

**PARDON: SARAH KOFMAN AND JACQUES DERRIDA
(ON MOURNING, DEBT AND SEVEN FRIENDSHIPS)
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to watch a baby sister while her mother went off to labor all day, she must have learned, that her hands, her thighs, her belly are organs that give pleasure. In a slum childhood, abandoned to the streets, she learned how little she needed or wanted. Picked up, fucked, left by a fifteen-year-old, and by how many men since, she learned how little she needed or wanted. How much all that tenderness, all that pleasure, she learned she has to give aches in her now!

One day she was gone. You blamed the police. This is the center of the city; was there some business conference for foreign investors in town, so that the police were ordered to clean up the streets, chase away the riff-raff? Was there some national commemoration to be made – some historical event to be celebrated, some statue to be unveiled?

But a few days later, you saw her again. Seated at the same doorway. With the same doll.

One day you left São Paulo. You saw her as you left the hotel with your bags. She is still there. You still see her.

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References

1. *Ibid.*, p.156.
2. See Alphonso Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), chapter 3, "Faces, Idols, Fetishes".

[E]verything we say or do or cry, however outstretched toward the other we may be, remains *within us*... it is with ourselves that we are conversing in the travail of mourning ... Even if this metonymy of the other in ourselves already constituted the truth and the possibility of our relation to the living other, death brings it out into more abundant light. (Jacques Derrida, 'Psyche: Inventions of the Other').

Sarah Kofman described her work as a project of depersonalising identification with the authors she wrote about, and described interpretation as a form of symbiosis with the text, whereby we transform and are transformed by our reading.¹ Rigorously challenging the phallogocentrism of figures such as Comte, Kant, Freud, Nietzsche, Rousseau and Derrida in over twenty-three works, she also staged her considerable identification with these same figures. She staged the inability to retain proper boundaries from the same figures whose phallogocentrism she resisted, the inability to criticise from a secure, sanitised identity, isolated or entirely differentiated from that which one opposes. How will we be responsible to and for the fact that what we resist or challenge is folded within us? For Kofman, there was no oppositional *différend* between herself and Freud, Comte, Kant, Rousseau, Hoffman, Derrida, etc. While Kofman staged an unusual rigour with her friends, she staged an unusual sympathy with her enemies. What is this sympathy, and what kind of stance towards the other does it imply?

Derrida to Kofman: the impossibility of excluding difference

In recent work, Derrida has at times occupied psychoanalytic theory to theorise the lack of self-identity at the heart of identity, the position that 'we are never *ourselves*, and between us, identical to us, a "self" is never in itself or identical to itself.'² We are inevitably cannibal selves, the constant interiorisation/incorporation of the other. He reminds us 'one must begin to identify with the other, who is to be assimilated, interiorized'. One must eat the other, yet we can not eat the other. If our understanding of the other must be described as an 'identifying appropriation', then, he continues:

one must begin to identify with the other, who is to be assimilated, interiorized, understood ideally (something one can never do absolutely without *addressing oneself to the other* and without absolutely limiting understanding itself, the identifying appropriation)³

We cannot appropriate, identify with, interiorize or assimilate the other without addressing oneself to the other. The other is also that alterity at which our consuming habits are addressed, which exceeds and limits our

understanding appropriation. Eating must fail — or at least, we can never eat the other, or not entirely, without remainder. What then, are the ethics of eating? Does this mean we need not be responsible for how we eat? Need we worry about inevitable eating, since eating also fails? Since the other exceeds us, since we are always faithful to the other insofar as we must address the other even to assimilate, identify with him/her, etc, is there no need for responsibility? The other *cannot* be (entirely) effaced. What then is the responsibility of the cannibal subject?

Derrida's formulations offer an alternative to ideals of autonomy and self-determination, for example, in political philosophy. There can be no complete autonomy over oneself or from the other, if we have always eaten the other. Instead, the possibility of an adequate political and ethical perspective could begin only once one acknowledges that 'we are never ourselves, and a 'self' is never in itself or identical to itself'. How then to locate responsibility towards the other, when we have always already appropriated the other? The strength of the Derridean material, and what it can offer the politics of difference, is its consistent emphasis of a paradoxical position as the most responsible, ethically and politically: one must eat the other, *and* one can not eat the other.

Social and political philosophy influenced by Derrida has posed the question of what kind of ethics and politics are possible in a context in which we say that the self has always internalised the other, that there are no discrete boundaries between self and other.¹ These are key questions articulated in Derrida's recent work on the politics of difference, and on the politics of friendship. This material allows one also to think about Sarah Kofman's place within recent philosophies of difference.

Friendships on the model of sameness and difference

Friendship one: After the death of his friend Etienne de la Boétie, Michel de Montaigne described their friendship as having been 'complete': 'Resemblance and harmony', he claims, '... gives rise to true and perfect friendships'. Where the friend is the second self, to lose the friend is to lose a part of the self.²

I had grown so accustomed to be his second self in everything that now I seem to be no more than half a man. (*On Friendship*, p. 103)

In a friendship of resemblance, one is said to know the depths of the other's heart as well as one's own, and Montaigne supposes that our ideal is this profound conviction of our knowledge of the other. Such friendship is depicted as more possible between two likes: such as two adult men, suggests Montaigne, then between men and women.

Friendship two: In his *Memoires for Paul de Man*, Derrida describes with emotion the death of his friend de Man, and evokes questions implicit in the

work of Montaigne. How to mourn? Who was the friend? What was the friend to me? How to respond to the memory of the friend? The friendship with de Man is described as 'the seal of a secret affirmation that, still today, I wouldn't know how to circumscribe, to limit, to name (and that is as it should be)' (*Memoires*, p.xv). Mourning de Man becomes the first context for Derrida's evocation of the impossibility of mourning: 'Faithful mourning of the other must fail to succeed/by succeeding (it fails, precisely, if it succeeds! it fails because of success!)'³

We can only live this experience in the form of an aporia: the aporia of mourning ... where the possible remains impossible. Where *success fails*... faithful interiorization ... makes the other a part of us ... and then the other no longer quite seems to be the other because we grieve for him and bear him in us ... And inversely, the *failure succeeds*: an aborted interiorization is at the same time a respect for the other as other, a sort of tender rejection, a movement of renunciation which leaves the other alone, outside, over there in his death, outside of us. (*Memoires*, p.35)

The position can be generalised in a politics of difference, to questions of recognition and comprehension of the other. Perhaps we assume as a value comprehension of another. But the other we can comprehend too well is the other assimilated to our own limits. Perhaps a failure in understanding 'leaves the other alone, outside, over there'. But a failure in understanding also bespeaks our failure to encounter the other. On this formulation, an encounter with the other could therefore be described as impossible- as failing whether or not it succeeds.

Nietzsche's Friend

Friendship three: In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and elsewhere, Nietzsche speaks of the need for the good friend who is a worthy enemy:

If you want a friend, you must also be willing to wage war for him: and to wage war you must be capable of being an enemy. You should honour even the enemy in your friend. Can you go near to your friend without going over to him? In your friend you should possess your best enemy.⁴

Nietzsche evokes an ideal of two subjects who heighten each other's forces in their agonistic encounter. This might seem to be a positive affirmation of alterity: of the encounter between two equal but different selves. But Luce Irigaray challenges the status of the other with whom Nietzsche wants to engage. Nietzsche expresses the need for engagement with the worthy other. But his ideal is not, she suggests, an encounter with the other as foreign, strange, but as 'like myself' — thus not really other but same. Asks Irigaray of Nietzsche, 'your search for a rival who can match up to you ... the urge to fight on equal terms', is not this another manifestation of the hope that 'someone like yourself turns up... someone other, and yet like, a faithful mirror'.⁵ Irigaray suggests that Nietzsche's ideal of an agonistic encounter with alterity, though painted in the glorious terms of the

friend as worthy enemy, is really no more than a repetition of the desire for a mirror. The other, suggests Irigaray, in the Nietzschean corpus 'has no role except as counterweight or balance arm between you and yourself'. (*Marine Lover*, p.73)

Irigaray relates Nietzsche's bad faith concerning the desire for alterity to his accounts of femininity which similarly serve as mirror to the (masculine) self, despite the occasional positive affirmation of an agonistic sexual difference. In *Marine Lover*, Irigaray reconstructs the figures of femininity in the Nietzschean corpus, and adopts the voice of the Nietzschean feminine in order to interrogate and resist Nietzsche on women:

Either you seize hold of me or you throw me away, but always according to your whim of the moment. I am good or bad according to your latest good or evil. Muse or fallen angel to suit the needs of your most recent notion. (*Marine Lover*, p.11)

Says the feminine speaker to Nietzsche: 'Doesn't your gaze reduce me to your images or illusions?' (31). Nietzsche fails to relate to the feminine as strange, other, non-relational. This failure is not mitigated by the Nietzschean images of femininity in terms of enigma and distance. Like Kofman, Irigaray takes the trope of 'distance' to amount to a desire to keep the feminine at a distance, rather than engaging with women in terms of sexual difference.

Irigaray's intervention is to draw on her diagnosis that Nietzsche's woman is being asked to play the role of man's other, to locate a point of excess to the performance. Personifying the feminine identity who performs for Nietzsche, Irigaray evokes the performer's resistance:

I shall escape a mask custom-made to beguile you. For smothering myself in such vain show repels me. (39)

I am no longer the lining to your coat, your - faithful - understudy. (4)

While Irigaray identifies with the feminine as it is evoked in Nietzsche's work, the project is a feminist, political resistance to his casting of femininity. This stance can be compared with Kofman's systematic identification with Nietzsche himself, despite her critique of his phallogentrism. Irigaray reappropriates the Nietzschean feminine so as to personify it in resistant fashion. Kofman disappropriates herself in favour of a partial personification of Nietzsche in her work. Irigaray occupies philosophical texts so as to resist and subvert those texts. For all that she occupies, appropriates, mimics and embodies a given philosophical voice such as that of Freud and Nietzsche, one immediately identifies her resistance to their voices. One might say that this is precisely the political strength of Irigaray's work: that it allows for the insertion of an uncompromised, clearly delineated feminine voice which resists and subverts Nietzsche's voice. By contrast, Kofman describes her methodology as a 'mimetic' or 'hysterical' writing and acknowledges that it runs the risk of a permanent disappropriation of herself.¹⁰

Kofman's approach raises the possibility that Irigaray's methodology leaves one too confident of the delineated boundaries between 'Nietzsche' and 'Irigaray'. We might conclude that in Irigaray's occupation of Nietzsche, the identity of the feminine voice who resists Nietzsche's figurings of the feminine is not sufficiently put into question if we offer a sympathetic reading of the way in which Kofman becomes so much more lost in a disconcerting ambiguity of borderlines with Nietzsche.

In Kofman's major work on Nietzsche, *Explosion I and II*, a 770 page monument to Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, she concludes that she has become one of Nietzsche's children. The work intimately occupies Nietzsche's identifications with friends, writers, bloodlines, family genealogy, with past books. Kofman declares that she has followed Nietzsche step by step:

Has one properly understood Nietzsche? ... at any rate, one will have loved him, one will have been with him symbiotically to the point of being confused with him.¹¹

But Kofman figures symbiotic love for and fusion with Nietzsche very differently to the figuring of symbiotic love of the friend as *same* as the self. Hers is a model of how difference transfigures in identificatory fidelity, of how one inevitably changes and is changed by the other in symbiosis. Nietzsche already becomes Kofman where Kofman becomes Nietzsche. Irigaray protects a voice which resists Nietzsche, and demarcates Nietzsche's position on alterity from her own. Despite her famous occupation of Nietzsche and her mimicry of his persona, she retains a fundamentally agonistic relationship with Nietzsche. Kofman, by contrast, takes up a position which challenges the possibility of agonistic reading. Irigaray's agonism with Nietzsche does not recognise that one has already changed Nietzsche, and the figuring of his phallogentrism, in one's engagement with him. Nietzsche's texts do not have a static form which one resists: they have always already mutated as one engages with them, mutated with one's reading. That Kofman becomes one of Nietzsche's children to the point of being confused with him, importantly marks *Nietzsche's* loss of identity in her hands, not (just) her loss of identity in his hands. Retaining an oppositional relationship to Nietzsche, Irigaray overlooks the enabling mutation of the two parties, Nietzsche in her hands, for which the price must be hers in his.

From this perspective, one could reconsider the symbiosis with which Kofman has sometimes been taxed by critics, her relationship of intertwined proximity to Derrida. Responding to Nietzsche's figuring of sexual difference, Kofman adopts a position famously attributed to Derrida in *Spurs*, a position which has caused feminists considerable unease. One shouldn't be too quick, claims Kofman, to decide the issue of Nietzsche's misogyny, to decide the truth of his woman, because in Nietzsche's work, truth is already a woman whose status is that there is no truth.¹² Rose

Braidotti has criticised Derrida's articulation of this position. In rendering woman a metaphor for undoing truth and knowledge, he appropriates femininity and designates it fluid and undefinable, undermining feminist interests.¹³ Those feminists who have criticised Derrida's response to Nietzsche are unlikely to be more impressed with the position as espoused by Kofman. Alice Jardine has described Kofman as antifeminist, and as having adopted Derrida's "'woman", "velis", and "nymen") to read the male philosophical texts in a mode that [only] seems feminist in inspiration ... For example, she would seem to agree absolutely with Derrida's reading of Nietzsche'.¹⁴ (By contrast, Jardine praises Irigaray as a singular and important feminist voice.)

Jardine supposes that Kofman is simply 'an orthodox Derridean' (199). But even imagining that Derrida and Kofman's relationship should be so described, who is to say who is debtor and indebted in a master-disciple relationship? Even accepting that this was the relationship, a philosophy which writes of the origin as enfolding the possibility of its copy, would certainly have to write of Kofman as always already enfolded within the work of Jacques Derrida. Derrida's work *Spurs* is one of the few places where he acknowledges the work of Kofman on Nietzsche, amongst others, readings to which, he says, he owes 'a great debt... that debt itself should ... be ... presupposed in its totality'.¹⁵ But in the large extent of feminist response to Derrida, and even to *Spurs*, there has been very little mention of Sarah Kofman.

Winking

Friendship four: During her life, Kofman had published a book of essays on Derrida.¹⁶ By contrast, only after Kofman's death, Derrida wrote a piece on her work, the essay 'Les Dons de Sarah Kofman'. He wrote of their relationship:

We shared in the public domain, in the domain of publication ... the play, the stakes, the trials of philosophy, of thought, of teaching, of reading, of writing. This play, these stakes, so exceed the limits of a short narrative, a terminable analysis ... Those interested by the question will find a thousand and one tiny signs in our respective publications. These remains are elliptic greetings, sometimes winks of the eye, they remain to be interpreted, even by myself who ... today, am not always sure of being able to decipher them.¹⁷

Derrida and Kofman wink at each other across their readings of woman as veil and enigma in the work of Nietzsche, across their readings of the undecidability of castration, castration anxiety and fetishism in Freud, across their account of the absence of any original psychic meaning in the unconscious, across their readings of Kant's account of respect for women, across the oft repeated philosophical trope of holding women at a distance. Thinking of this work, one would be hard pressed to distinguish the origin of certain positions. Elliptic greetings, sometimes tense acknowledgments. In

one exchange. Derrida and Kofman seem to have been reduced to saying to each other pardon?, pardon?, each supposing that the other is saying to them in rebuke what they take themselves to be saying to the other.¹⁸

Jardine uses the apparent debt Kofman owes Derrida to devalue Kofman's work as that of the mere disciple. Taking seriously the suggestion that one can usefully reflect on Derrida and Kofman's relationship in terms of the structure of the debt, we can revisit their readings of Nietzsche, and of friendship.

The Politics of Friendship

Derrida, Kofman and Irigaray all write with fascination about Nietzsche's concept of the dance of friendship. For Kofman, it is the model of an amorous dance of opposites, who make an alliance together, rigorous with each other, holding their hands out tenderly to each other, without ever reconciling. While Kofman eventually wrote that she had become the child of Nietzsche, at times she could also be thought of as the friend of Nietzsche, both tender and merciless. Derrida emphasises what an extraordinarily demanding and vigilant reader she was of Nietzsche.

she was ... without pity, without mercy, for Nietzsche and Freud ... She loved without pity, she was, towards them, uncompromising ('Les Dons de Sarah Kofman' p.137)¹⁹

If at times, Kofman seems to try to take up Nietzsche's model of friendship, Irigaray is entirely critical of this model. As we saw, for Irigaray, Nietzsche's model of friendship is 'the search for a rival who can match up to you ... the urge to fight on equal terms', the hope that 'someone like yourself turns up'. For Irigaray, what is in Nietzsche a model of joy in difference and resistance, is really joy in sameness, joy that there is someone like myself who resists me. We have seen Montaigne's suggestion that men and women are less capable of perfect friendship than two men. And despite the extreme differences between Nietzsche's and Montaigne's models of friendship, Nietzsche's Zarathustra also famously claims that women are not capable of friendship. What then of Derrida on Nietzsche's dance of friendship?

Elliptic Greetings

In the 1994 work, *Politiques de l'amitié*,²⁰ Derrida returns repeatedly to Nietzsche's discussion of friendship. Now, he writes, it strikes him as a particularly filial mode of friendship, an ideal of fraternity and equality (314). Friendship between women, heterosexual friendship, and heterosexual love are excluded from Nietzsche's ideal of friendship, partly because of a hierarchy between friendship and love, in which love is inferior because it is the domain of relations of inferiority and superiority, high and low, enslavement and tyranny. Implicitly, writes Derrida, Nietzschean friendship is liberty, equality

... and fraternity, because Nietzsche tells us that women aren't capable of friendship, only of love. In woman, writes Zarathustra, is hidden the slave and the tyrant (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p.83). In other words, a woman is incapable of respecting and honouring an enemy, honouring what she does not like. Friendship may be endorsed by Nietzsche as a joust with difference. But Nietzsche's friend, writes Derrida, is always a brother.

It is Kofman who was consistently vigilant in exposing the phallogocentrism of the philosophers. Derrida who toyed from time to time with occupying the place of sexual difference. So when Derrida taxes Nietzsche with his fraternal metaphors, and includes a long discussion of Kofman's famous thematic, respect for women in Kant, perhaps he is sending greetings to Kofman. If so, this winking could be compared with the fraternal model in intellectual friendship.

In the work *Circonfession*,²¹ Derrida's friendship with Geoffrey Bennington is the occasion for a particularly jousting exchange between friends. Bennington undertakes a contract to act as Derrida's commentator in the work *Jacques Derrida*. So Derrida and Bennington make the following pact, described as the 'simulacrum of a duel' (319). Derrida will resist and trouble Bennington's text in a counter-text protesting from the bottom of each page. Derrida becomes the corpus-corpse, which Bennington appropriates to the extent that there is no need for him even to cite the actual words of Derrida's published works once. But Derrida will have the last word, *en bas de page*.

Writing of de Man, Derrida had so desired that his dead friend could speak back. In *Circonfession*, Derrida himself becomes the deceased friend who does cheat death, speaking back from the place where he has been rendered the corpse-corpse. Bennington and Derrida make a combatant's pact ('this book presupposes a contract') which is described, friendship six, as a 'friendly bet' (1). The reader is struck by what a particularly vigorous, fraternal, and above all comfortable (or, comfortably uncomfortable?) battle this is between them, the virile friendship, when one compares this intellectual friendship to the particularly uncomfortable relationship between Kofman and Derrida.

Derrida uses the virile friendship to cheat his corpus-as-corpse. When she dies, it is Kofman, Derrida repeats his metaphor, who has become the corpus, her works taking the place of her body. The oldest affirmation, he writes, is: 'this is my body (mon corps): keep it in memory of me. Transform me into a corpus.' But, Derrida continues, transform me into a corpus, is the grand masculine-paternal paradigm, the site of the father and son, a scene analysed in, but she protested it, with all her living force'. ('Les Dons de Sarah Kofman', pp.132-3).

Certainly, Derrida is 'uncomfortable' as a corpse in the hands of Bennington. But compare the fraternal model for the vigorous, protesting exchange between Derrida and Bennington with what I take to be the absence of a model for the exchange between Derrida and Kofman, the degree of discomfort between them, painfully evoked by Derrida. Again this is a model of friendship, and (friendship seven) it is a model which is not fraternal:

I don't know if I have the right to suppose that you would know this, but know at any rate that Sarah Kofman was for me a friend, in her fashion, and for more than twenty years. In her manner, yes, but in mine I was her friend, also. In our manners, which, certainly, were different, and of our manners, those of the other towards the other, sometimes good, sometimes bad, I don't know how to talk about it ('Les Dons', p.133).

Derrida explains that he and Kofman were 'impossible' for each other, they found each other unbearable, they fought constantly. Kofman wrote mercilessly about Derrida in her lifetime, just as she wrote of Nietzsche, Freud and others. Perhaps she tried a dance of friendship with Derrida, but it seems there could be no comfortably uncomfortable duel, no pact, above all no *contract*, between them. If Derrida's suggestion is that one needs sexual difference to interrupt Nietzsche's model of friendship, then perhaps the excruciated friendship between himself and Kofman depicts this necessity.

Kofman and the Debt

Kofman seems to have been fascinated by her sense of the lack of the intellectual property of her own work, the sense that little was proper to her. She once described her work as no more than a composite of all she had read ('Apprendre aux hommes à tenir parole', p.7) She discussed the instability in her work of boundaries between herself and figures such as Nietzsche, in the context of her own becoming Nietzsche, and Nietzsche's becoming Kofman. She tried to stage, textually, deliberately, her status as a company of writers.

She was also a writer who compulsively tried to acknowledge her debts, her books saturated with relentlessly footnoted demarcation of the material which comes from Derrida, Nietzsche and Freud, etc. I think of Kofman as the consummate performer of, and philosopher about, intellectual debt and the boundaries, lines of influence and engagement with her colleagues which dissolve in her work, despite the integrity and extreme specificity of her voice. Kofman, then, staged bodily in her work, but never overtly articulated, relations of proximity to the other and difference at the points of greatest proximity. Given that Derrida and Irigaray are so well known, differently, as philosophers of difference, it is illuminating to think of Kofman as the philosopher of excruciated – and loving – proximity, of the 'trials and stakes' of proximity.

In what sense were Derrida and Kofman impossible for each other? In

recent work, Derrida has written repeatedly of a series of impossibilities, the impossibility of mourning, the impossibility of the gift, of the debt, and of recognition. By contrast, Kofman seems so to have tried to force this and other intellectual friendships into the economies of the gift, the debt, and of recognition. Kofman seems to engage in an excessive acknowledgment of intellectual debts, her books insistently acknowledging and recognising colleagues who rarely acknowledge her in turn, her books systematically given as (loving?, aggressive?, excruciating?) gifts to the friends whose work she acknowledged. In the face of this, and particularly in the light of his comment after her death that the constant winking going on between the two in their published works would exceed a terminable analysis, the infrequency of explicit recognition of Kofman in Derrida's work seems the strongest rebuke, as merciless a refusal to play the game of debt, gift, and recognition with her as was merciless Kofman's relentless insistence on the economy of the debt.

And so it is in 'Les Dons de Sarah Kofman' that Derrida evokes the radical impossibility of the pardon. The pardon would have to pardon what can not be pardoned, excused, forgotten, or erased. If we pardon the pardonable, there is no need for the pardon. But pardoning what is unpardonable is literally impossible. The pardon is therefore impossible, a structure it shares with the gift: 'For there to be a gift it must go unrecognised and radically forgotten, because if the "donor" and the "donee" ... recognise the gift as separate from themselves, then either a debt will be incurred (and the gift is no longer a gift as such) or the gift will be annulled by some form of return.'²²

Derrida's reflections on the pardon are addressed to Kofman, and at an imaginary Kofman he writes dwells in him. If there is a pardon between friends, it mustn't be said. One obligates the other with the 'pardon', opening a scene of recognition, of transacted gratitude, which destroys the gift. One must be silent. Only the death of the other renders possible this silence. But what is the meaning of a silent pardon, a pardon never noticed, one about which the pardoned person knows nothing, or a pardon addressed at the dead? Even if their spectre survives in me, what is a reconciliation with the other with which the other has nothing to do? What can it mean for the living to pardon the dead? The pardon has no possibility of arriving at its destination, unless its destination is the narcissistic phantom at the interior of the self. And what would it mean to be pardoned by the dead, or by the spectre of the dead which dwells in us? There can, then, never be the pardon between two living friends ('Les Dons', pp. 157-162).

What kind of friendship can there be between the one who seems only to want the acknowledgment of debt, the other who so emphasises that such acknowledgment is impossible? When Derrida does write of Kofman, after

her death, that there are 'a thousand and one tiny signs in our respective publications' of their friendship, and that Kofman 'knew and read Nietzsche and Freud like no-one else this century', one knows these are acknowledgements Kofman would have dragged from his mouth. Derrida writes that they had so many fights ('tant de scènes que nous nous sommes faites l'un à l'autre', p. 135), that now he catches himself out starting up another one with her, posthumously.

In Derrida's work, the concept of impossibility is not meant to, and could not, lead to a position of complacency in which one did not try to give, mourn, pardon, recognise, acknowledge or befriend. Instead, Derrida writes in contexts in which these gestures are inevitable, and then writes of their inevitable failure, described in 'Aporias' as 'a contradictory double imperative'.²³ When we speak to, and encounter the other, at every level from political negotiation to the quotidian encounter, we already presuppose the possibility of communication and community. But, let's say that we also presuppose the impossibility of both. We presuppose the very difference and deferral at the heart of proximity with the other which generates the impulse towards communication and community.²⁴ A Derridean politics of communication asks how we can be responsible to the *impossibility* of reconciliation, and negotiate a responsible politics at the heart of that recognition?

The impossibility of reconciliation does not lead to the conclusion that the politics of reconciliation is to be discarded. For Derrida, we are always trying to reconcile with the other, a need, a necessity, and an inevitability not undermined by its own impossibility. There can be no reconciliation between these positions, these are double and therefore impossible necessities.

This position has articulated itself in Derrida's work about politics and public policy, but most particularly in his essays on friendship and mourning.²⁵ Derrida emphasises the impossibility of the very mourning he painfully manifests, and this underlines the fact that Derridean 'impossibility' does not mean that we do not or should not do it. Derrida gives us the example of how, faced with the loss of a close friend, we must mourn. This raises into relief the meaning of his simultaneous statements that it is also impossible to mourn. In other formulations, Derrida writes of the other *per se* as both necessary and impossible.²⁶

This is an alternative model to the duel with a fraternal other. The virtue duel says little about the pain of literal impossibility in proximity, of irreconcilable difference in proximity, of being literally impossible, the one for the other, of how to live with the other in the context of the impossibility of living with the other. Evoking his friendship with Kofman, Derrida cites the joke recounted by Theodore Reik with which she concludes her work on Freud and jokes:

Two Jews, long standing enemies, meet at the synagogue on the day of Atonement. The one says to the other (in the guise of a pardon): 'I wish for you all that you wish for me'. And the other immediately retorts: 'There you go again!'.²⁷

Perhaps, suggests Derrida, it is in the very impossibility of pardoning each other that there can be a kind of mutual compassion or understanding between these enemies, the understanding that there can be no understanding between us in the proximity of our impossibility. Friendship seven might then be: we agree, we pardon each other nothing, it's impossible, okay? (*l'ultime compassion*, p.160). This paradoxical accord of impossibility is the acknowledgment of the most intense difference at the moment of the greatest possibility of proximity. Perhaps there can be some kind of conciliation in irreconciliation. Such conciliation is entirely different both to irreconciliation, and to reconciliation. And perhaps there may even be some contexts (the most fraught, the most imperative, the most impossible) in which such conciliation of irreconciliation may be less dangerous, utopian or unreal than ideals of reconciliation which disavow the impossibility of reconciliation. Perhaps there can be a living together which painfully acknowledges, as we (have to) go on *doing it*, the impossibility of living together, pardon.

Elliptic greetings, sometimes winks of the eye, ... testimonies which survive us, incalculable in their number and meaning. In a piece published posthumously, one finds that Kofman was already writing of her commitment to displacing Nietzsche's model of the dance of friendship. She writes of how, writing *Explosion*, she (too) became convinced of the need to displace Nietzsche's model of this dance. Given the consistency with which she exposed the phallogocentrism of the philosophers, she might have displaced the dance by thinking of how it figured sexual difference.

But, cheating death, Kofman had already answered the Derrida who sends greetings to Kofman with this proposal. Kofman returns the greetings. In fact, she writes of how she had become convinced that Nietzsche had to be displaced by Robert Antelme.²⁸ So much so that at one point in *Explosion*, she literally interleaves pages from Antelme's work on his survival of Auschwitz into her work.²⁹ Where Nietzsche has written, 'Dionysus v. the Crucified', she writes: 'Antelme versus Nietzsche'.

What does Kofman find in Antelme's work which in her view so crucially interrupts Nietzsche's model of difference? At the conclusion of *L'espace humaine*, Kofman argues that Antelme offers a model of compassion for and with the other.³⁰ Nietzsche rejects the presumptuous relationship to the other I suppose I know in certain models of empathy and compassion. Crucially, Antelme's mutual compassion is not with the other I know, empathise with, or subjugate to my compassionate self. Instead, Antelme evokes the mutual compassion there may be at the moment of greatest proximity with an other I

can not know. At the moment of the *inability* to know the other, there is sympathy (with what? with the *unknown*): it is, she says, a kind of counter-ideal.

Different models of difference: there is the other I presume I know, the other I assume, the other who resists me. At the point at which we recognise difference, we are failing to recognise difference, for at the point of what is intelligible to me, I fail to recognise the difference I meant to recognise beyond their subordination to my limits. At the point of the greatest proximity with the other lies the greatest difference from them. But in the spaces in between, proposes Kofman, there may be another model of friendship, living in sympathy with an other I do not know in our points of greatest proximity.

Kofman always resisted the affirmations of sexual difference of philosophers such as Irigaray. If I propose that Kofman be thought of as a philosopher of proximity in lieu of a philosopher of difference, it should be emphasised that proximity is a relationship in which there is an intense play of difference.

But a philosophy of difference can run the risk of figuring difference *between* the self and the other, a risk seen, for example, in the more recent work of Luce Irigaray on sexual difference. Irigaray takes the cultural imperative to be a thinking of sexual difference, which has increasingly been figured as the difference 'between' men and women.³¹ In proposing Kofman as a philosopher of 'proximity', I imagine a Kofman who might have wanted to say to Irigaray that thinking the 'difference between' of sexual difference may neither be quite as difficult nor as imperative as Irigaray supposes. I have imagined a Kofman, corpse-corpus saying to Derrida that displacing the dance of friendship with sexual difference may not be the imperative.

Is the cultural challenge, today, to conceive of the foreign, the radically alien, the radically other '*as such*', or is it the violence of difference in the moments of greatest proximity with the other?³² Is the hardest thing figuring the other as other? What is most painful and most inevitable may be the need to figure that there is no secured 'in-between' between self and other: knowing we are enfolded together (who am I? who is the other? what am I if the other is not secured *over there?*) – the violence of difference at the point of irreconcilable proximity. Even Derrida's figuring of the two enemies at the day of atonement remains, it seems, in a certain model of agonism. The enemies live an aporia in which they have a mutual compassion for their inability to reconcile. But it seems to me that the enemies retain the security of their difference from each other. Perhaps Kofman tries to indicate how terrifying and crucial such a model becomes when we sacrifice a model which secures for the enemies, difference *between*:

It would be quite a benefit
 If only I could sometimes sit
 Farther away; but my toes are
 Too distant; close friends, still too far.
 Between my friends and me, the middle
 Would do. My wish? You guess my riddle."³¹
 F. Nietzsche

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References

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2. J. Derrida, *Mémoires for Paul de Man*, trans. C. Lindsay, J. Culler, et al. (New York: Columbia Press, 1989), p.28.
3. J. Derrida, "'Eating Well', or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida. In E. Cadava, P. Connor and J.-L. Nancy (eds.) *Who Comes After the Subject?* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p.115.
4. See for example Rosalyn Diprose's work on in-vitro fertilisation in R. Diprose, *The Bodies of Women: Ethics Embodiment and Sexual Difference* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); R. Diprose, 'Giving Corporeality Against the Law', *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 11, no. 24 (1996) and Jennifer Biddle's work on anthropology, see for example J. Biddle, 'The Anthropologist's Body or What It Means to Break Your Neck in the Field', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1993), pp.184-197.
5. M. de Montaigne, 'On Friendship', in *Essays*, trans. J.M. Cohen (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), p.93.
6. J. Derrida, *Jarvis 2: Jek bihin all hier*. In E. Weber (ed.) *Points ... Interviews, 1974-1995*: Stanford University Press (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.321.
7. F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No one*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) pp.82-83.
8. L. Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. G.C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p.66.
9. See S. Kofman, *Le Respect des femmes (Kant et Rousseau)* (Paris: Galilée, 1982).
10. S. Kofman with R. Jaccard, 'Apprendre aux hommes à tenir parole – portrait de Sarah Kofman', *Le Monde* (27-28 April) ('Le monde aujourd'hui') (1986), p.vii.
11. ['(A)ura-t-on bien compris Nietzsche?... on l'aura, en tout cas, aimé : on se sera avec lui symbiotiquement uni au point d'être avec lui confondu']. S. Kofman, *Explosion II*, <<Les Enfants de Nietzsche>> (Paris: Galilée, 1993), p.371.
12. S. Kofman, 'Baubö: Theological Perversion and Fetishism', in M.A. Gillespie and Tracy B. Strong (eds.) *Nietzsche's New Seas: Explorations in Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Politics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press) p.180, 191-7.
13. R. Brandom, *Patterns of Disavowance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy* (Oxford: Polity, 1991), p.103; and see for a discussion of this issue E. Grosz, 'Ontology and Equivocation: Derrida's Politics of Sexual Difference', in N.J. Holland, *Feminist Interpretations of Jacques Derrida* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).
14. A. Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p.199.
15. J. Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. B. Harlow (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p.37.
16. S. Kofman, *Leçons de Derrida* (Paris: Galilée, 1993).
17. J. Derrida, 'Les Dons de Sarah Kofman', *Les Cahiers du Grif 3* [nouvelle série] (1997), p.133-134.

18. See the discussion following Kofman's presentation on Derrida's work at the conference *Les Fins de l'homme*, (S. Kofman, 'Ca Cloche' [followed by discussion], in J.-L. Nancy and P. Laoue-Labarthe (eds.), *Les fins de l'homme* (Paris: Galilée, 1981). Derrida asks Kofman if the passage on Freud's fetishism is really (as she seems to be suggesting) the pivotal point, and if a generalised fetishism is really the key, to his text, Glas. Kofman responds that she doesn't understand generalised fetishism as the key to his text, either. Derrida says it has been an operative key, for her. Kofman describes Derrida as conceding or giving too much to Freud in his reading of Freud. Derrida responds that one always concedes either too much, or else little, in giving a reading of a text. Derrida takes Kofman to suppose that the fantasy of castration is a master signifier, and responds that this supposes a metaphysical approach to fetishism with an original, master signifier and its substitutes. But Kofman takes herself to be arguing specifically against the idea of castration as a master signifier.
19. ('Car elle fut aussi sans pitié, sinon sans merci, en fin de compte, et pour Nietzsche, et pour Freud').
20. J. Derrida, *Politiques de l'écriture* (Paris: Galilée, 1994).
21. G. Bennington and J. Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, trans. G. Bennington (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993).
22. Here I cite Diprose's illuminating discussion of this material in 'Giving Corporeality Against the Law', p.259, who in turn cites J. Derrida's, 'Given Time: The Time of the King', *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1992), p.170.
23. J. Derrida, 'Apories: Mourir – s'attendre aux <<limites de la vérité>>'. In *Le passage des frontières: Autour du travail de Jacques Derrida* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), p.315.
24. The very gesture of comprehension will always operate in a fetishistic manner, it could be said, in which there is a simultaneous recognition and denial of the very need for communication. My very gesture of communication declares that we can communicate, and that we can not.
25. About immigration policy, Derrida writes of state policies oriented towards integration which affirm ideals of recognition and the acceptance of the alterity of the other. Those same state policies, he points out, also welcome the foreigner under a logic of integration. The same duty which dictates respect of difference, posits as a universal good the translation of the difference of the other, and the single, univocal voice which is opposed to racism and xenophobia ('Apories', p.316). In this passage from 'Apories', Derrida is also discussing his treatment of these issues in J. Derrida, *The Other Heading*, trans. P.-A. Brault and M.B. Nias (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).
26. See J. Derrida, 'Psyche: Inventions of the Other [extract]. In P. Kamuf (ed.) *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
27. Cited in 'Les Dons de Sarah Kofman', p.157 and see S. Kofman *Pourquoi rit-on?* (Paris: Galilée, 1986) p.198.
28. S. Kofman, 'Les <<Mains>> de Robert Antelme' in R. Antelme, *Textes inédits* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), p.151.
29. S. Kofman, *Explosion II: Les Enfants de Nietzsche* (Paris: Galilée), pp.232-234.
30. R. Antelme, *L'Expérience humaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), pp.305-6.
31. There is no doubt that Irigaray's recent work does run this risk, although it can be argued, on her behalf, that her concept of the subject's (differential) relationship to their own sexuate 'genre' is a means of avoiding the situation of difference 'between' men and women.
32. I have found Vicki Kirby's discussion of the problems of a difference figured 'between' extremely helpful in thinking about this issue, see V. Kirby, *Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997).
33. F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. W. Kaufmann. (New York: Random House, 1974), p.51.