

Is friendship possible with the dead?

On love and solidarity with Bataille and Nietzsche

Willow Verkerk*

ABSTRACT: This article proposes that Bataille's writings on Nietzsche demonstrate a love and solidarity that is a testament to the posthumous activity of friendship. In doing so it argues, against Aristotle and Derrida, that friendship is possible with the dead. I turn to Nietzsche's own writings to show an alternative account of friendship in which he claims that he is bringing into existence future philosophers and free spirits, posing himself as a friend to his readers, suggesting that he will continue to offer his friendship to those able to receive it after his death. Following Joanne Faulkner's analysis of the necromantic art of revival, I propose that Nietzsche is resurrected by Bataille when he brings him into his lived experiences and writings. Bataille's writings in the *Summa Atheologica* elucidate his attempt to receive and resurrect the thinking and spirit of Nietzsche. He was also one of the first to denounce the use of Nietzsche by the Nazis in the journal *Acéphale*. Bataille explains that Nietzsche's concept of force is interested in collective liberation and individual sovereignty and not in the alienation and enslavement required for fascism to succeed. He shows methodological and political solidarity with his dead friend by accepting his philosophical gifts and continuing the Nietzschean project of self-overcoming with both resonance and departure. In doing so, Bataille demonstrates the necromantic art of posthumous friendship and the role of the community without community in the practice of philosophy.

Keywords: Nietzsche; Bataille; love; death; solidarity.

"Human destiny has met with piety, morality, and the most opposed attitudes: anguish or even, often enough, horror: it rarely encountered friendship. Not until Nietzsche . . ." (Bataille, *Guilty*, p.41)

In the *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida, following Aristotle, distinguishes the act of loving from being loved. He describes loving as an activity of the subject which "belongs only to a being gifted with life" (Derrida, 1997, p.12). On the other hand, being loved is a passivity which belongs to the object and is one which can be alive, dead, or inanimate. Friendship

* **Willow Verkerk**, Department of Philosophy, 1866 Main Mall E370, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1, The University of British Columbia. **Email:** willow.verkerk@ubc.ca

is distinguished from romantic love for being a kind of loving that is actively known by both parties (Derrida, 1997, p.9). Thus, friendship, according to Derrida (and Aristotle) brings together life, love, and knowledge.

Derrida also explains the loving in friendship as being so strong that it commits one to their beloved after death (1997, p.12). Contained within the covenant of friendship is an understanding that the beloved will die and the love that one has for them will continue to be sustained. This love that the friend has for the other after death is compared by Derrida to a maternal joy (*jouissance*) that does not require reciprocity (1997, p.12). Yet friendship is distinguished from love, by being active on both sides (and thus being reciprocal). This complicates the definition of friendship. Does it require reciprocity or not? Does the status of friendship, and its requirements, change after death? Is there a kind of friendship that exceeds the categories of active and passive, life and death, man and woman, knowledge and ignorance? Derrida suggests so when he points to Nietzsche's future philosophers and friends of solitude as instigators of a new kind of "impossible" friendship, associating it with Bataille's "community of those without community" (Derrida, 1997, p.37).

This essay takes these reflections of Derrida as points of entry into Bataille's readings and re-writings of Nietzsche. As Derrida realizes, Bataille considers himself to be a friend of Nietzsche. Bataille's writings on Nietzsche provide an example of solidarity with, and love for, the dead philosopher. In this respect, we may view Bataille as a lover of Nietzsche. But can his relationship with Nietzsche be considered friendship?

Not according to Aristotle's and Derrida's preliminary categorizations of love and friendship. However, if we look to Nietzsche's writings, we find three kinds of friendship, one being that of the bestower who, like maternal *jouissance*, does not require a direct reciprocity. Instead, the bestower looks for one who can receive and transform their gifts. Nietzsche viewed himself as a bestower of teachings and writes about his principles of friendship (joy, agon, and bestowing) bringing into existence future philosophers and free spirits (Verkerk 2019). He poses himself as a friend to his readers, suggesting that he will continue to offer his friendship to those able to receive it after his death. This article argues that Bataille's writings in the *Summa Atheologica* (which include *Inner Experience*, *Guilty*, and *On Nietzsche*), elucidate Bataille's attempt to receive and resurrect the thinking and spirit of Nietzsche. In doing so, I propose that Bataille's writings on (and re-writings of) Nietzsche are a testament to the posthumous activity of friendship that Nietzsche himself aimed to mobilize through his books.

At the centre of this analysis is the following question: What kind of relationship did Georges Bataille have with Friedrich Nietzsche? Born on 10 September 1897, three years before Nietzsche's death, Bataille was arguably the first to claim his place as Nietzsche's posthumous friend. He was also one of the first to express his solidarity with Nietzsche and denounce the use of Nietzsche by the Nazis. The second issue of the journal *Acéphale* (January 1937), a journal created by Bataille together with the artist André Masson, is dedicated to Nietzsche. Its intention is not to celebrate or apologize for him, nor is it solely to proclaim Nietzsche's disapproval of anti-Semitism. In addition to

explaining how Nietzsche was misconstrued through the misrepresentations of his sister Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche and others, Bataille distinguishes Nietzsche's thinking from National Socialism and fascism more broadly. Bataille explains that Nietzsche's concept of force is interested in collective liberation and individual sovereignty, in "human life," and "the future," and not in the alienation and enslavement required for fascism to succeed (Bataille, 2015, pp.165-66).¹

Bataille took Nietzsche's thinking seriously, so much so that he attempted to integrate some of Nietzsche's concepts into his life. In an autobiographical note written in 1923, Bataille names Nietzsche a "decisive" figure and, as Benjamin Noys points out, he shares with Nietzsche a focus on "lived experience," in which one's thinking is integrated with one's life (Botting and Wilson 1996, p.113; Noys 2000 pp.5-6). Noys explains Bataille's notion of lived experience conveying the autobiographical in which life and work are conjoined through "irruptive forces" that do not presume a "secure identity" (2000, p.5). In *On Nietzsche*, compiled in 1944 during the last year that the Nazis occupied France, Bataille reflects on Nietzsche's writings and brings them into conversation with his inner ruminations and daily events (Bataille, 2015, p.xviii). Of Bataille's chief inspirations were Nietzsche, Pascal, and Sade and he attempted to live out what he conceived to be Nietzschean principles through setting his passions free to find community and enlightenment through transgression. Bataille's activities were not restrained to his imagination, he was a well-known libertine, a frequent visitor to brothels and strip clubs, and founding member of a secret society (also named Acéphale) occupied with rituals that employed Nietzsche's writings (Bataille 2015, p.xxiii; Noys 2000, p.46). The description of community he seeks with Nietzsche, one of surrender and violence, speaks to his life-long fascination with the erotic and the connection he believed it had with squandering, debauchery, and death, and ultimately, the path towards liberation through desubjectification.

Bataille's subversive description of "communication" as involving wounding and destruction appears to be closest to what Nietzsche writes about erotic love, which he claims is motivated by the assimilating instincts of the will to power. However, Bataille's use of the term "communication" in *On Nietzsche* is used broadly, associated with change, and "the will to chance" which Bataille explains as the child who, in Nietzsche's three transformations of the spirit in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, is the creative part of overcoming.² To explain communication, Bataille uses the words "risk," "defilement," and "wounding," experiences that allow for new openings and the change to occur that he thinks is necessary for sharing community (2015, pp.33, 38). Although the terms Bataille employs to describe this process are different from those of Nietzsche, his writings are not without foundation in Nietzsche's texts, and especially if one focuses on the destructive and transformative qualities which Nietzsche aligns with the will to power, erotic love, and overcoming.

At the same time, and true to the agonistic and joyful moods of Nietzschean friendship, Bataille retains a friendly atmosphere in *On Nietzsche*. For example, he writes

in a tone that sounds almost Epicurean, "My life in Nietzsche's company is a community; my book is this community" (Bataille, 2015, p.24). Bataille states that Nietzsche offers him solidarity and that other than a few exceptions his "company on earth is that of Nietzsche" (2015, p.19). Bataille views himself as responding to Nietzsche's "desire for community" as an inheritor of Nietzsche's ideas who can pursue them further and refine them for himself (2015, p.23). By interweaving excerpts from Nietzsche's books with his own philosophical musings on the death of God, overcoming, the will, sacrifice, and other topics, *On Nietzsche* has an admittedly personal quality that both inhibits and exposes meaning in tribute to Nietzsche's exoteric and esoteric styles which seek at once to expose and to mask (Nietzsche 2014, pp.33-34).

Bataille is taking part in what Joanne Faulkner has called the "necromantic art" of resurrection, in which a conjuring takes place, not only of the ideas but of the philosopher themselves. According to Faulkner, it is through reading and interpretation that this conjuring occurs. When doing so with Nietzsche it presents the conjurer with the challenge of being both within and outside of the text because Nietzsche's writings inspire and provoke feelings of intimacy and subjugation yet are nevertheless the work of a dead man (Faulkner 2010, pp.4-5). His books speak directly to the reader and, as evidenced by the variant kinds of readings of him, readers and re-writers of Nietzsche appear to think they know him even if the writings are by someone from whom one cannot seek a definitive response.

Bataille emphasizes what he conceives to be his unique ability to understand Nietzsche in his Preface to *On Nietzsche* when he writes: "Today it seems that I must say: those who read or admire Nietzsche ridicule him (he knew it, he said it). Except for me? (I am simplifying.) But to attempt, as he asked, to follow him is to submit to the same tests, to the same wandering as he did" (2015, p.5). What is particularly unique about Bataille's necromantic art of reading is that he is posing himself as a reader who is willing to take Nietzschean risks by embarking upon, what he conceives to be, some of the same experiments as Nietzsche. His engagements with Nietzsche's texts, which follow Nietzsche's thinking while also challenging him, show the efforts of one trying to enact intellectual and spiritual solidarity with a beloved friend, while concurrently attempting to revive him through lived experiences.

As a reader, Bataille follows Nietzsche's emphasis on reading slowly and living with his texts. In *Dawn* Nietzsche writes, "read slowly, deeply, backward and forward with care and respect, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate fingers and eyes...My patient friends, this book desires for itself only consummate readers and philologist: *learn to read me well*" (2011, p.7). This sentiment is repeated numerous times when Nietzsche offers advice about how to read his works. He is particularly concerned with the absence of leisure time and the obsession that modernity has with always being busy. Nietzsche points to the necessity of disconnecting from the busy pace of the financial market and a world in which people seek out endless productivity. Nietzsche writes, "One thinks with a watch in one's hand, even as one eats one's midday meal while reading the latest news of the stock market; one lives as if one always 'might miss out on something.' 'Rather do

anything than nothing': this principle, too, is merely a string to throttle all culture and good taste" (1974, p.259). Nietzsche's critique of industriousness and concern with modern society's emphasis on production over leisure influenced Bataille's thinking on the problem of liberation and the import of having useless time for friendship and various kinds of expenditures. As Bataille writes, "work created humanity, but at the summit humanity liberates itself from work" (2011, p. 31). As readers of Bataille know well, he views non-productive activities as vital to the project of liberation.³

Like Nietzsche, Bataille emphasizes for the reader "to practice reading as an art" which involves slowing down and spending time with the text so that it can be absorbed and reflected upon (Nietzsche, 2014, pp.214-215). Bataille replicates this sentiment in the "Introduction" to his *Memorandum*, a selection of Nietzsche's aphorisms arranged by Bataille in 1937, when he writes, "I propose this book for long, slow meditations" and then a bit later, "I imagine that no book is more worthy than this of being meditated upon—ruminated upon, endlessly" (Bataille, 2015, p.187). As Stuart Kendall points out, Bataille's selection in *Memorandum* was inspired by Acéphale, the secret society, as meditative tools for their rituals (Bataille 2015, p.xxiii). As such, it is not only rumination that Bataille is underscoring but also its consequences. Of the collection of Nietzsche's aphorisms that he chooses to bring together, Bataille states that he gathered them "for the use of those SEARCHING FOR CONSEQUENCES" (2015, p.187). It seems that Bataille is following Nietzsche's statement that the reader must be both profoundly wounded and profoundly delighted by his writing to understand it (Nietzsche, 2014, p.214). The activity of wounding is central to Bataille's notion of communication and his search to find those writings of Nietzsche that push one's being to its limits.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche states that a book can be harmful to one reader and emboldening to another, and he suggests that for one to fully comprehend his esotericism, one must be able to experience tragedy without succumbing to pity (2014, pp.33-34). Of this process, Bataille writes, "Nietzsche's thought rises to the crest of waves, TO THE POINT WHERE THE MOST TRAGIC IS LAUGHABLE. At this height, it is difficult to maintain oneself (maybe impossible)" (2015, p.187). Bataille challenges his readers to take positions, to be "FOR or AGAINST" (2015, p.187). In making this statement, Bataille is taking up Nietzsche's hammer, attempting to philosophize with the kind of spiritualized cruelty that Nietzsche cherishes through provoking greater questioning and probity in the reader. Yet, Bataille is going further still with his agon.

In the preface to the *Genealogy of Morality* as well as in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche states that his philosophical insights are so severe that they are likely to create a crisis in the reader (2014, pp.33-34, 214). Bataille wants this crisis and welcomes it. He joyfully adopts the metaphysical supposition of Nietzsche's force with a philosophical seriousness in which it becomes his very own project, a Nietzschean anti-Christian *pathos* that seeks out community and enlightenment through a going under. As a reader of Nietzsche, it appears that Bataille pursues Nietzsche to the place where one seeks self-

destruction, where one becomes in Deleuze's terms the person who wants to perish (Deleuze, 1983, p.176).

In *Inner Experience*, Bataille writes that his friend Maurice Blanchot challenged him, "why not pursue my inner experience as if I were the last man?" (Botting, and Wilson, 1997, p.90). While the reference to the last man may be read as literal (being the last person in existence), Bataille's response also speaks to Nietzsche's account of the last human in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Bataille writes, "I know myself to be the reflection of the multitude and the sum of its anguish. On the other hand, if I were the last man, the anguish would be the most insane imaginable! I could in no way escape, I would remain before infinite annihilation thrown back into myself or yet still: empty, indifferent. But inner experience is conquest and as such *for others!*" (Botting and Wilson, 1997, p.90). On the one hand, Bataille is emphasizing how important the other is for constituting inner experience, how the human being is inevitably tied to the life-world of their community. However, he is also speaking to the problem of indifference that Nietzsche illuminates in his description of the last human whose response to all is only a "blink." Nietzsche's elucidation of the last human refers to the passive nihilist; they are a consequent of the death of God, and the subsequent loss of higher meaning and values which occur when there is a lack of guiding normative authority. For Nietzsche, the last human has given up on searching for meaning and creation, they have "contrived happiness" to seek out petty satisfaction (Nietzsche 2005, p.16). "By taking the path of the least resistance, the last human enacts wretched contentment, a nihilist attitude to life in which one has relinquished striving" (Verkerk 2019, p.14). Nietzsche opposes the last human to the Overhuman in the Prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Yet there is also another suggestion at work in the text: the despair that is experienced due to a loss of meaning after the death of God will inspire some to become active nihilists, those who are no-saying destroyers of the remnants of the dying values.

Is it towards the figure of the active nihilist that Bataille moves? He appears most focused on the destructive stage of Nietzsche's philosophy, of expending and burning out the self, rather than being concerned with what comes after. For one to become an active nihilist in Nietzsche's thinking, a certain degree of self-loss is inevitable because one has decided that their values no longer have meaning and, as such, should be destroyed. Bataille's writings on the wounding aspect of communication and ritualistic meditation that allows for depersonalization can be viewed as the kind of practices necessary for the one who is attempting to distance and detach themselves from past beliefs. However, it is unclear whether these are themselves strategies that allow for the prospects of cultural re-evaluation that Nietzsche saw the active nihilist facilitating. In Bataille's writing they appear as therapeutic and spiritual methods for re-invigorating existence. Or, perhaps it is not merely that the Christian God is dead but that this death has removed the foundation out from under the eschatological view of the modern subject. This means that it is only through experiences of the body, through one's confrontation with their limits of sensation (and even their mortality) that an experience of liberation can be found.

Regarding Nietzsche's morality, Bataille writes: "Nietzsche's morality ceased to be ITINERARY. It is an invitation to the DANCE (divine dance, solitary, but dance, and the dance goes nowhere)" (2015, p.193). While it does seem at times that Bataille's description of the dance surrenders one into oblivion, here it may be better understood as a celebration of the tragic through dance, a return to the Dionysian element that Nietzsche thought was so important for the reinvigoration of spiritual and cultural health in his early *Birth of Tragedy*. In this book Nietzsche writes about the therapeutic value of art that is achievable through a merging of the Apollonian and Dionysian in tragedy. However, the Dionysian, which can be experienced most directly through ritualistic dance, music, and intoxication are said by Nietzsche, to "cause subjectivity to vanish to the point of complete self-forgetting" (Nietzsche 1999, p.17). Dance, as a form of intoxication that "goes nowhere," is a pathway into the Dionysian where embodied enjoyment allows for a loosening of one's egoic self-consciousness. Nietzsche's reflections on the Dionysian give Bataille inspiration for his project of depersonalization. Furthermore, the acceptance of the necessity of the dance without direction speaks to Nietzsche's notion of *amor fati*, or love one's fate, a condition for self-overcoming and the prospect of eternal recurrence, that one's fate will return repeatedly.

At minimum, Bataille is, in Nietzsche's terms, casting a light into the "*underworld* of the ideal," a process that is required for the one who seeks liberation from those values that are not one's own (2021, p.267). In his writings of the *Summa Atheologica*, it is on the central role of overcoming in lived experience that Bataille is focused. As Stuart Kendall explains: "Nietzsche claimed, and Bataille believed, that you measure yourself by what you have overcome. This twofold movement, of loss and the recognition of loss, of license and limitation, defines the dynamism of a being that is always more than itself always looking backward and leaping ahead of itself, always setting limits and always evading them. The only thing that does not change is the will to change" (Bataille 2011, p.xxiv). The notion that life is in perpetual change, movement, or becoming, is at the heart of Nietzsche's ontology of the will to power in which being and, as such, the human subject, is made up of a multitude of struggling forces. The evaluation of overcoming as a necessary good is simply an affirmative stance on life which is constantly overcoming itself. However, this wilful and constantly changing aspect of existence that Bataille celebrates in his thinking via Nietzsche can also be understood as having proto-existential elements. The existentialist line in Nietzsche's thinking can be found in *The Gay Science* but is perhaps stated most simply in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where the statement, "willing liberates," is repeated several times. One of these selections is repeated by Bataille, when he includes the following as section 175 in his *Memorandum*, "Willing liberates: that is the true teaching of will and freedom" (Bataille 2015, p.219; Nietzsche 2005, p.75).

In his *Memorandum*, in particular, Bataille appears to be "attempting nothing less than a repetition of the experience of Nietzsche" (Abel 1995, p.58). The mimicry that Bataille enacts in his thinking and living with Nietzsche cannot be understood as a simple movement of mimetic copying. While Bataille's repetition of Nietzsche involves an endeavour to enter into the thinking and doings of Nietzsche through lived experience,

this repetition is one that cannot help but enact the will to change. Part of the magic within the process of repeating Nietzsche is the unknowable chance of the will to change, that the future cannot be determined in advance. For this reason, it is misplaced to call Bataille's repetition of Nietzsche an "immolation of the self" (Abel 1995, p. 59). Even knowing that Bataille was searching out liberation by way of depersonalization, his rewriting of Nietzsche cannot be reduced to this movement. Rather, Bataille is engaging in a necromantic art, reviving and repeating Nietzsche through the reception of his gifts and in the spirit of love, solidarity, and friendship.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche expresses his hopes for future philosophers and free spirits who will pluck at his wreath, take his concepts, and re-formulate them to make them their own (2005, p.68). Bataille's reflections on the will to change and the will to chance, the Dionysian dance, communication, and liberation are his re-writings of Nietzsche in which he pursues his own way to becoming, in Nietzsche's terms, a free spirit. Nietzsche writes that those who are becoming free spirits will experience great loneliness, become suspicious of their beliefs, and abandon things that they most admire (1995, pp.11-12). He explains that the free spirit is a "relative concept" because there is great variation in how one actualizes free-spiritedness, and this depends upon one's unique relation to life (Nietzsche, 1995, p.155).⁴ Bataille was born to a syphilitic father whose illness had a profound impact on his childhood, his life was marked by war and occupation. Although his family was not religious, he converted to Catholicism in his late teens and then renounced it in his twenties. In Bataille's writings in the *Summa Atheologica*, one has the impression that he is attempting, in Nietzsche's terms, to break his fettered and faithful spirit through necromantic repetitions of Nietzschean values that pursue knowledge and pleasure with an abandonment that recognizes few limits.

Bataille writes, "Going far demands combined efforts, at least one following another, not stopping at the possibilities of one person...I hope that others continue the experience that others began before me, dedicating themselves like me, like others before me, to this test: to go to the end of the possible" (Bataille, 2015, p.23). What going to the end of the possible means for Bataille is something that exceeds Nietzsche because it requires a going under into disidentification with the supposition that a confrontation with the precarities of existence allows for a true experience of sovereignty. At the same time, however, going to the end of the possible in Bataille's description is an inner process that must be built upon the shared struggles and experiences of communal others, a community that he attempted to create with his secret society, Acéphale and the more public and intellectual College of Sociology.⁵ Both Nietzsche and Bataille state that one requires a community to go to the end of the possible, or in Nietzsche's terms to experience (conscious) self-overcoming. Nietzsche, in his letters to friends and his self-reflective writings, expresses frustration with being unable to find the right kind of friends. He is, as Bataille notices, motivated by a want to find community (2015, p.23).

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche describes friendship as involving 'a shared higher thirst for an ideal above' (1974, p.89). Most of this aphorism concentrates on possessive and erotic love with the argument that love is much closer to greed than we might

suppose. Nietzsche brings in friendship as an opposition to, and development of love, when he writes: "Here and there on earth we may encounter a kind of continuation of love in which this possessive craving of two people for each other gives way to a new desire and lust for possession—a shared higher thirst for an ideal above them. But who knows such love? Who has experienced it? Its right name is friendship" (1974, p.89).

In general, one has the sense when reading the *Summa Atheologica* that these texts continue a very personal project for Bataille, one that seeks something beyond, over, or above. As such, we may understand Bataille to be sharing with Nietzsche this higher thirst for something beyond. In reception of Nietzsche's teachings on the problem of nihilism after the death of God, Bataille aims to destroy the apathetic and escapist last human, a reaction to the death of God and the broken Christian morality Nietzsche qualified as sick. Nietzsche's goal is to move through the last human and into the active nihilist, one who takes destruction to its limit so that it crosses over and becomes affirmative to create something new with the figure of the child. Bataille's writings on communication speak to the practices of vulnerability, necessary for the destructive and creative stages of overcoming to occur. He is repeating in his own words what Nietzsche writes about regarding change: some degree of wounding is inevitable for growth and overcoming. In doing so, Bataille captures Nietzsche's emphasis on the importance of painful vulnerability, as part of the loving that happens in relationships that bring about transformation. In *On Nietzsche*, Bataille addresses his notion of communication declaring that it "is love, and love defiles those it unites" (2015, p.33). He states that human beings are compelled to communicate, but inevitable in communication is not only risk, but also wounding and defilement (Bataille, 2015, p.33). Bataille writes that communication "only takes place to the extent that beings, leaning out of themselves, risk themselves under threat of degradation" (2015, p.38).

This resonates with the striving that Nietzsche explains takes place between agonistic friends who are one's best enemies in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and in *Beyond Good and Evil* when he writes about friends being drainage ditches for one's envy.⁶ Nietzsche's ontological concept of human nature, that the subject is a combination of struggling forces that are the will to power, means that intersubjective relations involve a kind of sublimated violence. In agonistic friendship, refined qualities of cruelty and enmity which help to facilitate striving involve some degree of the risk that Bataille names. What differs for Nietzsche is that he also values measure; his focus is on overcoming rather than the degradation that Bataille centres in his work.

For Nietzsche, agonistic friendship involves suffering which he considers necessary for growth. But Nietzsche does not jump to the mode of defilement that Bataille attributes to communication. The characteristics that Bataille associates with communication are much closer to Nietzsche's articulations of the more brute forms of the will to power, and his writings on erotic love when Nietzsche points to the dominating drives of masculine love that seek to incorporate the other.⁷ If we consider Bataille's relationship with Nietzsche (in line with his writings on communication), he can be seen in the feminine

position as one who wants to submit himself to the phallic drives of Nietzsche. As the receiver of knowledge, Bataille performs a wilful surrender which moves beyond the writings on friendship in Nietzsche's work.

Bataille's relationship with Nietzsche is one of devotion in the spirit of Nietzsche's feminine lover when he attempts to receive the Nietzschean concepts as a way into the perishable instant. However, he also acts as an agonistic friend who struggles against Nietzsche, who wants to be his brother in war and push the boundaries of Nietzsche's thinking.⁸ Further, Bataille's re-writing of Nietzsche is sometimes incorporating, acts of virile force which he performs to make Nietzsche's thinking his own. His ability to move between these positions—feminine lover, friend, and assimilating thinker—in his want to absorb, become, and expend Nietzsche's philosophy shows Bataille to be one of Nietzsche's first posthumous friends. Bataille accepts Nietzsche's gift, the gift of a bestowing friend and responds to it with his own choreography. In doing so, he continues the project outlined by Nietzsche's free spirit philosophy which has within it the aim of going further than what has come before.

In 1944, in his diary Bataille wrote, "I've never felt so strongly—after so many excesses, I'm really coming to the end of the possible—that I must love what is essentially perishable and live at the mercy of its loss" (Bataille, 2015, p.115). Going over for Bataille means going under in various ways, whether it be through the intoxications of sex, drink, dance, or ritual. Yet, there are also moments in his writings where the chase of "the end of the possible" seems to beacon a rise out of the ashes through an affirmation of chance. For, the one who is willing to step outside of themselves into contradiction, vulnerability, and violence, takes part in the no-saying move necessary for Nietzschean self-overcoming.

Bataille's posthumous expression of friendship with Nietzsche, and Nietzsche's writings about friendship, tell us that human relationships cannot be bound by the traditional terms of how loving has been done. We are moving beyond, in Derrida's words, the "homo-fraternal and phallogocentric schema" (1997, p.306) through having new kinds of friendships that challenge and sometimes reject the binary categories of active and passive, life and death, man and woman, knowledge and ignorance. The key is to see love and friendship with more eyes, for "*the more* affects we allow to express themselves on a given thing, *the more* eyes different eyes we know how to engage for the same thing, the more perfect will be our 'concept' of this thing" (Nietzsche, 2014, p.308). As Nietzsche indicates, his future friends will offer new perspectives on human relationships and, in doing so, change the limits of friendship that its earlier categories maintained.

This reading of Bataille suggests that friendship is indeed possible with the dead. I claim that some kinds of friendship do not require the reciprocity traditionally understood as necessary for friendship. Following Faulkner, I propose that Nietzsche is resurrected by Bataille through his necromantic arts of revival and repetition in which he brings Nietzsche into his lived experiences and writings. Bataille is acting in tribute to Nietzsche's claim that he would be "born posthumously,"⁹ actively receiving the gifts of Nietzsche's teachings as a free spirit friend, one whom Nietzsche stated he was bringing

into existence through his own inventions (1995, pp.6-7). In doing so, Bataille shows methodological and political solidarity with his dead friend and suggests that other readers and re-writers of Nietzsche may too have the chance to necromantically bring posthumous friendship into existence.

About the author

Willow **Verkerk** is Lecturer in Continental Philosophy and Social Philosophy at the University of British Columbia and a researcher with the Gendered Mimesis Project at KU Leuven. She is the author of *Nietzsche and Friendship* (Bloomsbury, 2019) and numerous essays in continental and feminist philosophy. Her current work draws on a Nietzschean legacy in critical theory to create a dialogue between this legacy and contemporary continental feminist philosophers working with notions of gendered mimesis.

Endnotes

- ¹ For more on this see Surya, 2002, pp.235-240.
- ² Bataille writes about Nietzsche's concept of the child as a symbol standing for the "open game" in which what occurs moves beyond what is expected or given. Whereas he associates the lion with the will to power, he poses the question: "isn't the child the will to chance?" (2015, p.151). See also Nietzsche, 2005, pp.23-24.
- ³ In *The Accursed Share*, Vol. II, Bataille writes, "life beyond utility is the domain of sovereignty" (1991, p.198).
- ⁴ See also Verkerk, 2019, p.27.
- ⁵ Noys writes that Bataille formed Acéphale together with others to create a community that desired freedom instead of power. He calls the College of Sociology the "public face" of Acéphale (2000, p.9).
- ⁶ See Nietzsche 2005, pp.49-50 and 2014, p.172.
- ⁷ See Nietzsche, 1974, pp.86-89, 318-320 and 2014, pp.89-90
- ⁸ See 1974 pp.318-320 for the feminine lover and 2014, pp.41-42 for the warrior.
- ⁹ Nietzsche writes in the Foreword to the *Antichrist*, "This book belongs to the very few. Perhaps not a single one of them is alive yet...Only the day after tomorrow belongs to me. Some are born posthumously" (2021, p. 134).

References

- Abel**, L. 1995. Georges Bataille and the Repetition of Nietzsche. In: Bold-Irons, L.A. ed. and trans. *On Bataille: Critical Essays*. Albany: SUNY Press, pp.51-59.
- Bataille**, G. 2015. *On Nietzsche*. Kendall, S. trans. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Bataille**, G. 2011. *Guilty*. Kendall, S. trans. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Bataille**, G. 1991. *The Accursed Share*, Vol. II and III. Hurley, R. trans. New York: Zone Books.

- Botting**, F. and Wilson, S. eds. 1997. *The Bataille Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Deleuze**, G. 1983. *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, Tomlinson, H. trans. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Derrida**, J. 1997. *Politics of Friendship*. Collins, G. trans. London and New York: Verso.
- Faulkner**, J. 2010. *Dead Letter to Nietzsche; or, the Necromantic Art of Reading Philosophy*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.
- Heidegger**, M. 1991. *Nietzsche, Volumes Three and Four*. Krell, D. trans. New York: HarperCollins.
- Nietzsche**, F. 2014. *Beyond Good and Evil/ On the Genealogy of Morality*. Del Caro, A. trans. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Nietzsche**, F. 2021. *The Case of Wagner, Twilight of the Idols, The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Dionysus Dithyrambs, Nietzsche Contra Wagner*. Del Caro, A., Diethel, C., Large D., Leiner, G., Loeb, P. trans. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Nietzsche**, F. 1999. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Guess, R. ed. Speirs, R. ed. and trans. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nietzsche**, F. 2021. *The Case of Wagner, Twilight of the Idols, The Antichrist, Ecce Homo, Dionysus Dithyrambs, Nietzsche Contra Wagner*. Del Caro, A., Diethel, C., Large, D., Leiner, G., Loeb, P. Schrifft, A., Tinsley, F. and Wittwar, M. trans. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Nietzsche**, F. 2011. *Dawn*. Smith, B. trans. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Nietzsche**, F. 1974. *The Gay Science*. Kaufmann, W. trans. New York: Vintage.
- Nietzsche**, F. 1995. *Human, All Too Human I*. Handwerk, G. Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Nietzsche**, F. 2005. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Parkes, G. trans. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Noys**, B. 2000. *George Bataille: A Critical Introduction*. London and Sterling: Pluto Press.
- Surya**, M. 2002. *Georges Bataille: An Intellectual Biography*. Fijalkowski, K. and Richardson, M. trans. London and New York: Verso.
- Verkerk**, W. 2016. Nietzsche's Agonistic Ethics of Friendship. *Symposium: Canadian Journal for Continental Philosophy* 20.2 (Fall): pp.22-41.
- Verkerk**, W. 2019. *Nietzsche and Friendship*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Verkerk**, W. 2014. Nietzsche's Goal of Friendship. *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 45.3: pp.279-291.