aimance* to come' that, through writing, lovingly recognizes the friend or *aimi(e)*. In the same chapter, I have explained why this latter name corresponds better to the significance of *aimer* in a friendship that is, first and foremost, loving. The *aimi(e)* who is also and not by accident a poet: a poet-philosopher in the case of Derrida, whose later texts in particular demonstrate his desire to write philosophy, that is to say, to study fundamental and ontological problems, starting from *his* most intimate and 'personal' experiences and a philosophical poet in the case of Cixous, whose poetic work also reflects on philosophical, political and gender issues.

In the coming three chapters, I will move from this conceptual framework to the texts they have written about each other and their particular *aimance*: *H.C. pour la vie, c'est   dire...-* (2002), *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en jeune saint juif* (2001) and *Voiles* (1998). In each chapter, I will discuss one text in the light of the notions and concepts introduced in chapter 1: the question of faith and love in a friendship that is always, structurally 'to arrive', of lovingly recognizing what separates and joins them as Jewish *aim(e)s* and poets coming from Algeria, which they do through a bodily and 'vulnerable' form of writing that gestures toward the other as the unknown, the elsewhere, two poets who have the

courage to see and write differently, to let themselves be moved instantly by what arrives *tout à coup*. In this chapter, I will start by focusing on *H.C. pour la vie, c'est à dire...*- (2002). Although this work is published in 2002, Derrida first pronounced it during the opening of the Cerisy-la-Salle conference in June 1998, which was dedicated to Hélène Cixous and organized by Mireille Calle-Gruber.¹⁸⁴ In this text, Derrida speaks of his friendship with Cixous by writing about her, about what he learned from his *aimie* for life, who would always remain on 'the side of life', whereas he would situate himself rather on 'the side of death'. We will see that Derrida portrays Cixous mostly by close reading specific passages from her works *Les Commencements* (1970), *Jours de l'An* (1990) and *OR: Les lettres de mon père* (1997).

Since *H.C. pour la vie* and *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en jeune saint juif* (2001) are both portraits, I will also pay close attention to what happens when Cixous and Derrida lovingly read, portrait or write about one another as other, as different. Or, to put it differently, the question is if and to what extent Derrida's portrait of Cixous is not also a portrait of himself *comme si* Cixous and vice versa, in the sense that writing about the way someone else thinks and writes, maybe even pretending for a moment, *as if* one thinks or writes *like* the portrayed, might allow the portrayer to discover him/herself as other, to develop unknown sides of her/himself. After all, as Mireille Calle Gruber reminds us, according to Derrida, "c'est l'autre qui fait mon portrait", the other in the sense of the

¹⁸⁴ Derrida, Jacques, *H.C. pour la vie, c'est à dire...*- (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2002).

medium of writing, as well as the other who writes the portrait.¹⁸⁵ This would make the written portrait a medium through which to create an identity that is singular, as well as relational and transformational through fiction, through the modality of *comme si* that imagines the I *comme si un autre*, in the language of the other that is always already other. I will show that Derrida, in *H.C. pour la vie*, repeatedly uses or abuses this modality of fiction to designate what oscillates between the possible and the impossible and to focus on the promise that avows without avowing anything, that *attend sans s'attendre*.¹⁸⁶ Thus, the question is not 'is this portrait a pure representation of the friend', did Cixous and Derrida succeed in effacing themselves as portrayers in order to let the portrayed friend 'speak for herself or himself', but rather 'how does the portrayer lovingly read, approach, touch or even transform the writings of the portrayed friend' and 'how does the portrayed friend move, touch or transform the *aimi(e)* who portrays'? This idea brings into mind another poet and essayist, Michel de Montaigne - whom Cixous loves for a different reason than Derrida criticizes him for in *PoF* - who argued that the book is consubstantial to its author. Hence, Cixous and Derrida might be consubstantial to their portraits of each other, in the sense that they write and create the portraits as much as these portraits write and create them. This is not to say that text and flesh and blood body are of the same substance or that the portrayer feeds on the portrayed person,

¹⁸⁵ Calle-Gruber, Mireille, "Périodes," in Jacques Derrida, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet and Ginette Michaud (Paris: Éditions de l'Herne, 2004): 337.

¹⁸⁶ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 20.

rather that, through writing, there exists a dialogue between corps and corpus, an interaction between letters, words, images, lines and the body that senses, sighs, bleeds, exalts or shivers. In the case of Derrida and Cixous, we will see that, in the four literary texts, there exists a conversation between letters, text, voice and two gendered, racialized and stigmatized bodies that form each other and themselves through the texts they wrote about each other (and thus also about themselves *comme si un autre*).

2.1. A faithful aimance to come: *il faut toujours recommencer et remplacer*

Derrida begins this text by denying there exists *one* beginning of a text or of anything else, since he writes: "Au moment de commencer, avant même de commencer, en ralentissant, *adagio*, et même *lento, lento*, on sait, oui, on sait qu'il faudra toujours recommencer".¹⁸⁷ He adds that to 'recommence' is to say: "déplier ou multiplier les commencements".¹⁸⁸ In this respect, in their article "Between and beyond, or 'What to the letter Has Happened'" (2006), Ginette Michaud and Sarah-Anaïs Crevier Goulet rightly argue that "the very idea of beginning, or of origin, is precisely what is deferred throughout this text, which writes itself in the intervals of

¹⁸⁷ Derrida, Jacques, *H.C. pour la vie*, 9.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

countless re-beginnings".¹⁸⁹ Moreover, in the light of the central question of this thesis, the infinite need to restart, hence to multiply and unfold beginnings, explains why a faithful *aimance* is something that may and might arrive *at once* and maybe only *once*, but also that this *once* is not *one*, but multiple, plural. A *once* that requires unfolding. Hence, when Derrida speaks of the first time he met Cixous, he does not mention a specific date or location, but breathes out one long word that compresses the multiple beginnings of their *aimance*: "Je-l'ai-rencontrée-peut-être-il-y-a-quelque-trente-cinq-ans".¹⁹⁰ In the following passages, he unfolds this word by describing several moments of them getting *in touch* with each other: before their first face-to-face meeting at café Balzar, Cixous sent him a postcard, addressing a quick word to him ("un mot très *rapide*") and she has also already heard him speaking at the Sorbonne without seeing him (the moment of non-seeing mentioned in the introduction).¹⁹¹ I will come back to the rapidity, the speed of Cixous's address, which Derrida considers as the *puissance*, the power and magic of Cixous's poetic writing. Besides that, after their first meeting "à la lettre et de face" at café Balzar, there was a non-visual encounter that Derrida describes as an even more surprising event ("Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça? me suis-je à peu près demandé. Qu'est-ce qui arrive là? Qu'est-ce qui m'arrive?"), which is the arrival of Cixous's manuscript of *Le*

¹⁸⁹ Michaud, Ginette and Sarah-Anaïs Crevier Goulet, "Between and beyond, or 'What to the letter Has Happened,'" *New Literary History* 37, no. 1 (Winter, 2006): 96, accessed July 17, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20057929>.

¹⁹⁰ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 12.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

Prénom de Dieu.¹⁹² Thus, valuing an ethics of non-seeing or of seeing differently over the idea of '(s)(a)voir', that is, seeing, knowing and appropriating the face of the other through the gaze - as I have discussed in chapter one in relation to *Mémoires d'aveugle* - Derrida pays little attention to their first face-to-face encounter and foregrounds, instead, the first times he *read* the quick message she wrote at a postcard and her first manuscript.

In fact, he remarks that everything seems to have started with the reading of this particular manuscript, a text that is unlike anything he has ever read before, "un objet littéraire non identifiable", as well as a work that he might never be able to read at all, since he asks himself: "Qui pourra jamais lire ça? Moi?".¹⁹³ In their article, Michaud and Crevier Goulet link this (im)possibility of reading Cixous to Derrida's notion of the inevitability of recommencing with which he begins his portrait:

no reading could ever have the power (*puissance*) to measure itself against the excessiveness of the oeuvre, every reading can then only fail and exhaust its own strength, but in this very exhaustion it still draws (...) enough power to re-initiate itself and start afresh, and then - each time replanted in another beginning where it is a matter, according to the paradox of the absolutely unheard-of which nonetheless repeats itself, of 'reread[ing] ... at last for the first time' (*HC 178*).¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 14.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 20, 14, 14.

¹⁹⁴ Michaud and Crevier Goulet, "Between and beyond," 96.

Or, to put it in a slightly less long and complex way, since Cixous's oeuvre is highly dense and diverse, one reading of a text, like *Le Prénom de Dieu*, invites one to restart, that is to say, to reread it over and over again and also to reread it alongside other works that Cixous has written after this first text. Hence, Derrida's appeal to keep on commencing is also an appeal and a promise to continue to reread the works of his beloved *aimie*, to keep on trying to find a new entrance into her oeuvre and to be surprised if he suddenly does, which is comparable to the poet's quest that Cixous describes in "The Last Painting or the Portrait of God" (1991): like the Japanese painter Hokusai painted the 'same' waterlilies over and over again, hoping that one day he might see that 'everything is alive', Derrida will continue to paint-read-write Cixous after this first impossible reading, thereby hoping, praying and believing that someday all of her "six cents voix" will be alive, at least to him. In the next part of this chapter, I will return to the notion of Cixous's 'six hundred voices'.

2.2. The portrait as a theatre of the Eye or the *I comme si un autre*

By comparing the (im)possibility addressed by Derrida to the one addressed by Cixous, by arguing or pretending that the impossibility of reading Cixous's 'six cents voix' might be *comme si* Hokusai's quest of the waterlilies - and these waterlilies are, of course, never the 'same', each time Hokusai sees, remembers and paints them, they will appear

differently to his (inner) eye - I perform the modality of fiction that guides Derrida's portrait of Cixous: *comme si* or *as if*. Derrida continues to return to these words throughout his portrait of his *aimie* in order to remind the reader that it is from this modality, that of fiction, that he portrays and enters into Cixous's particular fiction, into the speed of her writing "qui va plus vite que la vitesse: avant même de mouvoir et de pouvoir mouvoir, elle remplace, elle substitue, elle met à la place de (une adresse pour une autre, un mot, un phonème, un graphème par un autre, un sens par un autre".¹⁹⁵ In other words, according to Derrida, Cixous's rapid writing is a result of quickly substituting or replacing one word, thought or image by another and this absolute speed "c'est d'abord le rapport à soi comme rapport à l'autre d'une métonymie ou d'une homonymie qui *remplace* à l'instant, sur l'heure, sans attendre, un nom, une marque, adresse".¹⁹⁶ Thus, one could also argue that, in Cixous's writing, there exists a dialogue between *comme* and *si*: between saying 'si' or 'oui' to the word that suddenly arrives and that is, in some way, *comme* the already written and known word it replaces, but not entirely, never entirely, which is why this substitute inspires one to wait for another substitute to arrive. Hence, Derrida's celebration of Cixous's rapid writing through acts of replacement comes close to his own notions of *arche-écriture* and *différance*, which are also based on the idea that, in order for some (never final) meaning to arrive, one always needs more and other words. From the perspective of the main question of this thesis, Derrida begins

¹⁹⁵ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 67.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

by lovingly recognizing a difference between him and his *aimie* (Cixous's writes quickly, while he unfolds his thoughts *lento lento*), which he explains in a way that comes close to his own notions of *différance* and *arche-écriture*, how he thinks meaning exists, an idea that he rediscovers or rereads from her side, *as if* he were on her side. Thus, for Derrida, the portrayer, reading Cixous is a way to imagine the notions that are associated with 'his' name from another side, to read that these notions come to life differently in the writings of his beloved friend. In this respect, in her article "Hélène Cixous and the Portraying: on *Portrait du Soleil*" (1999), Christa Stevens argues that the portrait "is always a 'Theatre of the Eye/I,' telling in the portrayed the story of the portrayer; and this story is, as the letter 'H' figures, both 'ladder' and 'axe,' made of approaches and separations between the portrayer and her model".¹⁹⁷ Although Stevens focuses on a different text, Cixous's "Portrait de Promethea en H", the idea that the portrait allows the portrayer to explore similarities and differences between himself or herself and the portrayed, what binds and separates them, also goes for *H.C. pour la vie* and *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*.

One could wonder whether the idea of replacement is not inconsistent with Derrida's principle of singularity, with the sphere of the unique, the untranslatable and the sacrosanct? In this regard, Derrida argues that in Cixous's oeuvre, acts of replacement do not exclude the

¹⁹⁷ Stevens, Christa, "Hélène Cixous and the of Portraying: on *Portrait du Soleil*," in: *Hélène Cixous: Critical Impressions*, ed. Lee A. Jacobus and Regina Barreca (Hoboken: Gordon and Breach, 1999): 117.

sacrosanct, but go hand in hand with it, since her oeuvre is “un lieu archi-secret et archi-public, un lieu qui, par conséquent annule ce qu’il rend possible, à savoir la distinction entre le public et le privé, le phénoménal et le secret, le lisible et l’indéchiffrable d’une crypte absolue”.¹⁹⁸ An oeuvre that thus dissolves the border between what can be substituted, translated, is public and what is untranslatable, sacred and private. In order to pay tribute to Cixous’s public and private plays of replacement through homonymy, homophony and metonymy, Derrida invents a title, *H.C. pour la vie, c’est à dire...-*, that performs just that: it plays with the possible replacement of homophonic words and letters, since the letter ‘C’ of Cixous is phonetically repeated through ‘c’est’, which makes it an unpublishable and untranslatable (private) title, because it needs to be pronounced and *heard* in French. Like Derrida states, a title “est souvent une annonce”, an announcement that needs to be pronounced before it becomes visible and readable: “Il s’agit de parler à l’oreille, à l’oreille seule, là où elle ne sait pas encore lire”.¹⁹⁹ This appeal to talk to the ear that does not *know* yet how to read, reminds again of the ethical demand, expressed in *Mémoires d’aveugle*, to use other senses than the eyes, and maybe even of a desire to return to a state before language, to the sphere of the (female) Imaginary that precedes that of the Symbolic, which, as I have pointed out in chapter one, is something Cixous dreams of and aspires to in her writing. Besides that, by phonetically linking the letter ‘C’ to the word ‘c’est’, “faisant ainsi corps avec le corps enlacé

¹⁹⁸ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 17.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

autour duquel, tournant, dansant, sombrant, s'est joué le vertige même de toute la philosophie, du savoir et de la question (*ti esti*) de l'Europe grecque".²⁰⁰ In other words, through its connection with 'c'est', the letter 'C' of Cixous plays with the fundamental questions of ontology and identity, like Cixous herself, according to Derrida, plays with the question of "Qui est C" in her own oeuvre:

Qui est C? S'il faut toujours recommencer, c'est aussi qu'elle-même donne près de milles réponses à cette question, parlant, comme elle le dit elle-même, par les six cents voix qui lui viennent. Retenez la syllabe *si*, le phonème ou la note en *si*, et six, et le chiffre 600, au-delà de ce que je vais en dire à l'instant.²⁰¹

Cixous writes about these six hundred voices near the end of *Or: les lettres de mon père* (1997): "J'avais toujours pensé que je finirais par ne pas lire ces lettres (...) J'avais peur je crois de leurs six cents voix (...) Maintenant je savais que je finirais par les lire."²⁰² However, this text ends not with an actual reading of these letters, but with a promise: "Je les lirai demain, dis-je, à haute voix. C'est promis".²⁰³ To express it in a manner that connects this quote to the main question of this thesis, a faithful *aimance to come*, at the end of *OR*, Cixous postpones, delays the reading and writing of the letters of her father, which is always something to be

²⁰⁰ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 16.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Cixous, Héléne, *Or: les lettres de mon père* (Paris: des femmes, 1997), 199.

²⁰³ Ibid.

done in a future to come. This is why Cixous ends this text with a promise, because it is the very impossibility of reading and writing *all* these voices that inspires her to continue writing, to wait for the next voice to arrive. Reading *and* writing, since, for Cixous, these activities go hand in hand: she not only reads and receives the numerous voices of these letters, it is through these voices that she is able to get in touch with her father as one of her own voices, to write "mon père intérieur mon père bobine mon homme femme". Hence, while the letters of her father enable Cixous to experience '*je comme un autre*', through receiving the 'six cents voix' of these letters in a future to come, Derrida re-experiences again, by reading Cixous, one of the notions he also believes in, that is, the self as an other, as formed by and multiplied by something or someone else. Thus, through reading Cixous's works, he rediscovers this idea 'from her side', the side of life, which may seem impossible, since he speaks of himself as living, thinking and writing on the side of death. Therefore, in the next part of this chapter, I will demonstrate how Derrida deals with this aporia by making the appeal, which is also a wish and a promise, 'Il faudrait que je puisse la croire' or 'It is necessary that I might believe her'.

2.3. Lovingly recognizing Cixous's *puissance*

2.3.1. 'Il faudrait que je puisse la croire'

On the second page of *H.C. pour la vie*, Derrida writes: "Et moi je me dis, de mon côté: 'Puissé-je la croire, il faudrait que je *puisse*, oui, que je puisse la croire, là où elle n'en croit rien, quand je lui dis qu'à la fin on meurt, trop vite'".²⁰⁴ Hence, he uses the French *subjonctif* '*puisse*' in order to indicate that his appeal to believe her, to have faith in her, in Cixous, who is on the side of life, is an obligation or a demand (*il faudrait*), as well as a wish and an (im)possibility (*puisse*), since the *subjonctif* can be used to utter a desire, a wish, a command and something that oscillates between the possible and the impossible, something that *might* happen and that, according to Derrida, will happen, because I wish and command it will. Thus, this appeal follows what Caputo calls "the structure of 'messianic teleiopoiesis'", which I discussed in chapter one in relation to Derrida's prayer of a(n) (im)possible loving friendship to come, a prayer that let's the friend arrive by making an appeal to him or her, thereby acknowledging the presence, as well as the absence of the friend who is not yet a friend: "Vous-mes-amis-soyez-mes-amis-et-bien-que-vous-ne-le-soyez-pas-encore-vous-l'êtes-déjà-puisque-je-vous-appelle-ainsi".²⁰⁵ In this respect, Michaud and Crevier Goulet rightly state that

²⁰⁴ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 10.

²⁰⁵ Chapter 1, 26, 23.

Derrida's (im)possible wish and command 'Il faudrait que je puisse la croire' has "the capacity to make happen what it believes", an argument they found by citing Derrida: "Then one could only believe in miracles. And to believe would be the miracle, the magical power [puissance] of the miracle".²⁰⁶ In other words, both Derrida's prayer for a(n) (im)possible *aimance* to come as discussed in chapter one and his appeal, wish or prayer to believe Cixous, who is on another side, are based on the idea of making the impossible, the miracle, happen by believing in it, which is in itself a miracle. More precisely, Derrida argues that the only way to learn "ce que *croire* veut dire, ce que *faire* veut dire - et ce que *faire croire* engage" is to believe in what seems impossible, in the eschatological, the incalculable, the miracle.²⁰⁷

Moreover, Derrida explains the *puissance* of Cixous's oeuvre, its magic and 'power', in terms of the *subjonctif* 'puisse', which "échappe d'avance au 'c'est'".²⁰⁸ I put the word 'power' in brackets, because, like Michaud and Crevier Goulet argue, the *puissance* of Cixous's oeuvre corresponds to "the revival of a whole other power (*puissance*), of a might beyond power, a weak or powerless power which would have nothing to do with the power of force (*Macht*), always compromising with its double, violence".²⁰⁹ Indeed, Derrida states that 'puisse' proposes a change in modality, from the modality of knowing what *is*, of 'c'est', to what *might* or *may be*, to 'puisse', which comes close to the power of

²⁰⁶ Michaud and Crevier Goulet, "Between and beyond", 97.

²⁰⁷ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 14.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁰⁹ Michaud and Crevier Goulet, "Between and beyond," 97.

powerlessness of Nietzsche's maybe, as discussed in chapter one, the power of being able to live with the insecurity, doubt and undecidability that the modality of 'maybe' brings about. Derrida shows that Cixous is able to do just that in her texts, by using both meanings of *puisse* in English, *may* and *might*, by creating an *alliance* between *may* and *might*: "l'alliage précieux du désir ou du vœu et de l'autorisation accordée (- 'might I, you may, si, you might'-), de la liberté ou de la grâce donnée".²¹⁰ In other words, Derrida recognizes in Cixous's writing a *puissance* that corresponds to that of his prayer for a(n) (im)possible *aimance* to come, the prayer through which he asks or commands himself to believe her, to believe in her *puissance* to give passage, to say 'yes' to a desire and a vow, which *makes* something happen or arrive by believing in it or by *letting* it arrive. Hence, this also illustrates Stevens' idea that the portrait allows one to look for approaches and separations between *portrayer* and *portrayed*, since Derrida recognizes or re-experiences, through *portraying* and reading Cixous, something he also believes in, but expresses in another way, approaches from another perspective in his writings.

2.3.2. Making arrive by letting arrive

In order to illustrate this idea of making arrive by letting arrive in Cixous's texts, Derrida focuses on three passages extracted from *OR*: "Je **vis** d'adresse", "Je **vis** des lettres" and "Les lettres de **toute-puissance**

²¹⁰ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 45.

sont de petit format naturellement. Billets à grande **vitesse**. **À la vue** de l'enveloppe, on est sauv**é** déjà²¹¹. Derrida has marked the letters and words 'vis', 'v', 'à la vue' and 'vé' in bold to create a connection between the homonyms that, according to him, drive Cixous's writing 'on the side of life': "la *vie*, la *vision*, la *vitesse*".²¹² A writing that thus addresses so quickly and vividly ("vivement que la lettre arrive, puisse-t-elle arriver, vite selon l'accélération même et l'impatience absolue de mon désir qui voudrait la faire arriver aussitôt, sans attendre vivement") that Cixous receives the letters, referring both to the letters of her father and to the letters with which she composes words, "avant qu'elle n'arrive".²¹³ To put it in a slightly different manner, according to Derrida, Cixous's desire, her demand for and allowance of the letter that may and might arrive "abolit la différence entre *faire venir* et *laisser venir*", which indicates that both the active making and the passive letting are required for an event to arrive, whether this is the letter of a friendship to come.²¹⁴ In order to stress the equality and similarity of making and letting, of "*kommen lassen*", he calls this pair "une tautologie qui fait ou laisse arrive ce qui arrive".²¹⁵ A tautology that thus renounces Aristotle's idea of the preeminence of loving over being loved, of the active doing or giving over the passive receiving or letting, as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. And that also requires courage, as Derrida argues near the end of

²¹¹ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 56-57.

²¹² Ibid., 57.

²¹³ Ibid., 57, 58.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 61.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

H.C. pour la vie: "le courage de se rendre, au travers du refoulement, à ce qui se passe ici dans la langue, à l'enchant de ce qui arrive à la langue par la langue, aux mots, aux noms, aux verbes et finalement à l'élément de la lettre".²¹⁶ It thus requires courage to respond directly to what arrives through language, an argument Cixous also makes in "The Last Painting", as I have showed in chapter one, that is, the courage to be vulnerable, to let oneself by what comes instantly, whether these are words or names of joy or suffering.

Furthermore, when Cixous writes "Je vis des lettres", Derrida reads and writes by way of response: "je les vis, tu vis, selon l'homonymie, vis la vie, que vive la vie, vivement que je *puisse* vivre le vivre de la vie et de la visibilité sous tous les temps, que vive la vie pour la vie et pour voir, à toute vitesse, vivement".²¹⁷ Hence, this is one of the examples of how Derrida lovingly recognizes his *aimie* as different, as a writer who lives and writes life rapidly, like the first quick word she addressed to Derrida through a postcard, thereby hoping to catch up with the speed of the sun that "moves so quickly", while "We who write are so slow", as she states in "The Last Painting or the Portrait of God", which I have discussed in chapter one.²¹⁸ It is probably in this respect that Derrida and Cixous differ the most: whereas Cixous chases the impossible desire to write *as it*

²¹⁶ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 119.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

²¹⁸ Chapter one, 53.

happens, trying to, one day, paint "the marriage of time with light"²¹⁹, Derrida has accepted, even embraced the slowness and the delay that come with writing, asking the reader to slow down and accommodate to "La lenteur posée avec laquelle je procède, moi, et qui est mon *tempo*, le pas de mon insistance".²²⁰ In fact, he states that he goes "à la fois trop lentement et trop vite".²²¹ This is to say that Derrida, sometimes, also makes a quick point, after which he is shocked by all the possible meanings that this rapid statement compresses and/or represses, after which he decides to eliminate and defer the point he has just made by saying, for example, "L'autre chose que j'ai dite trop vite" and proceeding by unfolding as many hidden meanings and interpretations from as many perspectives as possible.²²² Hence, it is *as if*, for Derrida, being on the side of death, i.e., to expect death to come too soon ('à la fin on meurt, trop vite'), corresponds to expecting or fearing the point to come too soon, whereas, for Cixous, being on the side of life would mean to write so quickly that it would seem *as if* "qu'il n'y avait plus le temps", *as if* the speed of her writing annuls the point, *as if* there does not exist a point that ends. In chapter three, I will show that Cixous also lovingly recognizes this difference of *point* of view in her portrait of Derrida by celebrating, what she calls, his '*point d'honneur*'.

²¹⁹ Cixous, Hélène, "The Last Painting or the Portrait of God," in *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, ed. Deborah Jenson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 110-111.

²²⁰ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 63.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

²²² *Ibid.*, 61.

2.3.3. To return everything to the one and only side of life through vital connections

As the prophet of the eschatological, the *eschaton*, Derrida goes as far as annulling, from his *aimie's* perspective, 'his' side of death, as well as the idea that there exists 'a side' and a clear distinction between life and death. In this respect, he argues that, for Cixous

il n'y ait qu'un seul côté et non pas deux, et ce côté est celui de la vie. La mort, qu'elle ignore ou méconnaît moins que personne, la mort n'est jamais déniée, certes, elle hante et elle souffle tout, vous pourriez le vérifier à chaque mot, mais ce n'est pas un côté, c'est un non-côté.²²³

To put it in another manner, Cixous does not ignore or deny death, in fact, it haunts her texts and can be found in every word she has written, yet she does not consider it as a side, nor as an opposite side of life, because there is only one side for her: life. For someone who always feels "tourné du côté de la mort" this might be an impossible idea, to efface the side of death by turning everything to and letting everything come from the side of life, including death.²²⁴ Yet, Derrida engages in this impossible project *for life*, following his prayer "Il faudrait que je puisse la croire", by showing how living, for Cixous, is to say "pouvoir-vivre, au delà de tout savoir, de tout pouvoir et de toute contradiction, par exemple entre le

²²³ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 36.

²²⁴ Ibid.

vivre et le mourir.²²⁵ Thus, Cixous considers death as a part of life, as generating new life and not as a final end or destination.

One of the passages he reads to learn what it means, for Cixous, to let everything come from this one side of life can be found in *OR*, in which Cixous, according to Derrida, speaks of the possibility of calling to life, of resurrecting recently deceased beings, thereby creating a link between magic, speed, life and telepathy or telephony.²²⁶ The passage from *OR* that Derrida cites, in this regard, ends with the following argument:

Les **appels** de résurrection s'adressent aux personnes récemment mortes car elles restent encore entre deux portes pendant une huitaine jours. Peut-être quinze. Pendant ces jours il est encore possible de les ramener de ce côté.²²⁷

First of all, Derrida underlines that the possibility of resurrection of which Cixous speaks here shows how she returns, '*ramène*', everything to the side of life: "Qu'en tout cela, qui vient et revient, il y va de vie et non de mort, d'une puissance différentielle de la vie finie sur la vie qui reste en vie, se garde en vie, revient à la vie".²²⁸ However, it is only possible to call the recently deceased back to life within a period of eight, maybe fifteen days, which is not without a connection with the Jewish tradition of

²²⁵ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 21.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

mourning the dead for eight days, as Derrida remarks.²²⁹ But more importantly, this is to stress that one needs to 'grasp' this specific and time-restricted appeal to resurrection, which does not last forever and is thus "une appellation de la vie qui ignore aussi bien la mort que l'immortalité, à savoir l'éternité hors du temps".²³⁰ To make a brief digression, in the texts she wrote after Derrida died, *Hyperrêve* (2006) and *Insister à Jacques Derrida* (2007), Cixous also examines the possibility of experiencing moments of "intermittence", that is to say, brief moments of addressing oneself to deceased beloved in order to maybe receive signs from them.²³¹ These moments of intermittence are thus not restricted to the period of eight to fifteen days Cixous mentions in *OR*. Hence, the idea of intermittence allows Cixous to find a way to posthumously continue her *aimance* with Jacques Derrida. Moreover, her calls for resurrection and intermittence are quite different responses to the death of the friend than Aristotle's and Cicero's. As I have demonstrated in chapter one, both these philosophers consider death as an opportunity, a chance for the 'self', who will survive and be remembered through the voice of the other (Cicero) or who loves 'actively' to such an extent that its object of affection might already be dead or inanimate (Aristotle). Cixous, on the contrary, tries to make contact with the deceased in order to continue a loving bond that requires

²²⁹ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 73.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Landrot, Marine, "Entretien - Hélène Cixous: 'Je suis d'abord un auteur de textes qui n'ont pas de noms,'" *Télérama.fr*, January 13, 2007, last modified November, 21, 2012, accessed July 20, 2017, <http://www.telerama.fr/livre/helene-cixous-je-suis-d-abord-un-auteur-de-textes-qui-n-ont-pas-de-nom,89551.php>.

an engagement from both the living and the deceased *aimi(e)*; she does not wish for a 'self' to survive, but for this bond to survive, yet in a different, less tangible way.

Back to Derrida's reading of *OR*, in order for this resurrection to arrive, Cixous considers it necessary that there is a '*lien vital*' that unites two creatures, a vital link or connection that, according to Derrida, "se métamorphosera comme par enchantement" from a string of hair, to a telephone line, to a telephone cord in the following passage from *OR*:

Ce cheveu extensible, une espèce de nerf, se conduit comme un cordon de téléphone vivant. Par ce **fil** tendu entre deux âmes passent les ordres essentiels, seulement des impératifs, comme si le fil ne supportait que quelques injonctions télégraphiques. Ce sont les hommes qui font des phrases. Dieu parle par syllabes comme les animaux. Des jappements divins: l'âme aboie l'autre âme réagit comme à une décharge. Viens! Sois! Reste! Vis!²³²

Hence, for Cixous, the tensed thread or wire ("ce **fil** tendu") that is necessary to unite two souls can be a string of hair, a telephone or telegraph line, because it are these lines that are able to convey one brief word that has the immediate effect and affect of an injunction ("Viens! Sois! Reste! Vis!"), an injunction that rapidly bridges a long distance or paints 'the marriage of time with light'. Since these vital lines try to resurrect life *for* life, Derrida considers them as "la puissance de vie, il

²³² Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 74.

n'est rien d'autre que la vie pour la vie, en tant qu'il lie à la vie qui n'est autre que cet engagement qui lie la vie à elle-même - et à rien d'autre". Moreover, the passage cited above demonstrates that Cixous, besides calling back to life the deceased, also tries to reanima(l)ate the soul, which she considers as animal ("l'âme aboie," the soul barks), as well as divine and electric. Therefore, Derrida argues that the *puisse* of Cixous's *puissance* "est électrique: *may, might and power*, instantanéité du e-mail, du courrier électronique à voix nue": it is the instantaneity and speed of the brief injunction ("Vis!") that makes the letter arrive *avant la lettre*.²³³ Hence, near the end of *H.C. pour la vie*, Derrida argues that in Cixous's texts,

il n'y a plus de contradiction entre l'expérience de la magie et l'expérimentation de la techno-science la plus objective. Toutes les expériences du téléphone et de la télégraphie par exemple sont à la fois magiques et purement techniques, voire cybernétiques et transgéniques.²³⁴

In other words, according to Derrida's reading of Cixous, telephony, telegraphy, the internet, the monosyllabic sounds of animals and the quick address of Cixous's own writing can all be experienced as magical, because they have in common this capacity to annul distance (*télé*) by quickly and immediately conveying a brief injunction.

²³³ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 75.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

In this respect, in his article "Crossing Lines: Jacques Derrida and H  l  ne Cixous on the Phone" (2008), Eric Prenowitz refers to another passage from *H.C. pour la vie*, in which Derrida reads Cixous's sentence "We are bodies in spirits that are as rapid as the radio".²³⁵ Prenowitz argues that the "spirit to which Cixous refers here, according to Derrida, is originary, primordial speed. It annuls distance, to be sure, but not because it goes fast or allows something else to go fast. It doesn't even move; it is already there".²³⁶ Yes, this primordial speed is already there, but it has the latent semi-presence of the specter; therefore, it needs to be called upon and to be conveyed, transported, channeled through the word, the name or the line that makes arrive by letting arrive. Prenowitz also argues that "it is not the *tele-* of the telephone that turns distance into a rhetorical question (ontological) question", but a deconstructive turn: "if we can no longer give an opinion on the being of distance, for example, not only what it is, but if it is, then there is no longer any reason to oppose it by trying to annul it".²³⁷ However, Prenowitz uses deconstruction's critique on notions like 'presence' and 'being' to draw a conclusion that annuls the very question of distance. Instead of wondering *if* there is such a thing as distance, I would argue that there is more than one answer possible to the question 'what is distance'. For example: what is distance when one talks to someone on the telephone

²³⁵ Prenowitz, Eric, "Crossing lines: Jacques Derrida and H  l  ne Cixous on the Phone," *Discourse* 30, no. 1&2 (Winter & Spring 2008): 149, accessed July 21, 2017, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/362100>.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid., 147.

who 'is' thousands of miles away and what is distance when one hopes for a moment of intermittence or when one listens to the voicemail of someone who 'is' and 'is not' no longer there, that is to say, deceased, but still audible? After all, like Prenowitz affirms himself, the magic of the telephone lies in its ability to convert the sound of the human voice into electronic signals, thereby separating a message, a signified, from the signifier, the embodied person, much like writing does.²³⁸ Thus, what is taking place is a translation, however, this is not to say that the singularity of the particular human voice that/who (here again the question of metonymy: is the voice a who, a person or part of a person, a that?) speaks on/to the telephone or that/who writes get lost entirely; the voice one hears through the telephone and one might hear or feel while reading a letter or a literary text is singular and repeatable, public and private. If in translation, in order for some meaning to be transferred, some other meaning always gets lost (following the logic of the sacrifice), this means, in the case of the telephone or writing, that one loses the actual body, in order for a part of this body, the voice, to be perceived and received in another way; separated from the body, it says more.

In Cixous's portrait of Derrida, we will see that Derrida recognizes this idea by arguing that his mother answers better "au téléphone, dont le dispositif revient à faire sombrer le monde pour laisser le passage de la voix pure vers le fond de la mémoire".²³⁹ However, this voice is only

²³⁸ Prenowitz, "Crossing lines," 149.

²³⁹ Cixous, Hélène, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en jeune saint juif* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2001), 15.

'pure', that is to say, without a face and body, from the perspective of the receiver, since the one who speaks obviously experiences his or her voice as connected to his or her body. Moreover, while listening to a voice, one also listens to a body, to how it breathes, maybe coughs, shakes, laughs, cries; the voice draws attention, makes one listen to and imagine some parts of the body, which is why the voice is never entirely with or without the body. Of course, this idea also creates possibilities for maintaining a loving friendship after an *aimi(e)* has died. This is to say that continuing to reread Derrida, allows Cixous to re-experience his voice with(out) his body through the texts that they have written, which she does in her texts *Hyperrêve* (2006) and *Insister à Jacques Derrida* (2007).

But more importantly to the main question of this thesis, the issue of a *faithful aimance*, the *puissance* of the voice, that makes some parts of the body appear by receiving it or him or her, explains why Cixous immediately trusted Derrida when she first heard him speaking at the Sorbonne without seeing him, why she considers, to return to a quote from the introduction, this moment as a

a primal scene *par excellence*, which has marked the whole weaving of the rapport between us. A rapport of absolute confidence, of unbounded friendship, which passed principally through the voice, through the text. We trusted each other with our eyes closed!²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰ Michaud, Ginette, "Derrida & Cixous: Scenes of Hyperreading (...and something else)," *Parallax* 13, no. 3 (2007): 65, accessed July 20, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13534640701433626>.

In other words, Cixous and Derrida read the voice metonymically, as a part of themselves through which they might experience other parts of themselves and each other, through writing and rereading each other. One can trust the voice - or rather 'voices', because there is always more than one - through the text or the phone, because it carries bits and pieces of a person and therefore, might be like a person.

2.4. Derrida and Cixous: poetic *aimi(e)s comme si frère et soeur*

Up until this point, I have demonstrated how Derrida, in *H.C. pour la vie*, lovingly recognizes the poetic *puissance* of his *aimie* 'for life', how he tries to have faith in her, in 'her side', by writing her portrait. Hence, this written portrait exemplifies what I have called in chapter one a 'faithful *aimance* through (poetic) writing', a mode of friendship that is not based on the politicized figure of the friend *like* a brother, nor on notions of kinship, proximity and similarity. However, the faithful writing *aimance* between Derrida and Cixous does not pass *outside* the sphere of the family, since it are their respective families, in Cixous's case her mother and father and in Derrida's his mother, as well as their different, but comparable Jewish and Algerian heritages, that incite their writings. This is why it is all the more interesting that Derrida, besides a poetic *aimie*, also imagines Cixous as a sister, or more precisely, he speaks of her *as if*

she were his sister.²⁴¹ This 'fiction' needs to be understood in relation to his analysis of the following passage he quotes from Cixous's *Jours de l'An* (1990):

C'est comme si on nous disait: ton père mort, voudrais-tu qu'il ne le soit pas? Je ne peux pas regarder la réponse en face.

Une différence entre l'auteur et moi: l'auteur est la fille des pères-morts. Moi je suis du côté de ma mère vivante. Entre nous tout est différent, inégal, déchirant.²⁴²

Derrida cites this passage in *H.C. pour la vie* in order to let one of Cixous's six hundred voices answer the question of why she, or rather 'me', is on the side of life.²⁴³ I will explain Derrida's idea that it is *as if* they were brother and sister by focusing on how Derrida analyzes the quoted extract from *Jours de l'An*. First of all, he argues that the modality of fiction with which this passage begins ("C'est *comme si* on nous disait") indicates that the status of *nous*, that could refer to the author and me, to my brother and me or to the reader and me, is not autobiographical, but fictive, as is the status of "l'auteur" and "moi", whom Derrida regards as characters that do not represent Hélène Cixous, "ni l'auteur ni moi ne sont *elle*", yet, they are also not "*sans elle*".²⁴⁴ This is to say that, as he argues later: "Ce n'est pas elle, mais ce n'est pas une

²⁴¹ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 54.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 27-29.

autre (...) Elle est, disons, à côté d'elle-même, de son côté mais assise, comme un autre, assise à côté d'elle-même".²⁴⁵ Hence, the fictive *comme si* allows Cixous to imagine her 'identity' as multiple and heterogeneous, to think of 'Je comme un autre', an 'I' that sits next to another I or to another being to whom she responds, whom she lets pass through her. To link it to a notion explained in chapter one, the modality of *comme si* through which Cixous enters into fiction ties in with Derrida's prophetic mode of writing that gestures toward the other as the unknown and the *ailleurs*, a mode that holds the promise of surprisingly encountering an other side of one's self' or someone radically other. Moreover, by infusing the so-called 'autobiographical' and referential mode with the fictive and prophetic *comme si*, Cixous creates a scene that is intimate and 'personal', as well as public and impersonal, that is to say, hospitable to others, who might recognize something in a story that is hers *and* not only hers. In this respect, in the introductory chapter to her book *Cixous's Semi-fictions: Thinking at the Borders of Fiction* (2014), Mairéad Hanrahan calls Cixous's work "semi-fictional", an idea she supports by quoting a passage from Derrida's *H.C. pour la vie*, in which he states that the fictional element does not dominate in Cixous's texts, nor do other elements "qu'on l'appelle le narratif, le romanesque, le théâtral, l'autobiographique".²⁴⁶ Hanrahan uses the term 'semi' to designate "a

²⁴⁵ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 38.

²⁴⁶ Hanrahan, Mairéad, "Introduction," in *Cixous's Semi-fictions: Thinking at the Borders of Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 9.

spacing: it is a space of encounter, of 'giving place' to the other".²⁴⁷

Hence, one could argue that Cixous's texts are not only semi-fictional, that is to say, hospitable to other elements than the fictional, but 'semi' in general, because, like Derrida argues, they always 'give place' to the more than one, to the narrative *and* the theatrical *and* the autobiographical, to the personal/private *and* the impersonal/public. Regarding the latter, in her article "Algerian Disorders: On Deconstructive Postcolonialism in Cixous and Derrida" (2015), Birgit Mara Kaiser also examines the "indebtedness" of the 'public' or theoretical to the 'personal' and private, by looking at how Derrida's and Cixous's 'personal' experiences of growing up in Algeria and coming from two different Jewish backgrounds give birth to poststructuralist notions like *différance*, deconstruction and spectrality.²⁴⁸ Thus, one could regard both Cixous's and Derrida's oeuvre, like Derrida himself puts it, as "un lieu archi-secret *et* archi-public", a place, spacing or scene that allows the singular, sacrosanct and intimate to become public, repeatable and replaceable, without losing its singularity, keeping the sacrosanct alive.²⁴⁹

The sentence "'l'auteur est la fille des pères-morts'", extracted from *Jours de l'An*, exemplifies this going together of the unique and the replaceable, since Cixous the author does not speak of herself as the daughter of one particular dead father, but of dead *fathers*. This is why

²⁴⁷ Hanrahan, "Introduction," 3.

²⁴⁸ Kaiser, Birgit Mara, "Algerian Disorders: On Deconstructive Postcolonialism in Cixous and Derrida," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 2, no. 2 (September 2015): 193, Accessed July 22, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1017/pli.2015.16>.

²⁴⁹ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 17.

Derrida argues that, in *Jours de l'An*, the unique and irreplaceable father of Cixous, Georges Cixous, who died in 1948, when Cixous was only ten years old, "se trouve remplacé, pluralisé, métonymisé".²⁵⁰ However, he underlines that this *puissance* to replace goes hand in hand with the sphere of the unique and the irreplaceable, "avec l'expérience aiguë de l'élection, de l'unique et de l'irremplaçable, de l'innommable comme l'irremplaçable".²⁵¹ After all, Cixous is the *daughter* of dead fathers, which is why, from the perspective of his text *Le Monolinguisme de l'autre*, Derrida states that it is the unique author-daughter who inherits and follows the power of replacement: "Car le pouvoir que j'ai, le pouvoir de remplacer, ce n'est pas le mien. Il m'a été donné, comme une grâce, et je suis moi-même l'unique substitut d'une lettre, d'un ordre, d'une injonction, d'une responsabilité, d'un héritage qu'à la lettre je suis".²⁵² In other words, it is Cixous as a singular and unique author-daughter who inherits the *puissance* to replace from the death fathers that preceded her, including her own father.

Regarding the sentence "'Moi je suis du côté de ma mère vivante'", Derrida remarks that the fictive 'me' is not the *daughter of* a mother or of mothers, but is "du côté de *ma* mère vivante. Vivante et unique. Il y a des pères-morts, il n'y a qu'une mère vivante, elle est irremplaçable".²⁵³ Hence, Derrida considers this sentence as one possible answer to the question why Cixous is 'on the side of life'. In this respect, Derrida also

²⁵⁰ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 80.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 114.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid., 28.

analyzes another passage from *Les Commencements*, in which Cixous speaks of her mother Ève Cixous as someone who never lies:

Jamais Ève [Ève, certains le savent, c'est le prénom de sa mère vivante, Dieu merci, et ici présente, hor littérature] ne ment. Ma mère est où elle est. Elle n'est pas où elle n'est pas (...) Sa langue et vérité sont nouées comme deux serpents en un mariage féroce à qui veut l'entendre.²⁵⁴

To describe it in another way, it is Cixous's mother Ève who is like an event, an événement that arrives without lying, that is to say, without the delay and difference that come with the written and with literature, which is never where it *is*, since it always gestures toward someone and somewhere else, to the *ailleurs*. Although she writes in *Jours de l'An* that everything is "différent, inégal, déchirant" between the author and 'me', the author needs the 'me' who is on the side of her living mother, thus *hors littérature*, outside of literature, to write literature. After all, the author acknowledges in *Jours de l'An* that within her, there is "une force inconnue qui écrit avant moi, contre moi, et que je redoute cette fois-ci plus que jamais. C'est elle qui est ma mort".²⁵⁵ Hence, for Cixous the author, the force that writes and thus *knows* before 'me' means her death. The only way to fight and avoid this death is to go "plus vite que la mort", to write *pour la vie*, on the side of her living mother, which is to

²⁵⁴ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 34.

²⁵⁵ Cixous, Hélène, *Jours de l'an* (Paris: *Des Femmes*, 1990), 155.

say: "Écrire par surprise. Avoir tout noté par éclairs. Télégraphier".²⁵⁶

Thus, these extracts demonstrate, in another way than discussed in chapter 2.3, how, for Cixous, death and life respond to one another, are in an infinite dialogue with each other, in the sense that death can generate life, can generate a choice *for life*; to write as fast as she can in order to defer or to forget the point, the plot, a final meaning that will end it all.

Now, Derrida speaks of Cixous *as if* she were his sister, because death and life, the 'sides' of death and life, cross each other in the names of their parents. This is to say that Cixous's mother Ève and Derrida's father Haïm, which is his Hebrew name meaning 'life', meet each other on the side of life, while Cixous's father George and Derrida's mother Georgette meet each other on the side of death, which is also the side of a writing that tries to avoid death by acts of replacement and substitution (Cixous and Derrida) and by defeating death through the speed of the pen that makes arrive by letting arrive (Cixous).²⁵⁷ This is why Derrida speaks of a perfect chiasm: "ma mère serait du côté de son père, si bien que là où moi je suis, et c'est vrai, aussi du côté de ma mère Georgette, car je tiens d'elle, je serais, du coup, du côté de son père Georges, du père de ses pères, de son nom du père".²⁵⁸ In chapter 3.2., while discussing Cixous's portrait of Derrida, I will come back to the link between Derrida's mother Georgette, her death and how Derrida comes to writing. Derrida

²⁵⁶ Cixous, *Jours de l'an*, 155-156.

²⁵⁷ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 54.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

continues by stating that it is "Comme si nous étions potentiellement frère et soeur depuis les deux côtés de familles dont le moins qu'on puisse dire est qu'elles n'ont aucun rapport l'une avec l'autre".²⁵⁹ Hence, one could ask oneself whether to take this 'fiction', this imaginative affiliation based on a meeting of sides between their parents, seriously. However, the fact that these two sides of their families have nothing in common with each other *besides* a name that Derrida connects to a side, is also a comment on the magical workings of homonymic words, on the happy coincidences they create, coincidences that mean nothing in themselves, but that can be made meaningful by way of imagination, through the modality of *comme si*, which says "everything without avowing anything," like Derrida puts it in the interview between him and Cixous.²⁶⁰ After all, according to Derrida, this saying everything without confessing or asserting anything that is so characteristic of literature or the fictive is also what "weaves a link of principle between literature and democracy", which are both driven by the principle of avowing without avowing, that is to say, of making the promise that justice will arrive in a future to come, without knowing whether this will actually happen. *Il faut croire*, one just has to believe and it might happen. Besides that, it also means that Derrida, in *H.C. pour la vie*, tries to change an issue he already denounced in *Politics of Friendship*: the exclusion of women from brotherly and politicized forms of

²⁵⁹ Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 54.

²⁶⁰ Armel, Aliette, Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous and Ashley Thompson et. al., "From the Word to Life: A Dialogue between Jacques Derrida and Helene Cixous," *New Literary History* 37, no. 1 (2006): 12, accessed July 22, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20057924>.

friendship. By inventing a chiasm that transforms a coincidence, the names of their parents, into a homonymic wordplay, Derrida starts a sacred and loving friendship with a woman, Cixous, who becomes an imaginative sister through the modality of *comme si*. In this way, he breaks, once and for all, with the tradition of 'fraternization', with the figure of the friend who is 'naturally' like a brother and a political ally or a compatriot. As if to stress through this elaborate chiasm that there is nothing 'natural' or given about the loving bond between friends. On the contrary, one has to keep on (re)imagining and (re)inventing this bond, through as many different voices and texts as possible. Thus, the words *comme si*, that connect Cixous to Derrida, substitute the politicized metaphor of friends *like* brothers for the fictive and imaginative *comme si frère et soeur*.

Conclusion Chapter Two

In this chapter, I have illustrated the idea that the faithful *aimance* between Cixous and Derrida passes through the text, by analyzing Derrida's textual portrait of Cixous, *H.C. pour la vie, c'est à dire...-*, in which he portrays his *aimie* for life by readings her works and celebrating the *puissance* of her writing. Hence, in chapter 2.1., we have seen that Derrida distracts attention from their first face-to-face meeting, in order to foreground the multiple first encounters between him and Cixous through text, writing and ear. For Derrida, these 'first' encounters will

never end, since he will continue to read Cixous, thereby trying to find new entries into her works, which ties in with the idea, discussed in chapter one, that a faithful *aimance* is something *structurally* to come.

To never stop re-reading his *aimie* is also a way to make all of Cixous's '*six cents voix*' alive, a multiplicity of voices that Derrida honors by phonetically linking the letter 'C' in '*H.C. pour la vie*' to the word '*c'est*' in '*c'est à dire...-*', with which he emphasizes that identity and being are to be thought of in terms of the multiple, the plural, an idea both Cixous and Derrida believe in. More precisely, as I have explained in chapter 2.2., the written portrait allows Derrida to explore the numerous textual voices of his *aimie*, as well as some of his 'own' notions, that is to say, notions he believes in, yet from her side. This is why I have argued, thereby following Christa Stevens, that the portrait enables Derrida, the portrayer, to look at what connects him to Cixous, the portrayed, as well as at what separates them, how they often approach the same questions or notions from a different angle. Moreover, I have argued that the modality of fiction, of *comme si*, guides Derrida's portrait and, more generally speaking, connects these *aimi(e)s* for life and to the text, in which they use it to create a voice that is fictive and prophetic rather than referential and autobiographical. In *H.C. pour la vie*, Derrida also employs *comme si* to create homonymic and metonymic word plays that pay tribute to the speed of Cixous's writing, a writing that rapidly replaces one word by another that looks or sounds the same, yet may differ in meaning. Thus, the modality of *comme si* becomes a way to honor Cixous by 'imitating'

her, which is to say that he sometimes writes *as if* he were on her side, *as if* to temporarily morph into one of her voices, which might seem an aporia. Yet, it allows Derrida to celebrate the magical writing of his *aimie*, as well as to experience '*je comme si un autre*', that is, to read notions he has also written about, but to read them from her perspective, thereby receiving the voices of his *aimie*, other voices that might change his own or speak to former unknown voices within him.

In chapter 2.3., we have seen that Derrida deals with the aforementioned aporia by making the appeal '*Il faudrait que je puisse la croire*', which one could also call a wish, a promise or a prayer for a faithful *aimance* to come. A faithful and loving friendship that does not shy away from differences, distance and separation, but embraces, praises and wishes to believe in the otherness of the *ami(e)*, as well as in the power of the subjunctive '*puisse*', which is used, in French, to express a command, a wish or a 'might', Nietzsche's maybe, thus, a situation that oscillates between the possible and the impossible. Moreover, Derrida lovingly recognizes Cixous's *puissance* of *making* the letter arrive by *letting* it arrive, which rejects Aristotle's idea of the preeminence of actively loving over passively being loved. He also praises the speed with which Cixous makes arrive by letting arrive, which is to say that she immediately receives the voices or letters that come to her and tries to write *as this happens*, thereby rapidly replacing one word for another. I have argued that this *vitesse* constitutes one of the reasons why Derrida considers his *aimie* to be '*du côté de la vie*': she writes so quickly that it

seems as though there exists no point, no end, no death, whereas Derrida is always afraid that the point that ends a sentence or life comes too soon, which is why he writes slowly, in order to delay this verdict.

I have also demonstrated that Derrida follows his prayer 'Il faudrait que je puisse la croire' to the point of pretending *as if* his side does not exist, since, for Cixous, there is only the side of life, of which death is a part. This is why Derrida shows that his *aimie* refuses to believe in the impassible border between the living and the deceased or the inanimate and, instead, believes that everything comes from the side of life, can be infused with life and can be returned to life. This is why he concentrates on her appeals for resurrection, with which she tries to temporarily return to life deceased loved ones through a '*lien vital*'. As I have showed, these vital connections that are able to immediately and magically convey a message can be a string of hair, a telephonic, telegraphic or textual line or the monosyllabic sound of an animal. Hence, Derrida stresses that, for his *aimie*, there is no clear-cut distinction between the magical and the electronic or the technological; Cixous experiences the telephone, which converts the sound of the human voice into electronic signals, as something technological *and* magical. After all, this conversion is a matter of translation, a translation that makes the actual flesh and blood body invisible, in order for a part of this body, the voice, to become more 'visible', to speak more 'purely' as Derrida argues in *Circonfession*. In writing, the voice is also perceived as separated from a body in the proper sense, however, I have underlined that this textual voice is not entirely

without the body; it makes *some* parts of the body, some wounds or markings, appear more vividly, in a more 'concentrated' and intensified form, it zooms in on some specific fragments, while the body as a 'whole' remains invisible, hidden. Thus, the *puissance* of the voice also explains why Cixous immediately trusted Derrida, while 'merely' hearing his voice, and why the text can be a medium of trust, since the textual voice enables one to read some specific (wounded) parts of the body that might remain invisible if one would look at the body as a whole.

In the last part of chapter 2, I focused on a passage from *H.C. pour la vie*, in which Derrida imagines Cixous and him *comme si* brother and sister. I have explained this imaginative familial tie by close-reading Derrida's analysis of an extract from Cixous's *Jours de l'An*, in which she speaks of the difference between 'the author', who is the daughter of death fathers, and 'me', who is on the side of my living mother. In his analysis, Derrida again underlines Cixous's use of *comme si*, which she employs, in this passage, in order to transform the autobiographical mode into a fictive and prophetic one, thereby creating a scene or a spacing that is 'personal' and intimate, as well as open to repetition and reappropriation. In fact, Derrida considers all of Cixous's works as spaces that are '*archi-secret*' and '*archi-public*', which ties in with Birgit Kaiser's idea of the indebtedness of 'public' poststructuralist notions to 'personal' experiences. In fact, this is something that Derrida and Cixous share: the capacity to learn from experiences that belong to the sphere of the private, the intimate, the family and to translate these 'personal'

experiences into notions that might be relevant for others, in a larger and different context. After all, this is also the main idea of Derrida's *Politics of friendship*: friendship does not only belong to the sphere of the personal and the private, but also functions as a figure in a political context and the sphere of the political is often thought of in terms of the distinction between a friend and an enemy. To return to the idea of Cixous and Derrida *comme si* brother and sister, Derrida imagines this by inventing a chiasm that transforms a coincidence, the names of their parents, into a homonymic wordplay that links the names of their parents to the side of life or that of death. Hence, from the perspective of rethinking a fraternalized form of friendship as discussed in chapter one, Derrida rejects this brotherly form by beginning a faithful *aimance* with an imaginative sister through the modality of *comme si*. He does so by inventing an elaborate chiasm that creates an artificial tie between him and Cixous, with which he emphasizes that there is nothing 'natural' or given about the loving bond between *aimi(e)s*. On the contrary, one should never stop addressing oneself to an *aimi(e)* - who is not necessarily *like* a brother, but might also be *as if* a sister - and try to wait faithfully for him or her to countersign this address, this prayer for an (im)possible *aimance* to come.

Endnotes Chapter 2

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Chapter 3 *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en jeune saint juif*

In this chapter, I will concentrate on *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en jeune saint juif* (2001), which is Cixous's response to Derrida's portrait of her, as well as, as Laurent Milesi calls it, "a 'critifiction' about, or *circonscription* of, his first alleged 'autobiographical' text 'Circonfession' (1991)".²⁶¹ This is to say that Cixous, like Derrida, portrays her beloved *aimi* metonymically by selecting and reading specific parts of his texts *Circonfession* and *Un Ver à soie*. In chapter 3.1., I will focus on how Cixous responds to Derrida's unfoldings of their first meeting in *H.C. pour la vie*, as well to the chiasm that makes them *comme si* brother and sister. In the second part of this chapter, I will zoom in on how Cixous paint-reads period 16 from Derrida's *Circonfession*, thereby focusing on the formal aspects of this reading, as well as on the themes I have discussed in relation to *H.C. pour la vie*: the death of the father or the mother and the role of writing, of creating vital textual or telephonic lines that temporarily connect the living with their deceased or dying loved ones. In chapter 3.3., I will demonstrate how Cixous expropriates and frees the rituals of circumcision and the tallit from their gender-specificity, in order to share these acts with her *aimi*, as well as with others.

²⁶¹ Milesi, Laurent, "Portraits of H.C. as J.D. and back", *New Literary History* 37, nr. 1 (Winter 2006): 67, accessed July 23, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2006.0025>.

3.1. An *aimance* through poetry, familial sides and 'Jewishness'

3.1.1. First meetings between Gross und Klein

In her portrait of Derrida, Cixous responds to some of the possible 'first' meetings that Derrida unfolds in *H.C. pour la vie*, as I have discussed in the beginning of chapter 2. She also writes about their encounter at Café Balzar, however, Cixous immediately puts into play the modality of fiction and replacement, of *comme si*, by transforming Derrida and herself into characters, thereby underlining the fictive and replaceable status of this 'first' meeting: "Alors, au café Balzar, rimant avec hasard, de quoi Gross und Klein ont-ils parlé?"²⁶² In fact, like she points out in chapter three of her portrait, "Des Klein et des Gross", these are characters from Paul Celan's *Gespräch im Gebirg*, a book that Derrida cites in one of the footnotes of *Un Ver à soie*.²⁶³ Hence, by presenting their first face-to-face meeting *as if* it were an encounter in and through fiction, that is, an encounter between two fictive characters that she borrowed from another book of fiction and which are cited by her beloved *aimi* in another text, Cixous performs her magical *puissance* of replacing through the fictive *comme si*. More importantly, she does not imagine herself and Derrida as any characters, but as two fictive Jewish characters, which she borrowed from another Jewish writer, Paul Celan, who was born as Paul Antschel into a German-speaking family in Cernăuți, in a region between what is

²⁶² Cixous, Hélène, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en jeune saint juif* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2001), 13.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 30.

presently known as Romania and Ukraine. Hence, whereas Derrida speaks little of their different Jewish backgrounds in *H.C. pour la vie*, I will show in this chapter that Cixous foregrounds the question of 'Jewishness' in her portrait of Derrida, which adds another element to the chain of 'an-aimance-through-poetry-familial sides-and-Jewishness' that connects Derrida and Cixous.

First of all, she starts her portrait of Derrida with the question what it means to be Jewish, for a woman and for a man, and, more importantly, what it means for Derrida to be *juif*, who has wondered all of his life: "Fus-je juif? (...) Aurai-je été juif?"²⁶⁴ One of the ways in which she answers these questions is through the names and characters of Klein and Gross. This is to say that, at the beginning of "Des Klein et des Gross", she gives some possible meanings of the name 'Klein', thereby performing, as Derrida would say, the *puissance* of her *puisse*, since she states that Klein *might* refer to

le nom de mon propre grand-père maternel l'Allemand ex-austro-tchécoslovaque mort pour l'Allemagne était Michaël Klein, ma mère est une Klein (...) Klein le nom et *klein* le mot, Klein le Klein de *Gespräch im Gebirg*, le cousin germain-par-les-femmes de Gross, Klein comme étaient nommés les Juifs allemands, ou bien Gross, c'est pareil.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 9.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

In other words, the proper name 'Klein' might correspond to the last name of Cixous's maternal Jewish grandfather and, therefore, to that of her mother, whereas the word 'klein' might refer to how German-speaking Jews were marked and belittled for their so-called poor, restricted and 'impure' German, that is to say, a German mingled with Yiddish words and expressions. However, Cixous remarks that the proper name 'Klein' could as well be replaced by 'Gross', since both are German names that replace the unpronounceable Jewish name. This is why she states that:

au Juif rien n'est propre tout est prêté et emprunté, le nom propre du Juif n'a rien de propre et là je cite Celan, et son clin de sourire, disant que s'en venait le Juif, et avec lui *fut son nom, son nom imprononçable (...)*. Avec, séparément.²⁶⁶

Hence, what seems to be most of all 'Jewish', according to Cixous, is to borrow a name in German, French or English, thus, in the language that is most dominant in a particular nation state or geographical or cultural region, in order to substitute the unpronounceable Jewish name for a more 'common' first and last name.

²⁶⁶ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 25.

3.1.2. The *destinerrances* of the circumcized, hidden and sacred names of Élie and Jackie

Cixous affirms the aforementioned idea by stating that Jewish boys are given two first names, a non-Jewish name that is also the name of their national and civil identity, and a Jewish name which "parfois c'était souvent le cas en Algérie, ils ne serviront jamais et qu'ils peuvent même ne pas connaître".²⁶⁷ This is to say that, unlike the Jewish names of his brothers, Derrida's parents did not officially register his second first name Élie. Cixous cites a passage from period 16 of Derrida's *Circonfession* in order to demonstrate the effects of this effacement of 'Élie', a name Derrida has never felt or borne, which he does not know ("*que je n'ai jamais senti, porté, le nom que je ne connais pas*"), which he has received without receiving or acknowledging it in return, hence, a name like a gift ("*que j'ai reçu sans le recevoir là où ce qui est reçu ne doit pas se recevoir, ni donner aucun signe de reconnaissance en échange (le nom, le don)*") and a name he has put aside as something noble, a sign of *el(i)ection*, once he learned of its existence ("*dès que j'ai appris, très tard, que c'était mon nom, j'y ai placé, très distraitemment, mis de côté, en réserve, une certaine noblesse, un signe d'élection, je suis celui qu'on élit*").²⁶⁸

Hence, on the one hand, to receive a name without receiving it means to be marked or wounded without knowledge or consent, which is why Cixous considers Derrida's hidden and effaced Jewish name as a

²⁶⁷ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 26.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

symbol of another wound, a "blessure également administrée au corps non défendant - la *milah* la circoncision -, l'autre nom son nom d'autre, mon escarre même".²⁶⁹ This is to say that, in Derrida's case, the name Élie seems to have been given and removed at the same time and at the same moment another part of him was removed, his foreskin, which resulted in a double sore that would continue to haunt him, an *escarre* that would constitute the beginning of Derrida's notion of spectrality, the prosthesis of origins, the prosthesis of a name that has been removed and replaced by another name, Jacques, without his knowledge or consent. As Joseph G. Kronick explains in his article "Philosophy as Autobiography: The Confessions of Jacques Derrida" (2000), Derrida keeps this spectral wound or marking open, in order to "repeat it - keep it alive without being totally annihilated by it - which is to say it transfers the trauma to other texts".²⁷⁰ To relate this to Kaiser's idea of the indebtedness of poststructuralist key figures to 'personal' experiences, as discussed in chapter 2.4., this is another example of how 'theoretical' and 'abstract' ideas, such as the notion of 'spectrality', are the direct result of 'concrete' bodily experiences, in Derrida's case, of a bodily non-experience, since the religious ritual of circumcision marks and wounds the body at an age that makes it impossible to experience and remember it, hence the spectrality of this wound. Moreover, whereas Kronick calls this spectral wound a 'trauma', I would rather follow Cixous and call it a 'stigma',

²⁶⁹ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 27.

²⁷⁰ Kronick, Joseph G, "Philosophy as Autobiography: The Confessions of Jacques Derrida," *MLN* 115, no. 5 (December 2000): 1006, accessed July 24, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mln.2000.0064>.

which differs, according to Cixous, from a trauma since it is “not a sign of destruction, of suffering, of interdiction [but o]n the contrary,... a sign of fertilization, of germination”.²⁷¹ As Kaiser puts it, the Cixousian stigma it thus a “wound that is painful, yet also generative”.²⁷² In chapter 3.2., I will come back to this idea of an open wound that is painful *and* generative, while analyzing Cixous’s reading of period 16 of Derrida’s *Circonfession*.

On the other hand, to hide the name Élie from the official records is also a way to protect the ‘holy’ other name that has been given as a gift, a *don*, and that is most noble, secret and singular. This idea shines a new light on how language, according to Derrida, protects or conceals what is most secret and singular of a person, which it does by acts of replacement and substitution, like the ‘profane’ name Jacques hides, replaces and protects the ‘sacred’ name of Élie. Derrida affirms this idea in period 17 of *Circonfession*, in which he writes that his parents have hidden his Jewish name in order to keep him, who will secretly continue the family line, alive, “comme un prince dont on dissimule provisoirement la filiation pour le garder en vie”.²⁷³

In the same period in *Circonfession*, Derrida links his parents’ wish to keep Élie alive to their loss of his older brother Paul Moïse, who died

²⁷¹ Kaiser, Birgit Mara, “Algerian Disorders: On Deconstructive Postcolonialism in Cixous and Derrida,” *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 2, no. 2 (September 2015): 198, accessed July 22, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1017/pli.2015.16>.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 27.

just a few months before Derrida was born.²⁷⁴ This is why Derrida has always felt as though he replaced his dead brother. Cixous links this idea to the notions of replacement and substitution, which are not only at work in language, but also in the sphere of the family, of filiation:

Où l'on voit comment la déesse Substitution, ou bien Superstition, n'a cesse de remplacer jouant de la métonymie, et l'un par l'autre Paul Moïse par Élie aimé à la place d'un autre, bonne chose mauvaise chose, Élie à la place de Moïse.²⁷⁵

Hence, Derrida's experience that he and his brother are replaceable is another example of the tangible and 'personal' roots of an abstract poststructuralist notion like *différance*, of deferring and replacing one word, or person, for another, which Cixous does not consider as a necessarily bad thing. On the contrary, to link it to Derrida's idea of the 'messianic' and the main question of a faithful friendship 'to come' as discussed in chapter one, the inevitability of substituting one word, name or person for another is what projects us into the future, toward the other whom we do not know yet, which Derrida's calls the messianic or the prophetic and which Cixous lovingly names the "*Destinerrance du prophète dit Jackie Élie Baba d'El-Biar...*".²⁷⁶

One of the manners in which she explains the name 'Jackie' is through a dialogue between Derrida as Gross and herself as Klein, who

²⁷⁴ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 27.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 28.

asks: "Et quand donc ce nom de Jacques t'est-t-il venu?"²⁷⁷ To which Gross answers: "Quand j'ai publié *L'Origine de la géométrie* dit Gross le Grand. Il était évident que je ne pouvais pas publier sous le nom de Jackie, comprends-tu?"²⁷⁸ Klein respond that she understands why Gross cannot publish his translation of Husserl under the name of Jackie. Gross nevertheless explains: "Mon identité américaine, c'est Jacques. Jackie reste en usage dans la famille, dit Gross".²⁷⁹ The question is whether Gross cannot possibly sign the translation of a philosophical treaty that proclaims 'universal' and 'public' truths with the name Jackie, because it is a name that is used within the 'private', 'personal' and secret sphere of the family (that rational and objective philosophy tries to avoid) or because, like Cixous remarks a few pages earlier, Jackie names "un garçon avec terminaison féminine"?²⁸⁰ The answer is possibly a combination of both.

To return to the "*Destinerrance du prophète*", Cixous names this prophet "*Jackie Élie Baba d'El-Biar*" and not 'Jacques Derrida', because it are the hidden, secret and private names of Jackie and Élie that are structurally to come, that have the night visibility or the semi-presence of the specter, of something that is, in some way, concealed, repressed, circumcized or *refoulé* and that is, therefore, destined to return. One could even argue that Cixous performs another circumcision by removing the name of Jacques, instead of Élie or Jackie, from the 'official registers',

²⁷⁷ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 29.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 20.

that is to say, from the hyphenated trio friendship-philosophy-politics as discussed in chapter one, from the genealogy of male philosophers of virile virtue who search for universal truths and an apolitical form of justice to be achieved through a brotherly form of friendship. In other words, Cixous eliminates the neutral and official name of Jacques and substitutes it for the hidden, secret and sacred names of Élie and Jackie. Moreover, with these names, she prays for another form of friendship, philosophy and politics to arrive. An *aimance* that lovingly acknowledges the *aim(e)* as different and singular, a form of philosophy that is not the brotherly friend of the wisdom of universal truths, but the *aimi(e)* of 'personal' experiences that might hold some truth for others and a form of democracy that welcomes the other unconditionally and asks for justice to arrive immediately, without knowing whether and when this will 'actually' happen.

3.1.3. Two distinct axioms: Derrida's imaginative proximity and Cixous's play with difference

In a way responding to Derrida, Cixous also imagines their *aimance* in the form of a chiasm, although she substitutes the notion of the fictive, affiliative family (based on the side of George-Georgette-death and that of Ève-Haïm-life) and the corresponding idea of Derrida and Cixous *comme si frère et soeur*, for two fictive Jewish characters, Klein and Gross, that are both Jewish in a different way. In this respect, she cites a phrase in German from Celan's *Gespräch im Gebirg* that Derrida cites in

French in *Un Ver à soie*: “kam, kam groß, kam dem anders entgegen, Groß kam auf Klein zu, und Klein der Jude, hieß seinen Stock schweigen vor dem Stock des Juden Groß”.²⁸¹ Cixous considers Celan’s chiasm, “Klein, le juif, et le juif Gross”, as a figure of encounter, an encounter that takes place within the spacing of a sentence that plays with difference and identity.²⁸² This is to say that, by playing with variations in and the syntax of a particular language, by placing ‘le juif’ before or after the proper name, Cixous argues that one makes differences appear within what seems similar.²⁸³ Hence, characters, like Gross and Klein, or persons, like Derrida and Cixous, who might look the same, suddenly appear as quite or totally different, which one could consider as a comment on Derrida’s play, in *H.C. pour la vie*, with homonymic and homophonic words that look or sound the same, but have a different meaning. But more importantly, Cixous’s chiasm reflects on how to compare her work and ideas to those of Derrida, which are often regarded as similar *and* different. The same goes for their shared, but distinct Jewish-Algerian heritages: Cixous’s ‘*Algérie*’, linked to her Jewish Ashkenazi/Sephardic roots, is comparable but not analogous to Derrida’s ‘*nostalgérie*’, which is related to his Sephardic-Jewish background.

To return to one of my main concerns, rethinking a fraternalized form of friendship or reimagining the figure of the friend who is ‘naturally’ like a brother, in chapter two, I have argued that Derrida’s chiasm

²⁸¹ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 30.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

proposes another form of friendship by underlining that proximity is something fictive and invented, in any case never 'natural' and a given. He therefore imagines a familial bond between him and Cixous *comme si* brother and sister. Cixous's chiasm follows this modality of fiction by focusing on two fictive characters, Klein and Gross. Yet, instead of imagining a fictive form of proximity and similarity, she makes differences appear through the workings of language, thereby stressing the importance of what is *not* similar, close, equal, symmetrical etc.

3.2. Cixous's miniature poems: painting-reading-writing

Derrida

In the first part of this chapter, I have demonstrated how Cixous's and Derrida's portraits of each other respond to one another by focusing on how Cixous imagines the first time they met in person, or rather 'in character', at café Balzar *as if* they were Gross and Klein. This response shows how Cixous, in her portrait of Derrida, immediately puts into action the modality of fiction, the *comme si* that Derrida braids through *H.C. pour la vie*, in order to emphasize the modality on which their faithful *aimance* through writing is based. However, unlike Derrida, Cixous foregrounds the question of Jewishness in her portrait, which she introduces with a chiasm that is quite different from that of Derrida, since it draws attention to difference and distance, rather than to similarity and proximity.

In this part of chapter three, I will look at how Cixous, thereby following Derrida, reads and writes her beloved *aimi* metonymically, that is to say, by selecting, reading and 'paint-writing' nine periods from his text *Circonfession* that show him at his most singular and unique. As we have seen, in *H.C. pour la vie*, Derrida also portrays Cixous by reading and analyzing passages he selected from her texts *Les Commencements*, *Jours de l'An* and *OR*. Moreover, we will see that Cixous, in *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, responds to Derrida's portrait of her by performing her magical homonymic and homophonic word plays. However, they differ in how they present their readings of each other; from a formal point of view, I will show that their portraits are quite divergent.

3.2.1. Deconstructive readings and miniature poems

This is to say that Derrida's reading of Cixous has the form of a 'classical' derridean deconstruction, in which he proceeds fragment by fragment: he concentrates on one selected passage, unfolds it, adds another line to his analysis or focuses on another sequence, then on another, and another, all of which show a different colour or voice of Cixous. The passage from *Jours de l'An* in which Cixous speaks of the difference between 'the author' and 'me' illustrates this reading strategy of citing a passage in order to divide and deconstruct it sentence by sentence: "C'est comme si on **nous** disait: ton père mort, voudrais-tu qu'il ne le soit pas? Je ne peux pas regarder la réponse en face"²⁸⁴.

²⁸⁴ Derrida, Jacques, *H.C. pour la vie, c'est à dire...* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2002), 27.

Cixous's portrait of Derrida looks quite different, since she alternates her writings and reflections on her *aimi* with the nine periods she selected from *Circonfession*. Figure 1 shows her reading of period 16.

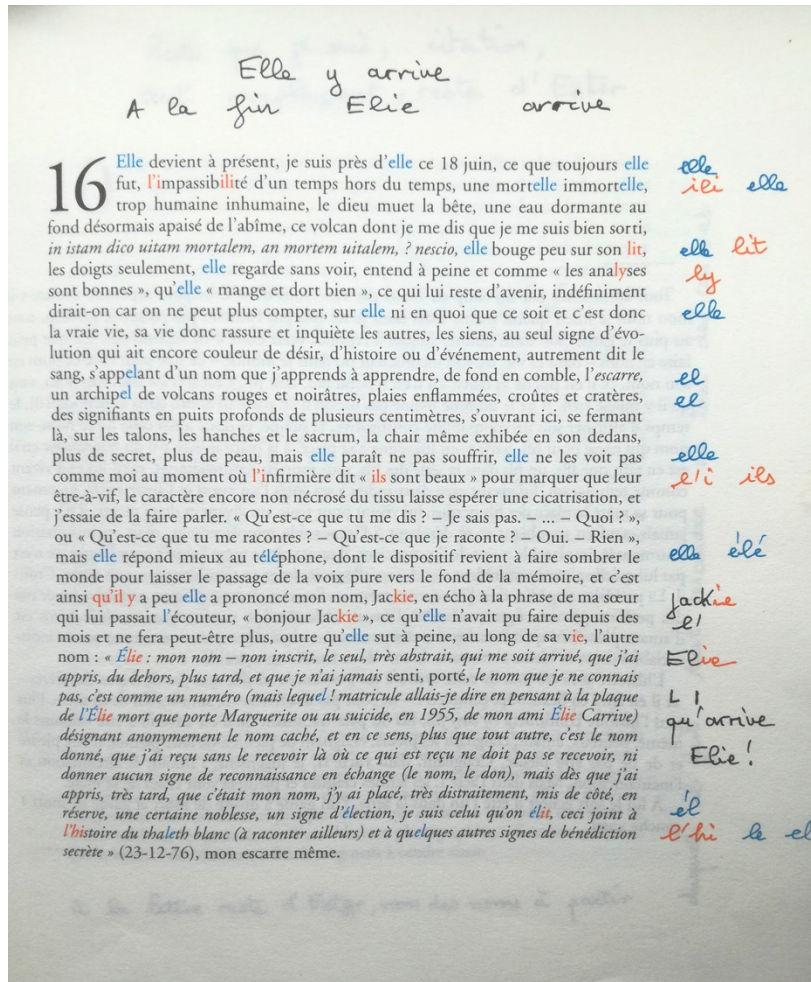


Figure 1 "Period 16," *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 15.

This figure demonstrates that Cixous quotes the periods from *Circonfession* in their entirety and on one single page, thereby uniting the fragments that are scattered across the pages of Bennington's essay. Hence, contrarily to Derrida, who divides the passages of his *aimie*, Cixous unites her *aimi*'s fragmented parts in one textual body that looks

like a miniature poem. After all, she also paint-writes these periods: by highlighting certain words in red or blue pen and by scribbling notes, remarks and sequences of letters in the margins in red, blue or black pen. Thus, she portrays Derrida by letting him speak, but she also shows how her hand lovingly colours and brightens his writings, how she touches certain words with a blush of red or a hint of blue, as if to indicate: read these coloured words differently, as if they were printed in braille. Hence, one could link this to the notion of seeing or reading differently, as discussed in chapter one in relation to *Mémoires d'aveugle*, as well as to Cixous's wish to 'see everything', also the letters within words that one easily overlooks and which one thus needs to make re-appear, by way of a colour, for example. Derrida also marks certain words or letters, like the word '**nous**' in the cited extract from *Jours de l'An*, but he usually marks the entire word and in plain black bold, he does not colour them.

Moreover, like Cixous, Derrida comments on the passages he quotes, but he uses the regular brackets to distinguish Cixous's text from his. Derrida's comments in *H.C. pour la vie* thus interrupt Cixous's text, while Cixous writes her notes in the margins of Derrida's *Circonfession*, much like Derrida himself writes the 59 periods of this text "into the inferior margins of Geoffrey Bennington's essay, *Jacques Derrida*".²⁸⁵ Hence, Cixous's 'marginal' notes in *Portrait de Jacques Derrida* are an example of how she lovingly recognizes and follows, in her own distinctive way, her *aimi's* 'marginal' writing in *Circonfession*. A writing that might

²⁸⁵ Regard, Frédéric, "Derrida Un-cut: Cixous's Arts of Hearts", *Paragraph* 30, no.2 (2007): 1, accessed July 25, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.3366/prq.2007.0024>.

not be as marginal or inferior as the name suggests; on the contrary, the margins are a magical rather than a minor spacing, since Cixous's notes shine a whole different light or colour on the 'core' text. After all, she not only marks certain letters in red and blue, she also repeats these words and letters in the margins on the side, thereby creating colourful sequences of "elle" and "el" and "ili, li, ly, ils, ie, l'hi" that highlight the themes of period 16, life, death and the telephone, to which I will come back in chapter 3.2.2. This is why, in his article "Derrida Un-cut: Cixous's Arts of Hearts" (2007), Frédéric Regard argues that "Cixous's manual labour consists in expressing the unarticulated yet-to-be-said of the intimate Derrida".²⁸⁶ Indeed, as I will demonstrate in chapter 3.2.2., Cixous's colourful markings and handwritten notes highlight or brighten notions or ideas that are hidden, implicit, suggestive or lurking in these periods. Thus, it is the typically Cixousian nearsighted view that wants to look at things from extremely close-up, as I have showed in chapter one, that allows for the return of her *aimi's* 'yet-to-be-said', for the arrival of what lingers in the shadow and waits to be reanimated by the hand of someone else, someone dear. However, according to Regard, Cixous's hand does so in order to "secure a survival, a sur-feit of life for the text just as it is, without overtaking it, without taking over from it".²⁸⁷ My problem is with Regard's idea of 'securing', since the whole point of this thesis is to demonstrate that the text, or writing, does not 'secure'

²⁸⁶ Regard, Frédéric, "Derrida Un-cut," 7.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

anything, any life, for a future to come; besides and after Cixous, one needs other friends to lovingly make Derrida's words alive.

The fact that Cixous's remarks are handwritten is also significant. First of all, it reminds us of Cixous's refusal to write by way of a computer and thus, as Eric Prenowitz puts it, to write "everything by hand, trusting only in the tactile relation to the written page, 'the contact between my hand and the paper'".²⁸⁸ Besides that, the handwritten notes make it impossible to copy her responses to Derrida by way of typing; one has to reproduce them by photographing the page, hence, by way of a click, in an *Augenblick*, which ties in with the electrical speed of her writing that Derrida celebrates in *H.C. pour la vie*. Hence, this is another example of how, in Cixous's texts, bodily writing and technology do not oppose or exclude each other, but respond to and work with each other.

3.2.2. A dialogue in red and blue between life, death and the telephone

Although their portraits differ from a formal point of view, period 16 shows that Cixous does respond to the theme of calling back to life the (recently) deceased through 'vital connections', which Derrida lovingly recognizes as Cixous's *puissance* in *H.C. pour la vie*. Hence, in period 16, Cixous performs this *puissance* by creating a dialogue in red and blue

²⁸⁸ Prenowitz, Eric, "Crossing lines: Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous on the Phone," *Discourse* 30, no. 1&2 (Winter & Spring 2008): 137, accessed July 21, 2017, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/362100>.

between Derrida's dying mother ("elle"), the "l'écouteur" (receiver) of the "téléphone" and Derrida as "Élie" or "Jackie".²⁸⁹

As the subtitle of *Circonfession* indicates, Derrida has written this text between January 1989 and April 1990, during the months his mother Georgette Sultana Esther Safar was dying, as if to defer her death, the final sentence, the final point, through these 59 periods.²⁹⁰ In chapter six of her portrait, Cixous lovingly calls this desire to delay the final point, that of a sentence, life or the final verdict, Derrida's "Point d'honneur".²⁹¹ As I have showed in chapter 2.4., Derrida considers himself to be on the side of his mother, which, in *Circonfession*, manifests itself in a writing that, as Mireille Calle-Gruber puts it: "chemine avec la mort, cherche l'allure capable d'accompagner ma mère dans sa mort" (45/220), de se tenir 'dans l'alliance avec la mort' (27/130) de la mère".²⁹² To describe it in another way, the 59 periods of *Circonfession* testify of Derrida's impossible desire to accompany his mother to death, into death, as if to turn himself, through these periods, to the side of death, thereby hoping to make her 'immortelle' through writing. The difference between Derrida and Cixous is thus a difference in direction, since, contrarily to Cixous's appeals for resurrection that try to return the (recently) deceased to the one and only side of life, Derrida wishes he could write and gesture toward the side where his mother is heading to, the side of death, thereby

²⁸⁹ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 15.

²⁹⁰ Bennington, Geoffrey and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (Paris: Éditions Seuil, 1991).

²⁹¹ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 59.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 335.

creating periods of a writing in-between life and death, a writing in which life meets death, in which "vie-et-mort ne font qu'un pas".²⁹³

The dialogue in red and blue in period 16 highlights and colours this encounter between death (blue) and life (red), by marking the letters 'el/elle' in blue and the words with an 'i' in it, like "vie" and "Jackie", in red.²⁹⁴ In the margins on the side, this conversation between "elle" and "el" and "ili, li, ly, ils, ie, l'hi" is repeated.²⁹⁵ Hence, Cixous thereby creates a visible and audible connection, in colour and sound, through the eye and the ear, between the dying mother marked in blue, "une mortelle", whom Derrida wishes she was "immortelle", and the living and warm-hearted 'i', Jacques Derrida, who is lovingly called "Jackie" by his mother.²⁹⁶ Hence, this exemplifies Regard's idea that Cixous's hand touches the "unarticulated yet-to-be-said of the intimate Derrida", since her colourful markings make the loving bond between son and dying mother re-appear in a different form, as well as his desire to write her immortal and the hidden names of Jackie and Élie.

In period 16, Derrida also reflects on this hidden name, "Elie", whose colours indicate that this name is inherited from the 'dead fathers' who preceded him, from his uncle 'Élie' to be precise, whose name Derrida has received without receiving it, making it a hidden, spectral name that will continue to return, a wound that will remain open and painful, but also generative 'for life', hence the red 'lie' in "Elie", the

²⁹³ Calle-Gruber, "Périodes," 335.

²⁹⁴ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 15.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

name “qu’elle sut à peine, au long de sa vie”.²⁹⁷ This idea corresponds to the notes she has written in black pen above period 16 (“Elle y arrive” and “À la fin Elie arrive”), as well as in the margins on the side: “Jackie l’Elie qu’arrive Elie!”²⁹⁸ Hence, this is Cixous’s demand for the arrival of her *aimi*, of Élie the elected, the chosen one, the young Jewish Saint, the Messiah who is structurally to come, that is to say, who will continue to arrive, to return, who is like the open, spectral stigma of circumcision that has given him this name. Thus, this is another example of how her colourful markings and handwritten notes in the margins retrace one of her *aimi*’s notions, that of the ‘messianic’, which she does by highlighting the hidden name of Élie and making an appeal for his arrival.

Moreover, by highlighting ‘élé’ in “téléphone” and ‘l’ in “l’écouteur”, Cixous connects his dying mother, “elle”, to receiving a word through the lines of the telephone, since Derrida remarks that

elle répond mieux au téléphone, dont le dispositif revient à faire sombrer le monde pour laisser le passage de la voix pure vers le fond de la mémoire, et c’est ainsi qu’il y a peu elle a prononcé mon nom, Jackie, en écho à la phrase de ma soeur qui lui passait l’écouteur, ‘bonjour Jackie’, ce que qu’elle n’avait pu faire depuis des mois et ne fera peut-être plus, outre qu’elle sut à peine, au long de sa vie, l’autre nom: ‘Elie’.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 15.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

I already partially cited this passage in chapter 2, in order to illustrate the idea that the voice one receives through the telephone or the text is with and without a body. This is to say that the 'invisible' 'pure' telephonic or textual voice makes some parts of the body appear in a different way than they would through the mediation of sight; it makes these bodily parts speak more and more directly to one's memory. I have also showed in chapter two that Derrida, in *H.C. pour la vie*, reads the *puissance* of these telephonic and written lines from Cixous's side, since, in *OR*, she writes about these lines as vital connections that enable her to temporarily return the (recently) deceased to the one and only side of life. Hence, what is interesting is that Cixous, in her portrait of Derrida, reads and highlights the power of the telephone from his side, by reading one of his periods in *Circonfession*. Thus, this time, the red and blue markings make a notion they both believe in, the *puissance* of telephonic and textual lines, re-appear. Cixous responds to Derrida's wish to accompany his mother into death that it is through receiving his mother's voice that says "Bonjour Jackie", first through the telephone, then through the text, that he can continue to write *elle immortelle*, not indefinitely, but for a singular, brief moment in time. Thus, this shows that the portrait also allows them to experience an idea they both believe in from the side of the *aimi(e)*, as well as to respond to this other side, since Derrida, in *H.C. pour la vie*, lovingly acknowledges the magical *puissance* of telephonic and textual lines from Cixous's side of life and Cixous, in *Portrait de*

Jacques Derrida, lovingly highlights and comments on Derrida's desire to follow his mother to the side of death.

3.2.3. Two affaires de lettres: Ester and the lost letters

Furthermore, according to Cixous, what links Derrida to his mother Georgette Sultana Esther, the reason why she is the one through whom Derrida comes to writing, "c'est une affaire de lettre".³⁰⁰ In fact, Cixous speaks of two letter affairs in her portrait, since she, in the first place, refers to Derrida's *La carte postale: de Socrate et Freud et au-delà* (1980), in which he tells the story of the Biblical Ester (without an 'h') after whom his mother is named. This Ester suspended a bloodbath, the extermination of all the Jews, by withholding a letter and substituting it for another.³⁰¹ Hence, what interests Derrida in this story are "ces lettres qui donnent et qui suspendent la mort, ce qui les lie au *sort*, au bon et au mauvais, à l'écriture de la chance, de la destinée, du hasard, de la prédiction en tant qu'elle jette un sort".³⁰² Much like his biblical mother Ester, Derrida's concern is with the suspension of death and slaughtering, of delaying the violence of the point, which he tries to avoid through the substitution of words, of letters. Cixous lovingly recognizes this refusal of blood and violence in her *aimi*, who has "garde les lettres de noms et de mots, il rejette le sang, les massacres d'innocents aux oubliettes".³⁰³ Thus, in *La Carte Postale*, Derrida renders justice to the woman who

³⁰⁰ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 36.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

³⁰² *Ibid.* 37.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

prevented a violent massacre by remembering her name, the name that remains, *qui reste*, of which 'Ester' is an anagram. Cixous writes in this respect: "Ester c'est lui à l'envers, *reste*, c'est son mot, c'est ce à quoi il tient après tout, au *reste*, à rester et au *rest* anglais".³⁰⁴ In other words, this name is Derrida's, since it designates what remains ('*reste*') and returns, the specter, but also what needs to remain a secret, protected and singular.

Regarding the question of (auto)biography, Cixous underlines that Derrida does not write about his mother, but "écrit près d'elle, avec ces lettres [the letters of her name], autour d'elle, depuis son puits inépuisable, depuis El-Biar (le puits en arabe) terre qu'elle est fendue par ses eaux par son déferlement renouvelé".³⁰⁵ This is why she explains Derrida's proximity to his mother Esther by referring to a biblical story. In order to further circumvent the (auto)biographical and referential fallacy, she, once again, puts into action the modality of fiction, of *comme si*, since she imagines and writes herself into the room where Derrida's mother died: "Je suis dans la chambre, je les suis tous les deux, tantôt mère tantôt fils. Et que vois-je?".³⁰⁶ She sees it is his mother Esther who

ouvre la veine du texte, qui l'eût cru, ce n'est pas ici le père qui est à l'origine de la littérature, c'est la mère, je l'ai toujours dit et su, mais attention c'est la mère-qui-ne-sait-pas (donner), la mère qui ne suit pas,

³⁰⁴ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 38.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 39.

elle ne lit pas, elle ne cite pas, elle ne dit même plus son nom, elle ne l'appelle pas, c'est elle, la mère qui fait écrire.

Thus, in Derrida's case, it is not the father who opens the veins of literature, like George does for Cixous. It is a woman, Georgette Sultana Esther, who makes Derrida write, yet who (no longer) reads or writes herself. This is why Cixous remarks: "Il est avec sans elle. Il est avec elle et elle n'est pas avec lui. C'est la figure même de l'amour, de l'âme contrariée de l'amour, ce qu'il appelle contretemps".³⁰⁷ Hence, being near someone who almost dies is an experience of solitude, of standing alone while being together, which is not only the figure of love, but also of love in friendship, of *aimance*, of lovingly granting the *aimi(e)* the right to stand apart, like I have demonstrated in chapter one.

The second *affaire de lettre* arrives when Derrida is unable to find the letters, the cards, he sent to his mother two times a week for thirty years, which Cixous narrates by adopting Derrida's perspective, thereby creating a form of free indirect discourse: "Il n'est pas dans son armoire. Ah! L'armoire! Il pensait bien y être gardé - il croyait - le croyait-il?".³⁰⁸ On the one hand, Cixous speaks of these unfindable letters as a painful loss, a wound that is like a second circumcision, a second removal of a part of his body: "La circoncision coupe; et elle, la mère, recoupe, championne de la surenchère qu'elle est, il le savait *dès la première page*

³⁰⁷ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 39.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

elle, la circoncision, sa mère".³⁰⁹ She recognizes the irony of these two acts of circumcision, since he did not attend his first circumcision, while she did not attend his second.³¹⁰ On the other hand, I have called the wound of circumcision a stigma and, according to Kaiser's reading of Cixous, the stigma is painful, yet generative. Hence, Cixous regards the lost letters as grievous, but also as a gift: "un don détourné à celui qui a découvert les caprices de la destinerrance".³¹¹ This means that this gift inspires Derrida to wait for his letters to return in a different form, through a writing that is inherited and 'his own', that is to say, singular.

Cixous thus lovingly recognizes and retraces the main idea of her *ami's* text *Monolinguisme de l'Autre*, a 'monolingualism' that, in the first place, comes 'from' the other, as one inherits a so-called 'mother tongue' from the ones who preceded me, like Derrida inherits it from his mother, who has granted it to him as a gift, so that he can create a singular monolingualism of 'his own'. To put it in a slightly different way, this makes Derrida an inheritor who is destined to make the lost letters, "ces lettres déléguées, ces destinerrantes", return through letters that are inherited and 'his own'.³¹² It also means that Cixous and Derrida share this second *affaire de lettres*, since she defers the reading of her father's letters in *OR*, which remains something to be done in a future to come, while Derrida needs to substitute his lost letters for new ones, which are

³⁰⁹ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 41.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid., 39.

also to arrive *structurally*. Thus, one can add another element to the chain that connects Derrida to Cixous by speaking of 'an-*aimance*-through-poetry-familial-sides-Jewishness-and-*affaires de lettres*.

3.3. Circumcision and the tallit as open and transferable figures

3.3.1. Circumcision as a spectral and noble wound and a figure of translation that bind Cixous and Derrida

In the last part of chapter three, I will concentrate on two Jewish rituals, the act of circumcision and the tallit, which show how the question of 'Jewishness' connects these *aimi(e)s*. Yet, these rituals, paradoxically, only bind Derrida and Cixous, after being freed from their religious and cultural Jewish context, that is, after being translated into notions that are relevant in a larger context and can be reappropriated by others.

As I have demonstrated in chapter 3.1., in *Portrait de Jacques Derrida* Cixous writes about the act of circumcision as something that, for Derrida, is most 'personal' and singular, something that has profoundly touched and formed him, thereby using it as a lense through which to read her *aimi*. Hence, she portrays Derrida as someone for whom everything (deconstruction, the idea of an inside and an outside, *différance*, spectrality, the messianic, the monolingualism of the other etc.) started with the spectral removal of a particular part of him, his foreskin; a wound that would remain open and that is destined to continue to return, that is to say, to be repeated in many different forms,

like the painful and generative re-circumcision of the lost letters of his mother. However, Cixous also shows why Derrida considers the ritual of circumcision as something that depersonalizes. This is why she wonders, like her *aimi*, what 'to circumcize' could mean in a larger context, thereby transforming this religious and gendered ritual into a transferable figure or paradigm that she, as a Jewish woman, can share with her *aimi*, as well as something that might not be particularly Jewish at all, a "circumcision par alliance".³¹³

In this respect, in chapter VII of her portrait, called "Les Circonfictions d'un Objecteur de Circoncision", Cixous cites a passage from Elisabeth Weber's *Questions au judaïsme* (1996), a book in which Weber interviews, among others, Jacques Derrida. Cixous shows that, in this *entretien* with Weber, Derrida speaks of the idea of circumcision as a figure: "La question reste de savoir ce qu'est le judaïsme comme figure, justement; et ce qu'est la circoncision comme figure".³¹⁴ Moreover, Derrida states that he has always experienced the act of circumcision as "un problème de figure", because it confronts him with the question: "je suis né juif ou suis circoncis"?³¹⁵ Cixous describes this problem as "un cas de détournement", a matter of a detour or a diversion that asks the following question: "SUIS-JE JUIF OU FUIS-JE JUIF"?³¹⁶ Thus, according to Cixous, the questions are 'Am I Jewish' or "Do I flee/retreat from being Jewish"? One could translate Cixous's translation of Derrida's problem as:

³¹³ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 63.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

it is by taking away a part from me, my foreskin, by retreating or withdrawing this from my body, from me, that I become Jewish. According to Cixous, this retreat is both singular and repeatable. Singular, since “*la circoncision n’a lieu qu’une fois*”, as Cixous demonstrates Derrida writes in *Shibboleth*.³¹⁷ In his case, the unrepeatable, singular event of his circumcision took place on “23 juillet 1930, et ce jour-là était aussi l’anniversaire de sa mère”, as Cixous remarks.³¹⁸ Hence, this is another seemingly insignificant coincidence, which, from Cixous’s perspective, could be regarded as a vital line of magical numbers and dates (his mother’s birthday falls on the same day as the ritual of circumcision, since both events take place eight days after his birth) that connects him and his mother to each other through the act of circumcision. However, the ritual of circumcision is also a repeatable retreat, since, like Kronick argues, as a ritual it “belongs to repetition; and it is consigned to forgetfulness, being no more within reach of memory than one’s own birth”.³¹⁹ This is why Derrida, according to Cixous, wonders whether it is right to speak of ‘my’ circumcision, since this ‘me’ has not witnessed the ritual, did not countersign its wound. Cixous therefore imagines Derrida asking a question that he also asks himself, in other words, in *Circonfession*: “Comment tourner autour d’une blessure, se demande-t-il si c’est la ‘mienne’ (...) puis-je dire *ma* blessure

³¹⁷ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 78.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Kronick, “Philosophy as Autobiography,” 1005.

de cette ouverture qui taille en moi la part de l'étranger?"³²⁰ She continues this imagined inner dialogue: "Mais si *je* ne peux pas tourner autour de *moi*, un *je* peut tourner autour des mots".³²¹ Hence, the 'je' is linked to a verb in the third person, 'je peut', as if to say: I cannot turn around myself, around a wound that is not actually 'my wound', since it existed without my knowledge or signature, but 'an I' can turn around words, although not in the first, but in the third person, thereby affirming the idea of "*je est comme si un autre*". This affirms again the idea that autobiography does not exist, that there is only such a thing as hetero-autobiography, since the *hetero* always precedes the *auto*.

Correspondingly, language precedes me, like 'my' circumcision precedes me. This spectral wound gestures toward something that is removed from me and that, from that moment on, takes place 'outside' of me and can return to me. Thus, the well known deconstructive structure of inner and outer, the plays and reflections on an 'inside' and an 'outside' are also brought about by an 'experience', circumcision, that might be called 'hetero-personal' or 'auto-public' rather than merely 'personal'.

Hence, Cixous follows her *aimi's* notion of circumcision as a figure or a metaphor, because this allows her to share it with her *aimi*; it is as such that this highly gender-specific ritual can be re-appropriated by 'others', i.e., Jewish women, non-circumcized Jews and non-Jewish man and women. In this respect, Cixous paraphrases Derrida by stating: "Tout homme alors est circoncis. Traduisons dit-il pour ne pas oublier, selon le

³²⁰ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 65.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

même trope donc aussi toute femme... Nous sommes tous traduits et en traduction - circoncis - donc".³²² To link it to the modality of fiction and metonymy, both Derrida and Cixous speak of circumcision *comme si* translation and of translation *comme si* circumcision, because both acts involve replacement and substitution: one word or skin for another (I will come back to what comes in the place of the foreskin according to Derrida), as well as a loss, of meaning and of me. To circumcize or to translate thus means to disappropriate, to take something away that used to be 'mine', that belonged to 'my' identity, 'my' body. However, Cixous underlines that Derrida rejects the idea that "une certaine non-identité à soi", being a stranger, to a certain extent, to oneself, is the sole prerogative of Jews.³²³ If this would be true, Cixous argues, all poets would be Jewish or all Jews would be like *comme si* poets, in the sense that both are born in language and through language, which is their only belonging, in language as other and that comes from the other who preceded me:

Alors pas juifjuif pas juif-même pas plus ou moins juif mais juif-comme-Celan-qui-était-juif-comme-Marina-Tsvetaïeva-qui-était-juif-comme-poète-qui-était-juive comme tous ceux qui sont nés pour ne pas habiter la ville hyperchrétienne dit-elle dans le *Poème de la fin* (1924), nés pour l'expulsion, nés pour n'avoir d'autre toit que toi la langue, nés

³²² Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 78.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 78.

dans la langue, et nés *de* la langue, nés à la langue qui nous précède et nous commande".³²⁴

Hence, in this passage, Cixous not only argues that Jews and poets share a similar sense of belonging, she also creates a connection between herself and Derrida as Jewish poets who are born through and reside in language.

The figure of circumcision as a wound also enables Cixous to write about the markings, the '*noblessures*', they share, which are brought about by their experiences with colonial and racial violence and dispossession. In this respect, right at the beginning of her portrait, she remarks that she shares with Derrida "la circoncision", not that of the penis in particular, but

celle du coeur, je l'ai connue aussi - *la* Circoncision à laquelle Jacques Derrida aura donné ses lettres de noblessures, nous avons en miroir un nombre de stigmates précis et datés Alger 1867, 1870, Oran 1940, Alger 1940, 1942, 1954, 1956, toutes ces dates de pâques, passations, expulsions, naturalisations, décitoyennisations, exinclusions, mise à l'index, à la porte, dates de guerres, de colonisation, incorporation, assimilation, indigè/ne/stion qui constituent l'archive de ce qu'il appelle 'ma nostalgie' et que j'appelle mon 'algérianisme'.³²⁵

³²⁴ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 79.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

Thus, these noble wounds also connect Cixous and Derrida and could therefore be regarded as another aspect that makes them *comme si* brother and sister, an aspect that engenders a form of kinship through the blood of the stigma, instead of that of the 'actual' family.

3.3.2. The tallit that substitutes the circumcized skin

In the last chapter of her portrait, "La peau en plus", Cixous reads the text Derrida wrote for *Voiles, Un Ver à soie*, in which he writes, among other things, about the skin that substitutes the removed foreskin, as well as the other part his mother 're-circumcized', that is to say, the letters he could not find in his mother's closet. Cixous writes in this respect, partially citing Derrida: "*Dans l'armoire, le voici en hébreu sous sa transfigure, le tallith, 'il m'attend bien caché dans sa cachette à la maison, il ne voyage jamais'*".³²⁶ Hence, what does her *aimi* find in another closet? According to Cixous: "À la place de la peau volée", instead of or on the place of the stolen foreskin comes the tallit of sheep's wool, the other skin: "l'autre, la peau cachée, et ne venant pas de n'importe quel animal mais du mouton de la brebis ou du bélier".³²⁷ For Derrida, the tallit, the shawl for prayer, thus replaces the skin removed during the act(s) of circumcision. Furthermore, he emphasizes that the tallit is not made of any animal, but of a sheep: a ram or an ewe. It thus commemorates the death of the sheep, which is why Cixous speaks of "la peau commémorante,

³²⁶ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 103.

³²⁷ Ibid.

commémourante peau de brebis fut vivante et mourut pour le tallith".³²⁸

Cixous stresses that Derrida does not consider his shawl for prayer as a veil, but as a skin "sous la protection de laquelle il murmure", under which he mutters, murmurs, thereby vocally commemorating the sacrificed (female) sheep by imitating its sound or voice.³²⁹

Cixous also asks whether this shawl is another "chose d'homme? réservée? excluante?"³³⁰ In some way it is, since women "n'ont pas le tallith", as Derrida remarks in *Un Ver à Soie*.³³¹ Traditionally, only Jewish boys are given this shawl for prayer on the occasion of their bar mitzvah and a father is only allowed to bless his sons under this shawl on the day of Yom Kippur. Yet, Cixous also acknowledges Derrida's desire to free his tallit of the sheep's blood, of the blood of the sacrifice, and of the sacrifice of women, who are not granted the right to pray under the protection of this holy shawl. According to Cixous, her *aimi* wishes to liberate the tallit from its gender-specificity, much like he tries to expropriate and open up the act of circumcision for others to re-appropriate it. After all, as we will see in the next chapter, Derrida stresses that the tallit, like the ritual of circumcision, comes from the other, a sheep, and asks its owner to obey the commands of someone else, God, which is why this shawl for prayer can never be completely 'his', that is, a possession. Thus, both the act of circumcision and the tallit are open and transferable figures, as well as singular events, since the act of circumcision happens only once, on one

³²⁸ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 103.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Derrida, Jacques, *Un Ver à soie*, in *Voiles* (Paris: Galilée, 1998), 46.

particular day, and one sheep dies for one tallit, for one man, who will be buried under *this* shawl and not another.

Moreover, Cixous writes that Derrida wants to believe his shawl for prayer is different, because it is completely white and lacks the traditional markings in the form of blue threads: "les talliths c'est comme ça il y a du sang, sauf dans le mien veut-il croire".³³² Hence, according to Cixous, her *aimi* dreams of a tallit "préoriginaire", a tunique "blanche", innocent, of wearing and seeing the former sheep's skin in a different, non violent way.³³³ She quotes Derrida in order to illustrate this wish, who writes in *Un Ver à Soie*: "Mon tallith blanc appartient à la nuit, à la nuit absolue".³³⁴ Thus, the white and innocent tallit belongs to the night, to a night's visibility - which is the visibility of the specter - where there is only grace, no seeing and knowing.³³⁵ This is why Cixous describes her beloved friend as the "juif au toucher, juif à tâtons du tallith, juif au tallith indécidé: sans savoir, à la fin de cette bénédiction sans mot".³³⁶ The significance of touching that Cixous emphasizes here, brings into mind Derrida's *Mémoires d'aveugle* and Cixous's "The Last Painting": like a blind man, Derrida needs to grope his way forward, à *tatons*, without knowing whether he will find the 'second innocence' of which poets dream; he can only hope and believe he will, some day. Regarding the main question of this thesis, by regarding the tallit as a figure, Cixous and

³³² Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 104.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid., 105.

Derrida thus translate another Jewish and gendered ritual into something that they can share, under which they can approach each other in a faithful *aimance* to come. I will elaborate on this idea in the next chapter, while reading *Un Ver à Soie*.

Conclusion Chapter Three

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that Cixous follows Derrida's portrait of her, in the sense that she also reads her *aimi* metonymically by selecting and paint-reading specific parts of his texts *Circonfession* and *Un Ver à Soie*. Regarding the main question of this thesis, this means that Cixous's *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en jeune saint juif* also exemplifies the idea that it is through writing that these *aimi(e)s* engage in a loving and faithful *aimance* to come. Yet, whereas Derrida focuses on the modality of fiction, on *comme si*, in his portrait, thereby stressing that his lifelong *aimance* with Cixous passes mostly through the fictive textual voice, Cixous's portrait of Derrida foregrounds the question of 'Jewishness' as something that connects and separates them. Connects *and* separates, since, because of their different Jewish backgrounds and distinct genders, 'Jewishness' is also an element of difference, which Cixous illustrates by quoting a chiasm of Paul Celan that plays with the position of 'le juif'. Hence, I have argued that this chiasm, like Derrida's, rethinks a fraternalized form of friendship, because it emphasizes the importance of fiction and imagination in creating a loving bond, which

Cixous does by imagining a conversation between herself and Derrida as two fictive characters: Gross and Klein. Yet, the chiasm that Cixous follows, foregrounds difference, it draws attention to what is *not* similar and close, whereas Derrida's chiasm is based on corresponding familial names and sides; his concern is thus with imagining a fictive proximity between him and Cixous.

In chapter 1.3.2, we have seen that Cixous also writes about the hidden and sacred names of Élie and Jackie in her portrait, names that have been removed, or 'circumcized', from the official records in favour of the more neutral first name 'Jacques'. Therefore, I have argued that these names are like spectral and open wounds that are destined to return. Cixous speaks, in this respect, of the "*Destinerrance du prophète dit Jackie Élie Baba d'El-Biar...*", with which she removes or 'circumcizes' the neutral name 'Jacques' and substitutes it for the secret and sacred names of Élie and Jackie, thereby following Derrida, who, in *Circonfession*, has already freed these these names of obscurity.³³⁷ Through these names, Cixous also hopes for a different form of friendship, philosophy and politics to come, which is to say: a loving friendship that celebrates difference instead of sameness, another form of philosophy that acknowledges the wisdom of 'personal' experiences that can be translated into notions that might hold some truth for others and a new form of politics that is based on faith and trust, on believing in the promise and asking for justice to arrive immediately, instead of suspicion and nihilism.

³³⁷ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 28.

In chapter 3.2., I focused on how Cixous portrays Derrida by reading and paint-writing the periods he wrote for *Circonfession*, which she unites and transforms into miniature poems that touch the letters of her *aimi* through colourful markings and 'marginal' handwriting. Thus, from a formal point of view, Cixous's portrait differs greatly from *H.C. pour la vie*, in which Derrida reads his *aimie* in a classical deconstructive way. However, I have showed that thematically, she responds to her *aimi's* portrait by creating, in period 16 of *Circonfession*, a dialogue in red and blue between life, death and vital telephonic and textual lines, thereby highlighting Derrida's struggle with his mother's agony of death. As we have seen in chapter 2, these are themes that Derrida also discusses in *H.C. pour la vie*, in order to demonstrate how Cixous returns the (recently) deceased to 'her' side, that is, to the one and only side of life. Thus, I have argued that the portrait allows them to retrace a notion they both believe in, the *puissance* of telephonic and textual lines, from the side of the other, as well as to respond to this others side.

Cixous also underlines that, in her *aimi's* case, it is the mother, Georgette Sultana Esther, and not the father, George Cixous, who brings Derrida to writing, who 'opens the veins of literature'. She illustrates this idea by narrating two *affaires de lettres* that both link Derrida to his mother through the themes of substitution and deferral: the first letter affair connects Derrida's mother Esther to the Biblical Ester who suspended a bloodbath by substituting one letter for another, while the second letter affair concerns the lost letters of Derrida's mother, which

inspire Derrida to keep on substituting this lost heritage for letters of his 'own'. Since Cixous, in *OR*, also defers the reading of the letters of her father, I have argued that these *affaires de lettres* are another element that can be added to their 'aimance-through-poetry-familial-sides-Jewishness-and-*affaires de lettres*'.

In the last part of chapter three, I have looked at how Cixous, by reading Derrida, translates the Jewish and gender-specific rituals of circumcision and the tallit into figures or wounds that she can share with her *aimi*. I have demonstrated that, for Derrida, the act of circumcision is a singular and highly personal event, as well as a repeatable and non-personal ritual that can be reappropriated by those who are not Jewish and/or circumcized. I have particularly paid attention to the latter, since the notion of circumcision as a transferable figure allows Cixous to speak of the 'circumcisions of the heart' that she shares with her *aimi*, that is to say, the noble wounds brought about by their experiences with (post)colonial violence, exclusion and expropriation. I have showed that Cixous and Derrida also write about the tallit as a unique event *and* an open figure that comes from the other, a sheep, and asks its owner to follow the commands of the holy Other, God, or, from Derrida's perspective, the *wholly* other. Hence, according to Cixous, Derrida dreams of freeing the tallit from its gender-specificity and from the blood of the sheep, from the sacrifice, which he does in *Un Ver à Soie*, as I will demonstrate in chapter four. From the point of view of the main question of this thesis, I have argued that, as a figure, the tallit forms another

element that connects Derrida and Cixous, a shawl under which they approach each other in texts that are like prayers for a faithful *aimance* to come.

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Chapter 4 *Voiles*

In this final chapter, I will concentrate on *Voiles*, a work that brings into conversation two texts: *Savoir*, which Cixous wrote in 1997 and *Un Ver à Soie*, which Derrida wrote while reading *Savoir*. Hence, this shows again how, for these *aimi(e)s*, reading and writing are in a constant dialogue with each other, how Cixous and Derrida trace and retrace each other's writings and their own. In the same year, 1997, the two texts were published in the journal *Contretemps*, after which they were brought together in *Voiles* (1998).³³⁸ From a thematic point of view, we will see that the texts in *Voiles* correspond in many ways to Derrida's *Mémoires d'aveugle* (1991) and Cixous's essay "The Last Painting or the Portrait of God" (1991). Moreover, Cixous reads *Un Ver à Soie* in the last chapter of *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en Jeune Saint Juif*, which makes this portrait an intertext as well.

I will begin by reading Cixous's *Savoir*, a short text in which she narrates the birth of sight and the loss of her myopia after a surgery that lasered her eyes. In the second part of this chapter, I will focus on Derrida's *Un Ver à Soie*, in which he learns about the loss of Cixous's veil by reading *Savoir* and prays for the arrival of a verdict that is *not a voile*.

³³⁸ Milesi, Laurent, "Portraits of H.C. as J.D. and back", *New Literary History* 37, nr. 1 (Winter 2006): 68, accessed July 23, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2006.0025>.

4.1. Celebrating and mourning sight and nearsightedness

Cixous starts *Savoir* by writing: “La myopie était sa faute, sa laisse, son voile natal imperceptible. Chose étrange, elle voyait qu’elle ne voyait pas, mais ne voyait pas bien (...) Elle avait des yeux et elle était aveugle”.³³⁹

This beginning shows, first of all, that Cixous narrates the story of her myopia or of her sight, ‘sa voir’, in the third person. After all, as we have seen in chapter 3.3., ‘an I’ can only revolve around words, “un je peut tourner autour des mots”, in the third person, as a character and as one of Cixous’s possible ‘I’s’, one of her six hundred voices, as Derrida would put it. Moreover, Cixous speaks of *her* myopia as a mistake that is unmistakably ‘hers’, something with which she defines herself, that leads her by leashing her. Hence, a few pages later, she describes it as her fate, “Son sort”, “son étrangèreté essentielle, sa propre faiblesse nécessaire accidentelle”; a strangeness or weakness that is so much a part of her life, that she considers it as “ma vie, ma ville natale”, thus, as a sort of belonging.³⁴⁰ For Cixous, her nearsighted eyes are her destiny that makes her the ‘elected’ of her family, “l’élue de la famille, la myope parmi les cygnes”, an idea with which she transforms an innate weakness into a positive and generative force for life.³⁴¹ Moreover, this notion of election forms another element to the chain of ‘an-*aimance*-through-poetry-

³³⁹ Cixous, Hélène, *Savoir*, in *Voiles* (Paris: Galilée, 1998), 11.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

familial-sides-Jewishness-*affaires de lettres*-and-election' that binds Derrida, Élie the elected, and Cixous, the elected myope '*parmi les cygnes*' and among *les signes qui signent et contresignent*'.

Furthermore, the eyes that see that she cannot see force her to be careful in order to avoid painful mistakes, like when she did not recognize the difference between a stranger and her mother: "La douleur de n'avoir pas reconnu l'inconnu ne pouvait pas être ma mère, la honte de prendre une inconnue pour la connue par excellence, le sang n'a donc pas crié, pas senti?"³⁴² Thus, she regards her nearsightedness not only as a belonging, but also as a stigma, a marking that can cause great pain and shame, when her eyes do not see and her blood does not recognize the connection to whom she 'actually' belongs: her mother. This is why she states that, because of this loss of sight, "Le Doute et elle furent toujours inséparables (...) Voir était un croire chancelant. Tout était peut-être. (...) Vois-je ce que je vois? Ce qui n'était pas là était peut-être là. Être et ne pas être ne s'excluent jamais".³⁴³ Hence, from the perspective of Derrida's *Mémoires d'aveugle* and his notion of spectrality, Cixous's stigma of blindness does not only lead to painful experiences, the doubt and uncertainty that come with it are not merely troubling, they also ask of her to rely on believing, instead of seeing and knowing, to open up to what is not yet visible, but which might be there and become visible at the very last moment, like the specter. In other words, her fate of nearsightedness demands her to have the same kind of blind faith as the

³⁴² Cixous, *Savoir*, 14.

³⁴³ Ibid.

blind man and the 'blind' artist who needs to draw from his memory, as Derrida writes in *Mémoires d'aveugle*. To relate it to the main question of this thesis, the veil of myopia forces and allows her to live with eternal doubt, with Nietzsche's '*viel/veil-leicht*', with the modality of what may and might, in which one must believe in order for a faithful *aimance* for life to arrive through the voice(s) of the text. The veil of myopia is thus a stigma that is, like Birgit Kaiser argues, "painful, yet also generative".³⁴⁴ Laurent Milesi remarks that this lack of sight is also generative in another way, since it might be her myopia that brings her to writing.³⁴⁵ To support this idea, he cites the following sentence from Cixous's "Coming to writing": "Maybe I have written to see; to have what I never would have had".³⁴⁶ According to Milesi, this means that the impossibility of instantly 'seeing and having' her mother from a distance, of "*l'a-voir* and *l'avoir*", is what guides Cixous to "the Promised Land of Writing".³⁴⁷ This is true, yet, Milesi's argument requires a little precision, since, as I have pointed out in chapter one, Cixous's nearsightedness leads her to a particular kind of writing, to seeing and writing differently, i.e., from her soul's perspective or to look "at things from very, very close up".³⁴⁸ Cixous's reading of period 16 of Derrida's *Circonfession*, analyzed in chapter 3, illustrates this tendency to zoom in on the most tiny details, to lovingly touch specific

³⁴⁴ Kaiser, Birgit Mara, "Algerian Disorders: On Deconstructive Postcolonialism in Cixous and Derrida," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 2, no. 2 (September 2015): 198, accessed July 22, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1017/pli.2015.16>.

³⁴⁵ Milesi, "Portraits of H.C.," 69.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Cixous, Hélène, "The Last Painting or the Portrait of God," in '*Coming to Writing*' and *Other Essays*, ed. Deborah Jenson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 109.

letters or sequences of letters within words in order to create another layer of meaning.

After the laser surgery that made the veil in her eyes disappear, Cixous describes how "Ce qui n'était pas est. La présence sort de l'absence, elle voyait cela, les traits du visage du monde se lèvent à la fenêtre, émergeant de l'effacement, elle voyait le lever du monde".³⁴⁹ In other words, what was once absent, is now suddenly present, the eyes are unveiled, uncovered, naked in one magical *Augenblink*: "C'était voir-à-l'oeil-nu, le miracle".³⁵⁰ Cixous thus experiences it as a miracle to see with her own eyes, without the help of glasses, without an intermediary. Hence, she considers the birth of vision as a gift, a *don*: "le monde lui est donné dans la main des yeux. Et ce qui lui fut donné en ce premier jour, ce fut le don même, la dation".³⁵¹ As I have demonstrated in chapter one, Derrida is suspicious of the all too naked and wide-open eyes that immediately see, know and try to appropriate the world around them, which is why he advocates an ethics of blindness in *Mémoires d'aveugle*. Cixous's response to this sudden birth of sight is quite different, since she considers it as a miracle that makes her laugh: "Sous le coup de l'apparition elle éclatait de rire. Le rire des accouchements".³⁵² Hence, the sudden appearance of what was once not there makes her laugh, she is jubilant about this "je suis là, oui' de la présence, le non-refus, le non-

³⁴⁹ Cixous, *Savoir*, 15.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 15-16.

retrait".³⁵³ She therefore wonders: "Voir est-il la jouissance suprême? Ou bien est-ce: cesser-de-ne-pas-voir?" Thus, contrarily to Derrida's appraisal of blindness in *Mémoires d'aveugle*, Cixous celebrates the birth of sight in this text, which she considers as the ultimate form of pleasure. To put it differently, Derrida links clear vision to the dangers of a positivistic world view, while Cixous also experiences the positive sides of sight and acknowledges the dangers, the risk involved in non-seeing. In *Mémoires d'aveugle*, Derrida also takes into account this risk, yet he still idealistically, as the young Jewish saint that he will be, preaches the 'Gospel of blindness'.

Moreover, the idea that seeing can give us instant joy also reminds of a notion from "The Last Painting", of the poet's courage to experience instant joy (as well as instant suffering) and to write or paint as fast as s/he can in order to grasp this moment of joy *as it happens*. Hence, one could relate the difference between Cixous's celebration of the sudden appearance of sight and Derrida's refusal of 'seeing clearly' to the different sides that Derrida discusses in *H.C. pour la vie*. This is to say that Cixous is on the side of life and sight, because she welcomes, as she writes in *Savoir*, the 'yes' of presence, of what her eyes suddenly see, "le non-refus, le non-retrait", thereby making an appeal to future appearances to come: "Viens, futur, viens, toi qui ne cesses de venir, n'arrivant jamais, viens, venant!"³⁵⁴ Derrida makes the same hospitable and messianic appeal, yet, as Cixous acknowledges in her portrait of her

³⁵³ Cixous, *Savoir*, 16.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

aimi, Derrida's thinking revolves around 'non' instead of 'oui', around negation and refusal.³⁵⁵ A 'non' that he wishes to say in a non-violent, loving way: "Il voudrait bien dire *non* sans que ce fût violent, *non*, par respect de chaque autre toi non comme moi".³⁵⁶ To put it more precisely, Derrida's 'non' refuses and defers the final point of death, while Cixous's 'oui' extends, embraces and enjoys the duration of life. A similar desire, yet a different accent and direction.

However, it does not take long before the *contretemps* arrives, before sudden joy turns into sudden grief. This is to say that, in *Savoir*, Cixous not only praises the birth of sight, but also mourns the loss of her myopia, since she suddenly exclaims: "mais je suis en train de *perdre* ma myopie!"³⁵⁷ Now, she suddenly experiences myopia as a gift. With the (dis)appearance of this gift also vanishes: "le flou, le chaos avant la genèse, l'intervalle, l'étape, l'amortissement, l'appartenance à la non-voyance, la silencieuse pesanteur, le passage quotidien de frontière, errances dans les limbes".³⁵⁸ Hence, after her myopia has disappeared, what appears, what 'reveals' itself retrospectively is "son force, son étrange force, lui était révélée, *retrospectivement* au moment même où elle lui était retirée".³⁵⁹ In other words, it is only through unveiled eyes that she can love her veil of myopia, that she can enjoy "le passage par le

³⁵⁵ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 33.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Cixous, *Savoir*, 17.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 18.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 19.

non-voir" that frightened her when she was nearsighted.³⁶⁰ *Savoir* thereby illustrates that it is only as something other, something outside of her, no longer a part of her, that she can love her nearsightedness. This exemplifies the idea that love always gestures toward the other; in order to love, one needs an other, someone else or another perspective, to witness and to countersign. Much like Cixous needs Derrida, and Derrida Cixous, in order for a faithful *aimance* through writing to come, a writing that lovingly portrays, that is to say, which lovingly examines how they often share the same desires, wounds and prayers, yet experience them from different perspectives.

Faithful to the vow that binds these *aim(e)s*, this story ends with a promise, since Cixous promises that, although she has received *Sa voir*, she will not leave "mon peuple", the myopes, she will remain one of the "non-voyants".³⁶¹ Hence, the loss of her myopia rests like Derrida's mother Esther *reste*, that is to say, in writing, in Cixous's case, in a writing that will continue to touch letters from extremely close up, a writing that gropes its way forward, relying on the *savoir-faire* of her soul's eye.

³⁶⁰ Cixous, *Savoir*, 18.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

4.2. Before the verdict: the truth of the silkworm

4.2.1. Derrida's prayer for the arrival of a verdict that is not a *voile* but a shawl

As pointed out in the first part of this chapter, Cixous celebrates the birth of sight and mourns the loss of her myopia in a story that ends with a promise: the land of the veil will remain her belonging. In *Un Ver à Soie*, Derrida moves into a quite different direction, literally, since each chapter starts with specific dates and locations: chapter one is introduced by "Vers Buenos Aires, 24 novembre-29 novembre 1995, chapter two by "Santiago du Chili-Valparaiso, 29 novembre-4 décembre 1995 and chapter three by "São Paulo 4 décembre-8 décembre 1995.³⁶² Due to these dates and locations one might expect a travel journal, yet this text is far from an autobiographical account that represents Derrida's journey across South America. On the contrary, written two years after these travellings, in 1997, *Un Ver à Soie* says farewell to the age-old '*histoires de voiles*', that is to say, the histories of veils and sails. As the subtitle "*Points de vue piqués sur l'autre voile*" indicates, this text is all about stitching points of view to another '*voile*', one that is neither a veil, nor a sail.³⁶³ Hence, Derrida writes in English that he is "*fed up with veils and sails*", with "*la vérité comme histoires de voiles*".³⁶⁴ He wants to abandon *le voile*, the veil that conceals and reveals meaning and truth, as well as

³⁶² Derrida, Jacques, *Un Ver à soie*, in *Voiles* (Paris: Galilée, 1998): 25, 49, 71.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 42, 40.

la voile, the sail that has been used to discover, map, chart, know and appropriate the world.

This is why, in *Un Ver à Soie*, he addresses himself to the Portuguese explorer Fernand de Magellan, who organized the first circumnavigation around the world, from Europe to Asia, during which he crossed a dangerous narrow located at the southern tip of South America that would be named after him, since he was the first European man to cross it: the Strait of Magellan. Derrida writes:

Pauvre Magellan, tu parles. Car je les vois encore, les caravelles.

Pour lui écrire de très loin *comme si*, pris dans les voilures et poussé vers l'inconnu, à la pointe de cette extrémité, *comme si* quelqu'un attendait le nouveau messie, à savoir un 'heureux-événement': surnommé *le verdict*.³⁶⁵

First of all, by using *comme si*, the modality of fiction, Derrida indicates that the 'je' who writes to Magellan has a fictive rather than an autobiographical status. In *Savoir*, Cixous also tries to avoid the autobiographical fallacy, which she does by letting one of her six hundred voices narrate the story of her myopia. Furthermore, the extract cited above demonstrates that Derrida's concern in *Un Ver à Soie* is with the verdict or, rather, with the moment "Avant le verdict, le mien, avant que, tombant sur moi, il ne m'attire avec lui dans la chute, avant qu'il ne soit

³⁶⁵ Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 27.

trop tard, ne point d'écrire".³⁶⁶ Hence, the verdict of which Derrida speaks in this text is that of the final point, the end of a sentence, the revelation of the final meaning of a text, a marking or stigma, death, the universal truths that the 'proper' philosopher tries to reveal, the final arrival of the Messiah, all of which Derrida refuses to believe in and wishes to defer. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Cixous lovingly calls this her *aimi's* "point d'honneur" in *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*.³⁶⁷

Contrarily to men like Magellan, Derrida waits for the arrival of a verdict that has nothing to do with the sails that try to discover, know and appropriate the world. This is why he states that he is searching for a verdict "absolument imprévisible, absolument, c'est-à-dire sans aucun rapport avec la prévision, donc avec la vue. Question de vie ou de mort, mais que se décide autrement qu'à déchirer, crever, soulever, plier, déplier quelque chose comme 'voile'".³⁶⁸ For Derrida, the verdict has nothing to do with vision, anticipation and prospect, one just has to believe it will come from the other, "comme une opération de l'autre, confiée à l'autre, dans la main de l'autre".³⁶⁹ To put it differently, it must arrive unexpectedly, surprisingly, like the unpredicted event of an *aimance* for life that one does not see coming, like the letter Cixous makes arrive by letting it arrive, thus by immediately receiving an event when it arrives all of a sudden.

³⁶⁶ Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 25.

³⁶⁷ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 59-60.

³⁶⁸ Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 43.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

Derrida writes that he does not merely want to see the veil, to see “en eux, vers eux ou à travers eux, le mot et la chose, mais tenir à leur sujet un discours qui touche enfin, en un mot un discours ‘pertinent’ qui les dise proprement, même s’il ne donne plus rien à voir”.³⁷⁰ Thus, he desires to create a discourse that *touches* the veil, because to touch “‘cela’ qu’on appelle ‘voile’, c’est de toucher à tout”.³⁷¹ In chapter one, we have seen that it is also this sense that guides the blind man in *Mémoires d’aveugle*, since the blind must stretch out their arms and touch with their hands what the sighted see with their eyes, making the hands a sort of prosthesis of or ‘verres’ (glasses) for the eyes. Comparably, *Un Ver à Soie* is not a journal that traces the travellings of an author, an *auto*, but the ‘touchings’ of a silkworm who vehemently wishes to abandon the stories of *le voile* and *la voile* in order to focus on a tissue that is not a veil, nor a piece of clothing, but a shawl for prayer that Derrida likes to touch rather than to see: “Un châle de prière que j’aime à toucher plus qu’à le voir, à caresser tous les jours, à baiser sans même ouvrir les yeux”.³⁷² In chapter three, I have demonstrated that this emphasis on touching is why Cixous speaks of her *aimi* as the “juif au toucher, juif à tâtons du tallith, juif au tallith indécidé: sans savoir, à la fin de cette bénédiction sans mot”.³⁷³ In *Un Ver à Soie*, Derrida stresses the importance of touching his tallit by writing that he does not wear it anymore, but only touches it with “mes doigts ou mes lèvres, presque tous le soirs, sauf quand je voyage au

³⁷⁰ Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 27.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid., 44.

³⁷³ Cixous, *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, 105.

bout du monde, car comme un animal il m'attend, bien caché dans sa cachette, à la maison".³⁷⁴ For Derrida, this holy tissue is thus like an animal that waits for him to come home after a journey around the world, like the one around South America.

Maybe even more importantly, the tallit is not only *like* an animal, but must also *come from* an animal, that is to say, must be made of the 'living skin' of a sheep, mostly that of an ewe: "il faut que le talith soit du vivant pris sur du vivant porté par du vivant".³⁷⁵ Of course, he deconstructs this Law of the 'living for the living' by noting that the shawl for prayer is made of the skin of an animal that *once* lived but is now dead and that this once living, now dead skin will bury the skin of a living man who will, one day, die.³⁷⁶ Derrida gives much attention to the 'skin' of the tallit that was an animal in the first place, because "elle commémore de quelque façon une expérience qu'on appellerait sacrificielle".³⁷⁷ He wonders whether 'sacrifice' is an apt translation of the Hebrew word "Korban", which means "l'approche, le rapprochement".³⁷⁸ Hence, 'to approach' or 'to bring together' might be more adequate translations, since the tallit brings together life and death through the skin of a once living (female) sheep. As I have demonstrated in chapter three, Cixous's interpretation is also more close to these translations, since she writes about the tallit as a tissue that commemorates the skin

³⁷⁴ Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 46.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 66.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 67.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

of the sheep, under whose protection Jewish men pray and murmur, thus under which man and sheep, the living and the deceased, approach each other, come together and murmur. To return to chapter two and three, the tallit could therefore be regarded as another '*lien vital*', a vital connection like a telephone line, string of hair or textual line, that allows for a moment of contact, of intermittence, between the living and the dead, like life approaches death in the 59 periods of *Circonfession*. From the perspective of the main question of this thesis, the tallit is a skin under which Cixous and Derrida approach each other in *Portrait de Jacques Derrida* and *Voiles* - a work that itself brings together their voices - it is a skin under which these *aimi(e)s* come together and murmur prayers that sometimes correspond to each other and sometimes differ. This 'textual tallit' could even be considered as a vital link that enables them to continue their *aimance* beyond Derrida's death, which Cixous does in *Hyperrêve* (2006) and *Insister à Jacques Derrida* (2007).

Furthermore, the tallit does not merely come from a sheep, from an other, it also asks its 'owner' to follow the Law of the holy Other, that is, God. After all, although Derrida's expression '*mon tallith à moi*' makes it seem as though it were his possession, the shawl for prayer is given to him to remind him of the law of God, to follow his commandments:

Avant le voir et le savoir, avant le pré-voir et le pré-savoir, elle ["la chose", the *tallith*] se porte en mémoire de la Loi" and therefore this

shawl is "la propriété (le pour soi) de ce qui au fond n'appartient pas et n'est là que pour rappeler les commandements."³⁷⁹

Thus, the tallit asks Derrida to do something different than seeing, knowing or wearing it like a piece of clothing, since it does an appeal to his memory, it reminds him of the Law of the other. From a religious perspective, this is God, the holy Other, but from Derrida's perspective, as I have pointed out in chapter one, it reminds one of the Law of the wholly, radically other, who precedes me and whom I follow through a prophetic mode of writing that gestures toward him or her as someone different and unknown. Hence, this principle of following corresponds to Derrida's main argument in *Monolinguisme de l'Autre*, whereas the appeal to memory instead of sight can be retraced to *Mémoires d'aveugle*, to the idea that drawings of the blind are also drawings of the blind artist, who needs to draw from his or her memory, because of the gap between the eyes that instantly see and the hands that follow in a slower pace.

4.2.2. Cixous's touchings in *Savoir*

In *Un Ver à Soie*, Derrida also reads Cixous's *Savoir* from the 'verres' (glasses) of touching, which is why he argues that what technoscience gives his *aimie* is not so much sight, but 'touching': "ce que la technoscience au laser vient de lui donner (...) ce fut moins le voir, moins

³⁷⁹ Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 44.

l'entendre aussi que le toucher".³⁸⁰ In order to support this idea, he cites the passage in *Savoir* in which Cixous writes that, now she can see with her own eyes, "*Elle venait de toucher le monde de l'oeil*", thus, she touches the world through the eye, with her own eyes.³⁸¹ Derrida also reads Cixous's touchings from another opening by arguing that *Savoir* "chante le savoir des lèvres", since "La consonne labiale est chantée dans ce poème (...) Le toucher de *Savoir* est un se-toucher des lèvres".³⁸² In order to support this idea he cites the following sentence from *Savoir*: "*Elle n'avait pas su que les yeux sont les lèvres sur les lèvres de Dieu*".³⁸³ In other words, according to Derrida, in his *aimie's* poem, knowledge (*savoir*) arrives through the hands that touch and gesture toward the other, the elsewhere, as well as through the lips that touch each other. In his reading of *Savoir*, Derrida thus switches the accent from sudden sight to sudden touching, since this ties in better with his own beliefs. Correspondingly, he focuses more on how Cixous mourns her myopia in this text, than on the joy and pleasure she, initially, experiences from the birth of sight, since he states that "au fond de la joie de son voir, au coeur de sa vision survenue et non revenue (...) il y a le deuil".³⁸⁴ Like I have explained in chapter 4.1., this accent on mourning the loss of blindness ties in with Derrida's ethics of blindness and his suspicion of a 'clear' positivistic point of view.

³⁸⁰ Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 54.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid., 55.

³⁸³ Ibid., 56.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 50.

Savoir also struck Derrida, because he did not know of his *amie's* nearsightedness, she did not share this secret with him: "Elle ne m'avait pas dit le secret de tous ces jours, je ne l'avais pas vu, ni vu venir".³⁸⁵ He stresses that with 'coming', he does not mean that it came to him as a revelation or an unveiling, but as an event of a different order, of the same order as the verdict. In other words, Derrida regards Cixous's myopia as a singular event of the order of the messianic, of *attendre sans s'attendre*, of waiting without an horizon for something or someone to come unexpectedly, to structurally come, a coming that is thus continually and forever suspended. Thus, a text like a messianic event that will only read itself "dans un français à venir, qu'il s'y reconnaisse ou non, et cela ne peut arriver qu'à retardement".³⁸⁶ Derrida links this idea to Cixous's ability of "savoir hériter sans hériter, à réinventer le père et la mère".³⁸⁷ In fact, in chapters two and three, I have demonstrated how both Cixous and Derrida inherit without inheriting, how they reinvent George and Ève Cixous, Georgette Esther and Haïm Derrida, by inheriting *and* refusing or resisting to inherit their names, their letters, the wound of circumcision, the veil of myopia, the tallit, thereby following the logic of *Le Monolinguisme de l'Autre*. This is to say that they follow the names, the language(s) and the cultural heritages of their parents, in order to transform them and to create a language and a heritage that is 'mine', as well as open to the other, because they come from the other.

³⁸⁵ Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 39.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 75.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

Following the same logic, Derrida argues that the operation of writing is always indebted to another operation:

C'est chaque fois comme ça, l'opération de cette opération, l'opération d'écriture poétique. S'endettant auprès de l'autre opération, l'opération dite 'réelle', elle s'endette ainsi auprès de l'opération de l'autre, cet événement qui arrive là où je n'opère plus, où je suis opéré.³⁸⁸

According to Derrida, *Savoir* is thus indebted to the operation that lasered Cixous's eyes, *Circonfession* to the procedure of circumcision and the lost letters of his mother, *OR, les lettres de mon père* to the arrival of the letters of her father, *Un Ver à Soie* to the tallit and thus to the sacrifice of the sheep etc. Hence, this argument corresponds to Kaiser's idea of the indebtedness of poststructuralist notions to 'personal' experiences, which are always 'hetero-personal' or 'auto-public' as I have argued in chapter 3.3. In *Un Ver à Soie* Derrida pushes this idea even further by arguing that everything, and especially the operation of writing, is set in motion by something else, some other operation that touches some other marking, stigma or wound that can and *should* be replaced. Hence, the modality of *comme si*, of the fictive that can and *should* transform the stigma by way of substitution. Should, since the stigma would otherwise close unto itself, become invulnerable, untouchable, with which it becomes as unproductive and destructive as a trauma. Thus, Cixous's and

³⁸⁸ Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 78.

Derrida's experiences with what they have inherited, their distinct but comparable Jewish and Algerian heritages about which they write, are not only interesting and relevant within the context of postcolonialism and poststructuralism. They also show that any creative operation, writing, thinking, painting, drawing, that is involved in exploring and replacing a specific wound might germinate into an other operation that tries to substitute another wound or marking. The faithful writing *aimance* between Derrida and Cixous demonstrates this idea, since Derrida lovingly reads the markings of his *aimie*, that is, the story of the loss of her myopia, in *Savoir*, which sets into motion another writing operation, that of *Un Ver à Soie*, in which Derrida touches two stigmata of 'his own': his tallit and circumcision.

4.2.3. The truth of the silkworm

The story with which this text ends, that of the silkworm, the 'ver à soie', is interesting in this respect, since it illustrates the notion of one operation that gives birth to another by focusing on the transformation of the silkworm into a butterfly. Derrida starts it by writing that, before he turned thirteen, before wearing the tallit, he cultivated silkworms in a shoebox. Several times a day, he would offer them leaves of the mulberry tree and he would only leave his room to search for these nourishments.³⁸⁹ He describes these quests for leaves as "*le voyage et l'aventure: on ne savait plus où aller les chercher, et si on allait encore en*

³⁸⁹ Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 82.

trouver".³⁹⁰ This is why Mara Negrón Desvelo argues that *Un Ver à Soie* "has the form of a travel journal as a shoe box, which instead of shoes contains worms".³⁹¹ To put it differently, Derrida does not travel in order to discover and appropriate foreign lands and people; it is *for* the silkworm, in order to nourish this caterpillar, in favour of the needs of this other living being that he leaves his room, his home, and sets off on a journey. Desvelo rightly argues that Derrida writes about these adventures in a journal that is *comme si* a shoe box, since he argues that the truth seems to wait, not in the histories of veils and sails, but in this little box, or rather in the figure of the silkworm and the "sericulture avant le verdict".³⁹² In fact, in his journal of the silkworm, Derrida unfolds several truths, the first being that silkworms "*ne s'animaient qu'en vue de la transformation du mûrier en soie*".³⁹³ Hence, they only feed themselves with leaves from the mulberry tree in order to transform these leaves into silk, into something else, much like Cixous and Derrida nourish themselves with, for example, the act or 'operation' of circumcision in order to transform this ritual into other wounds, that is, the noble wounds that they share (the stigmata of Alger 1867, 1870, Oran 1940 etc.) and the wounds or markings brought about by acts of translation. Moreover, Derrida remarks that this process of leaves turning into a cocoon of silk remains invisible to his eyes: "*comme ce devenir-soie d'une soie que je*

³⁹⁰ Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 82.

³⁹¹ Desvelo, Mara Negrón, "Desvelo," in *Joyful Babel: translating Hélène Cixous*, ed. Díaz-Diocaretz, Myriam, and Marta Segarra (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 105.

³⁹² Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 33-34.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 82.

n'aurais jamais crue naturelle, comme ce procès extraordinaire restait au fond invisible".³⁹⁴ The apparent invisibility of this becoming-silk ties in with the night visibility of the specter, of something that is not yet visible or not visible to our human eyes. Hence, Derrida writes that the silkworm weaves a cocoon "*en s'y enveloppant de nuit blanche*".³⁹⁵ It is also impossible for Derrida to distinguish "*entre une tête et une queue*", thus to see the difference between a part of the silkworm and the silkworm as a whole, as well as to know at which sex he is looking.³⁹⁶

Because of all these impossibilities, he states that what he learns or 'appropriates' by looking into the shoebox is not so much the actual operation of leaves turning into a silk, yet "*l'opération à travers laquelle le ver lui-même sécrétait sa sécrétion. Il sécrétait, la sécrétion. Il sécrétait. Intransitivement*".³⁹⁷ In other words, Derrida learns, first and foremost, that this operation is a secret one, since the silkworm creates a cocoon by secretly and intransitively secreting a substance, "*une chose qui ne lui serait jamais un objet, un objet pour lui (...) une chose qui n'était autre que lui (...) qui lui appartenait et lui revenait en propre*".³⁹⁸ Hence, sericulture is not something created by and for humans, on the contrary, "*C'était la culture du ver à soie comme ver à soie. Sécrétion de ce qui n'était ni un voile, ni une toile (rien à voir avec l'araignée), ni un drap ni*

³⁹⁴ Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 82.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 83.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

une tente, ni une écharpe blanche".³⁹⁹ To put it in another way, what Derrida loves about the silkworm is that it creates a cocoon *of* itself and solely *for* itself, for its own sake, as a form of auto-affection. Thus, silkworm-breeding differs from the production of the tallit, which is made by sacrificing a sheep, who is separated from his or her skin to produce an object, a shawl, that will no longer belong to him or her but to someone else, a human animal. This shawl for prayer might be white, like Derrida's, yet it will never be as innocent, that is, free from the blood of some other once living creature, as the cocoon of silk that is made entirely *by* and *for* the silkworm and that is therefore something "avant le verdict", before the marking or the stigma.⁴⁰⁰

However, the silkworm hides itself only "*en vue de se produire au-dehors et de s'y perdre (...) En vue de revenir à soi (...) en mourant aussi à la naissance, de s'évanouir au fond de soi, ce qui revient à s'ensevelir glorieusement dans l'ombre au fond de l'autre*".⁴⁰¹ Although the caterpillar thus hides itself and closes upon itself through breeding a shield of its own, it does so while awaiting a future transformation, a death and birth to come: the death of the caterpillar and the birth of a butterfly. In other words, the silkworm breeds an inside only to abandon it, only to pop out in a different form. This might, for Derrida, be the ultimate truth of this journal and journey: the idea of returning to oneself, to an *auto*, like one does in *autobiography*, for the sole purpose of abandoning oneself, of

³⁹⁹ Derrida, *Un Ver à soie*, 83.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 33-34.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 83-84.

leaving, expropriating this *auto*, in order to transform into something else. Laurent Milesi makes a comparable argument by considering “the *vers à soie* [silkworm] as another possibility of the *vers (à) soi* [towards one’s self] without property or appropriation, the ‘to have or not to have’ of being”.⁴⁰² However, the silkworm not merely turns toward itself without appropriating the cocoon, it does so with a view to a metamorphosis to come, which Milesi does not underline in his article.

This idea of a *retour à soi* while awaiting a transformation to come, ties in with Derrida’s idea that a creative operation is always indebted to another operation. After all, the operation that transforms the silkworm into a butterfly is indebted to the operation of breeding a cocoon. Comparably, Cixous’s love of her nearsightedness in *Savoir* is indebted to the operation that gave her sight, since it is only through seeing eyes that she can love her lost blindness. Yet, there is also a difference, since the silkworm can almost completely rely on itself, on an *auto*; the only ‘hetero’ it needs are some leaves for the production of the cocoon. Cixous, however, needs, at least, two others, a physician and laser technology, to make the magical birth of sight happen. To link this to the main question of this thesis, in sericulture, the silkworm returns to itself while awaiting a transformation to come, while in their faithful *aimance* through writing, Derrida and Cixous let one of their ‘own’ textual voices return to another, that of the self *as* other or that of the *aimi(e)*, in view of a transformation of one or both these voices. Hence, in *Savoir*, Cixous

⁴⁰² Milesi, “Portraits of H.C.,” 72.

lets the voice that celebrates sight return to the one that mourns the loss of her myopia, in order to transform both through the perspective of the other. In *Un Ver à Soie*, Derrida lets one of his voices return to the voice in *Savoir* that celebrates the sudden birth of sight, in order to translate this latter voice into one that ties in with his ethics of blindness and touching. Thus, contrarily to the silkworm that is almost completely autonomous, Derrida and Cixous need multiple others, language(s), texts, writing, fiction, each other, other (textual) *aimi(e)s*, their parents, the tallit, circumcision etc., in order to transform themselves and each other. Joseph G. Kronick affirms this idea by arguing that "For the *autos* to be itself, it cannot come back to itself but must come back to the other - ellipsis".⁴⁰³ In this thesis, I have tried to demonstrate that the faithful *aimance* between Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous is not only about a (re)turning of two 'selves' to the other, to the *aimi(e)*, in order to explore, transform and connect the different voices and stigmata of these 'selves', it is also about reading the *aimi(e)* for his or her sake, *pour l'autre*, for love of the other, not to 'secure' his or her survival, but to lovingly recognize the *aimi(e)* as singular *and* connected by touching him or her through the text. As if to say: you are *not* alone, but you may be, if you wish.

⁴⁰³ Kronick, Joseph G., "Philosophy as Autobiography: The Confessions of Jacques Derrida," *MLN* 115, no. 5 (December 2000): 1014, accessed July 24, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mln.2000.0064>.

Conclusion Chapter Four

In this final chapter, I focused on *Voiles*, a work that brings together the voices of Cixous and Derrida through the texts *Savoir* and *Un Ver à Soie*. I have showed that, in *Savoir*, Cixous celebrates the birth of sight and mourns the loss of her myopia in the form of a story that she narrates in the third person. This ties in with a notion that she shares with Derrida: the idea that an *auto* can only write and imagine himself or herself as an *hetero*, an other. Cixous considers her myopia as her destiny, her fate and as a fault that makes her the 'elected of her family'. This also connects her to her *aimi*, to Élie, a name that makes Derrida the elected of his family, since it is the only Jewish name that his parents chose to hide from the official registers. Moreover, I have argued that Cixous's nearsightedness is a stigma that causes painful situations, but that is also generative, since it asks her to live with the insecurity of what may or might happen, which is the modality of a faithful *aimance* to come, and it inspires her to develop a form of writing that touches things from extremely nearby.

In *Savoir*, Cixous writes about the sudden birth of vision as a miracle, a gift and the ultimate form of pleasure, of *jouissance*. This ode to the pleasures of sight contrasts with Derrida's prayer for blindness and his suspicion of clear vision in *Mémoires d'aveugle*. I have related this difference to the opposing sides of life and death of which Derrida speaks in *H.C. pour la vie*. This is to say that Cixous says 'yes' to what she

instantly sees, a 'yes' that extends, embraces and enjoys the duration of life, while Derrida prefers to say 'no' in order to defer and avoid the point of the verdict, of death. This shows again how these *aimi(e)s* often share the same desire, but approach it from a different perspective, a different side.

Cixous also mourns the sudden loss of her myopia in *Savoir*. Hence, it is only after the veil of nearsightedness has been removed, that she can love and enjoy the pleasures of non-seeing. I have therefore argued that love requires a *hetero*, that is, another perspective, another side or a *wholly* other who lovingly recognizes what you do not see your'self'. This also goes for the faithful *aimance* between Derrida and Cixous, which passes through the text and the written portrait, hence, through 'hetero' places 'outside' of them, separated from them, yet places that are also open, which allow them to lovingly recognize each others as other *and* connected.

In the second part of this chapter, I concentrated on Derrida's *Un Ver à Soie*, in which he prays for a verdict that has nothing to do with the histories of veils and sails. This is to say that he prays for the verdict to suddenly and unexpectedly come from the other. He also wishes to touch the tissue that is *not* a veil, the tallit, of which he speaks as an animal that waits for him to come home. Moreover, Derrida stresses that the tallit is not only *like* an animal, but also *comes from* an animal, a sheep, and asks its owner to follow the Law of the holy or *wholly* other. I have argued that this tallit is a skin under which Derrida's side of death

approaches Cixous's side of life and vice versa, under which he reads her appeals to resurrection, her calls to return everything to the side of life and she reads his efforts to defer and avoid the point of death, as well as his desire to accompany his mother to the side of death.

We have seen that, in *Un Ver à Soie*, Derrida also reads Cixous's *Savoir*. However, he does not simply recognize Cixous's celebration of sight, since this does not tie in with his ethics of blindness and his suspicion of clear vision. Therefore, he shifts the accent from seeing to touching and foregrounds how Cixous mourns the loss of her myopia. He also reads *Savoir* through another notion he firmly believes in, one that follows the main principle of *Le Monolinguisme de l'Autre*: that of knowing how to inherit without inheriting, how to reinvent the father and mother. According to her *aimi*, Cixous has this *savoir*, this *puissance*, since she follows and inherits the languages and the heritages of her parents *only* to abandon them, to transform them into a *monolinguisme* of her 'own'.

In the last part of this chapter, I have showed that this is comparable to what Derrida calls the 'truth of the silkworm', or of sericulture, since the silkworm closes itself off from the rest of the world by breeding a cocoon *only* to abandon this cocoon and to transform into a butterfly. To link this to my main question, I have showed that the faithful *aimance* to come between Cixous and Derrida passes through the text, through their portraits of each other, which are indebted to the texts they analyze in it, to *Jours de l'An*, *Or*, *Circonfession* etc., in which they perform operations that try to transform stigmata. Thus, unlike

sericulture, what happens in these portraits is not a *retour à soi*, but a return of one of the voices of the 'self' to one of the voices of an other, that of the self *as* other or that of the *aimi(e)*, in view of a transformation of one or both these voices.

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Conclusion

In this thesis, I focused on the question how Jacques Derrida and H el ene Cixous develop a faithful and loving friendship, an *aimance* for life, through voice, text and writing.

In the first theoretical chapter, I have showed that this *aimance* can be considered as a new form of friendship that rethinks and reimagines a 'fraternalized' and a 'hostilized' mode of friendship, as well as the two forms of philosophy and politics that correspond to these modes, all of which Derrida denounces in his work *Politiques de l'Amiti e* (1994), translated as *Politics of Friendship* (1997). This is to say that Derrida, in this work, traces and criticizes a genealogy of (male) philosophers and thinkers who have constructed and politicized the figure of friends as brothers, thereby valuing a friendly and brotherly bond that is based on similarity, proximity and equality. Besides denouncing this fraternalized form of friendship, he criticizes a 'hostilized' mode of friendship that politicizes the figure of the enemy. Moreover, he blames both these traditions for excluding, ignoring or silencing women and the category of the 'feminine', which has often been negatively associated with the unknown, the unconscious, the invisible, the vulnerability of the body, undecidability, uncertainty and changeability.

In order to rethink this mode, Derrida adopts a concept from his friend Abdelk ebir Khatibi, *aimance*, in order to stress the importance of

love, distance and difference in friendship. Because of the emphasis on *aimer*, I have called Derrida's friend an *aimi(e)*, instead of an *ami(e)*, who recognizes the other as singular and different in a loving way and who keeps on hoping and praying for an *aimance* to come, without knowing for sure whether this will happen. Thus, Derrida's *aimi(e)* can be like a brother or a sister, who lives, either by necessity or choice, with the insecurity and the instability of what may or might come, with Nietzsche's *vielleicht*, which he opposes, in *PoF*, to the stability of Aristotle's *bebaios*. Hence, this ethical appeal that prays for a different attitude towards what is uncertain, different, distant, unknown and might remain unknowable, that is, secretive, also asks for another form of philosophy and politics to come: a form of philosophy that does not merely try to secure universal truths and a form of democracy that welcomes the other, the stranger unconditionally.

In order to illustrate what this means, unconditional hospitality and an unconditional faith in the other, I have linked *PoF* to an earlier text of Derrida: *Mémoires d'aveugle: l'autoportrait et autres ruines* (1990). I have argued that, in this text, the blind man becomes an ethical figure for how to trust the other without seeing him or her, without knowing whether s/he will help or abuse him, how to remain vulnerable and open to reception, to seeing differently, from an inner eye. After all, the blind man needs to grope his way forward, thereby relying on the hands that touch, instead of on the eyes that see. This is why I have argued that Derrida, in this text, makes an appeal for an ethics of blindness and tears,

since he also argues that human eyes are not destined to see, but to cry. Thus, he thereby shifts the emphasis from a form of philosophy that uses the eyes in order to see, know and appropriate, to (s)(a)voir, to a form of philosophy that seeks for knowledge through eyes that cry and thus show vulnerability. I have argued that Derrida shares this attention for vulnerability, for the vulnerable body, with his *aimie*, who, in her essay "The Last Painting or the Portrait of God" (1991), argues that the poet will only find 'the second innocence', which is to say that which comes *before* knowing, if s/he has the courage to receive acute suffering, as well as acute joy. For these *aimi(e)s*, it is the body of the text that allows them to write and share their vulnerable bodies, its pleasures and wounds or stigmata. Hence, Cixous and Derrida both believe in and practice a prophetic form of writing that gestures towards the *aimi(e)* for life as someone singular who will always remain a little 'unknown', that is to say, someone they will have to continue to encounter through the text in order to experience all of their voices.

Thus, although the text is usually considered as a medium of distance and separation, I have demonstrated that, for Cixous and Derrida, it is a medium of intimacy and absolute trust, since it allows these *aimi(e)s* to continue to lovingly meet each other in a different way. Hence, in chapter two, we have seen that Derrida, in *H.C. pour la vie*, speaks of a loving friendship as something that will continue to arrive and to return, which is why he speaks of several 'first' meetings between him and Cixous; 'first' meetings that will continue to come, since he will never

stop re-reading and reanimating the 'six hundred voices' of his *aimie* for life. I have demonstrated that it is the modality of fiction, of *comme si*, that binds these *aimi(e)s* for life and through which their textual voices meet, voices that thus have a fictive and prophetic, rather than a referential and autobiographical status. Derrida uses this modality to imagine a fictive familial bond with Cixous, hence, with a sister, instead of a brother, which is why I have argued that he thereby rejects a fraternalized form of friendship and reimagines a new *aimance* to come. All the more, since the elaborate chiasm he invents in order to create this fictive familial tie, stresses that there is nothing 'natural' or given about the loving bond between *aimi(e)s*; one has to keep on imagining and reinventing it.

It is also through the modality of *comme si* that Derrida explores 'the side of life' of his *aimie* in his (im)possible prayer 'Il faudrait que je puisse la croire'. This appeal allows Derrida to read his imaginative sister as singular and different, as well as to pay tribute to Cixous's *puisse*, to the magical speed of her writing that engenders homonymic and metonymic word plays. Derrida also lovingly recognizes his *aimie's puissance* to make the word arrive by letting it arrive, which denounces Aristotle's idea that 'actively' loving is preferred over 'passively' being loved. For Cixous, creation requires thus an active and receptive spirit. I have argued that Cixous's *vitesse* constitutes one of the reasons why Derrida regards his *aimie* to be on the side of life. This is to say that Derrida slows down his writing pace in order to delay the point that

would, too soon, end a sentence or a life, or that would, too hasty, make a verdict; his *aimie*, on the contrary, steps up her writing pace, in order to extend the duration of life, to make it seem as though one moment could last forever, *as if* there is no final point.

In chapter two, I have also showed that Derrida, in *H.C. pour la vie*, retraces the voices of his *aimie* and 'her' side of life to such an extent that he must acknowledge that, for his *aimie*, there is no side of death. Or more precisely, she does not believe in it. This illustrates the idea that portraying, that is, retracing the side of the other, involves a retracing of one's 'own' side, in view of a temporary or permanent transformation of this side. Thus, in his portrait, Derrida experiences that, for Cixous, there is only the side of life, to which she tries to return everything and everyone, especially (recently) deceased loved ones. She does so through 'vital' telephonic or textual lines that quickly and magically convey one's 'voice', thereby annulling the distance between the living and the deceased, as well as the clear-cut difference between technology and magic. For Derrida and Cixous, the fact that telephonic and textual voices are separated from the body is not a reason for suspicion or distrust. On the contrary, I have argued that, for these *aimi(e)s*, this 'pure' voice is with and without the body, in the sense that it makes certain bodily parts or spectral wounds, like the wounds brought about by the different acts of circumcision, (re)-appear more intensely, than if voice and body would be united and immediately visible. Hence, this explains why, for Derrida and

Cixous, the (textual) voice is the ultimate medium through which to foster a faithful and loving friendship.

In chapter three, I have demonstrated how Cixous retraces Derrida, in *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en jeune saint juif*, by reading his texts *Circonfession* and *Un Ver à Soie*. Hence, we have seen that her readings of Derrida's periods in *Circonfession*, as well as the fictive dialogues she creates between Klein and Gross, ask for the '*Destinerrance du prophète dit Jackie Élie Baba d'El-Biar...*'. I have argued that this is Cixous's way of removing or 'circumcizing' the neutral name of 'Jacques', in order to make the 'circumcized' and hidden names of Jackie and Élie return, to underline that these names are *destined* to return, to be retraced and reinvented. From the perspective of the main concern of chapter one, rethinking a fraternalized form of friendship, I have argued that Cixous, through these names, asks for a different form of friendship, philosophy and politics to arrive: a friendship that is, first and foremost, *loving* and that praises difference rather than sameness, a practice of philosophy that acknowledges the wisdom of 'personal' and translatable experiences and a new form of politics that is based on faith and trust, on believing in the promise and asking for justice to arrive immediately, instead of suspicion and nihilism. Thus, Cixous thereby lovingly recognizes and retraces her *aimi's* prayer for another form of friendship, philosophy and politics to come.

I have showed that Cixous's portrait, unlike that of Derrida, foregrounds the question of 'Jewishness' as something that binds and

separates them. The axiom of “Klein, le juif, et le juif Gross” that Cixous adopts from Paul Celan shows that her concern is with making differences appear in what seems similar, as opposed to the axiom that Derrida invents in *H.C. pour la vie*, which imagines a fictive form of proximity. Hence, this illustrates the idea that the portrait allows these *aimi(e)s* to approach each other, as well as to diverge from each other. Although Derrida does not elaborate on their Jewish-Algerian backgrounds in *H.C. pour la vie*, Cixous shows, in her portrait, that they both desire to translate the Jewish and gender-specific rituals of circumcision and the tallit into shareable figures and wounds. After all, in her portrait, Cixous reads Derrida in order to show that her *aimi* considers the act of circumcision as a singular and highly personal event, as well as a repeatable and non-personal ritual that can be reappropriated by those who are not Jewish and/or circumcized. Moreover, I have argued that, as a figure, the tallit forms another element that connects Derrida and Cixous, a shawl under which they approach each other in texts that pray for a faithful *aimance* to come.

In chapter three, I have also pointed out that their portraits diverge greatly from a formal point of view, yet, thematically speaking, they often correspond. More precisely, the portrait allows them to experience an idea they both believe in from the side of the *aimi(e)*, as well as to respond to this other side. After all, in *H.C. pour la vie*, Derrida lovingly retraces the magical *puissance* of telephonic and textual lines from Cixous’s side of life and Cixous, in *Portrait de Jacques Derrida*, lovingly highlights and

comments on Derrida's desire to accompany his mother to the side of death, by creating a dialogue in red and blue between life, death and telephonic and textual lines. Cixous also portrays how Derrida's mother Georgette Sultana Esther incites him to writing by narrating two *affaires de lettres* that are both a matter of substitution and deferral of the letter. The second letter affair focuses on another theme that binds *and* separates these *aim(e)s*, since they both come to writing through one of their parents, yet in Cixous's case, it is her father George that incites her writing, whose letters she promises to read tomorrow, while in Derrida's case, it is his mother Esther who opens the veins of literature, who incites Jackie to pray for the letters she lost to continue to return.

In the last chapter, I have argued that the two texts brought together in *Voiles* demonstrate how Cixous and Derrida, in their faithful *aimance* to come through writing, let one of their 'own' textual voices return to another, that of the self *as* other or that of the *aimi(e)*, in view of a transformation of one or both these voices. Hence, unlike the silkworm that only needs some leaves in order to return to itself in view of a transformation to come, Derrida and Cixous need numerous others, language(s), texts, writing, fiction, each other, other (textual) *aimi(e)s*, their parents, the tallit, circumcision etc., in order to transform themselves and each other. Moreover, I have stated that Derrida's story of the silkworm ties in with his idea that a creative operation is always indebted to another operation. After all, the operation that transforms the silkworm into a butterfly is indebted to the operation of breeding a

cocoon. More generally, I have argued, in chapter four, that any creative operation that is involved in retracing a wound might engender another operation that tries to substitute another wound or marking. The faithful *aimance* through writing between Derrida and Cixous demonstrates this idea, since Derrida lovingly traces and retraces the markings of his *aimie*, that is, the story of the loss of her myopia, in *Savoir*, which sets into motion another writing operation, that of *Un Ver à Soie*, in which Derrida touches two stigmata of 'his own': the tallit and 'his' circumcision.

To conclude, in this thesis I have tried to demonstrate that the faithful *aimance* for life between Derrida and Cixous passes through voice, text and writing, since these media allow them to encounter, explore and transform their 'own' numerous voices, by reading the texts of the *aimi(e)*, by turning toward him or her as a 'hetero', who expresses his or her voice in writing as another 'hetero', an outside that is open for appropriation and (re)tracing. Besides that, Derrida and Cixous also turn toward each other for the sake of the *aimi(e)*, *pour l'aimi(e)*. This is why I have argued that the portraits they have written about each other, *H.C. pour la vie, c'est à dire...-* and *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en jeune saint juif*, portray, that is, celebrate, honour and lovingly recognize the *aimi(e)* as singular and other, as well as connected through the elements of poetry, the modality of fiction, of *comme si*, corresponding familial names and sides, *affaires de lettres*, hands and eyes that touch and the question of 'Jewishness'. Thus, in the faithful *aimance* between Derrida and Cixous,

the portrait does not 're-present', but re-trace. This is to say that, in their portraits of each other, they make return or re-appear words, letters, notions or voices - of self as other and other - that linger, that have the night visibility of the specter and need to be reanimated. Their faithful *aimance* through writing is thus always something yet 'to come', since this retracing of voices of self as other and of other is an ongoing process that will also continue beyond life or death. Moreover, this faithful *aimance* to come asks for a different form of philosophy and politics to come: a form of philosophy that loves the wisdom of hetero-personal experiences in which others might recognize some truth and a form of democracy that welcomes the other unconditionally, that demands justice to arrive immediately, without knowing, beforehand, whether this is possible. After all, to pray for a faithful *aimance*, philosophy or politics to come is to ask for the impossible, the unpredictable, the unanticipated to arrive.

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