

Love, Friendship, and *Casablanca*

(Abstract)

What is love? Many theorists have tried to answer this question. One such attempt was made not so long ago by the philosopher and sociologist Axel Honneth who argues that every love relationship between people is the result of an interactional process by which the persons involved detach themselves from an initial state of oneness in such a way that, in the end, they learn to accept and care for each other as independent persons. Hence his definition of love as the affectional expression of care retained over distance. Honneth's account, however, is not unproblematic. There are profound differences between various kinds of love which his account tends to ignore. C.S. Lewis has drawn attention to some of these differences and in this essay I focus on his discussion of the specific contrast between romantic love and friendship. Friendship certainly is, I argue, a form of love, though it cannot be accommodated in Honneth's model. To illustrate this, I refer to what is arguably one of the best films to deal with romantic love and friendship, *Casablanca*.

Keywords: love, friendship, film, romance, *Casablanca*

What is love? Many theorists have tried to answer this question. One such attempt was made not so long ago by the philosopher and sociologist Axel Honneth who argues that every love relationship between people is the result of an interactional process by which the persons involved detach themselves from an initial state of oneness in such a way that, in the end, they learn to accept and care for each other as independent persons. Hence his definition of love as the affectional expression of care retained over distance. However, Honneth's account is not unproblematic. In fact, the very effort to describe the essential features of love may be ill-conceived. Ludwig Wittgenstein famously argued that if we look closely at the various proceedings that we call 'games,' we will not find something that is common to all, but only similarities or 'family resemblances.' The same may be true for love. Perhaps there is not one defining characteristic

that all love relationships share. Indeed, I will argue that friendship, though certainly a form of love, cannot be accommodated in Honneth's unifying model. The interactional process which plays such a pivotal role in his model and the resulting condition of a 'care retained over distance' are, as I will try to show, not essential features of friendship. In building my argument, I will repeatedly refer to and rely on ideas formulated by C.S. Lewis and George Santayana. Both these authors have drawn attention to profound differences between various kinds of love and especially their analysis of the contrast between romantic love and friendship will help to reveal the lacunae in Honneth's theory. To confirm my findings and bring out the said contrast even more, I will end my paper with a discussion of what is arguably one of the best films to deal with romantic love and friendship, *Casablanca*.

Love

In his influential study *The Struggle for Recognition*, Axel Honneth argues that a healthy relationship to oneself is always the result of an intersubjective process. The development of self-esteem, for instance, depends crucially on the esteem of others, while self-confidence, according to Honneth, can only come about in an environment in which one is loved. To substantiate the latter claim, Honneth appeals to (a somewhat simplified version of) the 'object-relations theory' developed by the British psychoanalyst and pediatrician Donald W. Winnicott.

Honneth's 'winnicottian' account of the early interactions between mother and child begins with the observation that mother and child are in a state of symbiosis during the first months of life. The child is completely dependent on the mother and the mother identifies herself with her baby to such an extent that she experiences the helpless neediness of the baby as a lack of her own sensitivity. She devotes all her attention to the child and adapts her care and concern, as if out of an inner urge, to the child's changing requirements. After some time, however, the mother reassumes her social life and, as a consequence, can no longer meet the needs of the child as immediately as before. The child inevitably becomes aware of the decreasing attention of the mother and will typically try to hurt the mother, whose body until now was only experienced as a source of pleasure. The hitting, biting and kicking should not just be seen as a destructive phase, however, but also as a constructive strategy by which the child tries to find out whether the love and care of the mother remains intact now that she has manifested herself as an independent entity. If this does appear to be the case 'the child can de-

velop a sense of confidence in the social provision of the need he or she has, and consequently a basic "capacity to be alone" gradually unfolds¹. This capacity to be alone is not a state of absolute separation but rather a relational state in which young children come to feel confident in becoming assured of the mother's love.

According to Honneth, this winnicottian account of the interaction between mother and child provides the model for *all* adult love relationships², meaning not only romantic attachments, but all primary relationships which are constituted by strong emotional attachments among a small number of people (Honneth emphasizes that he wishes to assign a neutral meaning to love and to distance himself from the specific and tendentious meaning the concept acquired during romanticism). On the one hand, Honneth recognizes an initial tendency towards fusion or boundary-dissolution in every full-fledged love relationship. In friendship this may manifest itself in an enthusiastic conversation in which both friends lose themselves completely, whereas in amorous relations this finds its most obvious expression in sexual union. On the other hand, he also claims that 'this desire for merging can only become a feeling of love once, in the unavoidable experience of separation, it has been disappointed in such a way that it henceforth includes the recognition of the other as an independent person'³. It

¹ Winnicott as quoted by Honneth (A. Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. J. Anderson, Cambridge, Polity, 1995, p. 104.)

² In a sense he defends an even stronger thesis, namely 'that all love relationships are driven by the unconscious recollection of the original experience of merging that characterized the first months of life for "mother" and child' (*Op. cit.*, p. 105).

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 105.

is in this sense that love, for Honneth, can best be defined as ‘the affectional expression of care retained over distance’⁴. The balance between attachment and independence creates the ultimate condition for the development of self-confidence and the ‘capacity to be alone.’⁵

Friendship

Honneth sees friendship as fully congruous with both amorous relationships and the relationship between mother and child. He thinks that all of these attachments reveal the same basic structure and dynamics. But is this correct? I have come to have various qualms about this account, qualms that prompt me to a friendly interrogation of some of its constitutive elements. By his own account, Honneth distances himself from a specific romantic interpretation of love. Yet, in some respects he appears to be the victim of romanticist prejudices, in particular regarding his concept of friendship. I will demonstrate this with the aid of *The Four Loves*, an interesting but often overlooked book about love by C.S. Lewis. I will also occasionally refer to George Santayana’s essay ‘Friendship’, which bears a number of significant similarities to Lewis’s account.

According to Lewis one may distinguish between two types of pleasures: those which would not be pleasures at all unless they were preceded by desire, and

those which are pleasures in their own right and need no such preparation. As an example of the first kind, the so-called ‘need-pleasures,’ Lewis mentions a drink of water. An example of the second kind, the so-called ‘pleasures of appreciation,’ would be the unsought and unexpected sensations caused by certain smells. This crude but illuminating distinction may help us, according to Lewis, when we think about love. Just as ‘pleasures of appreciation’ differ from ‘need-pleasures’, so there seems to be a difference between ‘appreciative love’ and ‘need-love’. A good example of the latter kind of love is the relationship between mother and child. At the mother’s breast the child primarily seeks care and protection, and as such their love is one born out of a preceding need. Need-love, like need-pleasures, will not last longer than the need. This does not imply that every attachment which starts as a form of need-love is necessarily of a transitory nature. After all, the need may arise again and again and even be permanent; and moral principles such as conjugal fidelity, filial piety and gratitude may keep the relationship alive for a lifetime. Nevertheless, where need-love is left unaided it is bound to dissolve once the need is gone. That is why, Lewis adds dryly, ‘the world rings with the complaints of mothers whose grown-up children neglect them’⁶.

Lewis thinks that sexual or amorous love relationships often conform to the model of need-love. As he points out, it is not by accident that lovers often make use of baby-talk when speaking to each other⁷. Friendship, by contrast, is not

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁵ John Bayley writes about his marriage to Iris Murdoch: ‘One of the truest pleasures of marriage is solitude. Also the most deeply reassuring.’ (J. Bayley, *Iris. A Memoir of Iris Murdoch*, Abacus, London, 2001, p. 45) And further: ‘we were beginning that strange and beneficent process in marriage by which a couple can, in the words of A.D. Hope, the Australian poet, “move closer and closer apart”. The apartness is a part of the closeness, perhaps a recognition of it’ (*Op. cit.*, p. 49).

⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, Fount, London, 1998, p. 15.

⁷ As Roland Barthes puts it in *A Lover’s Discourse*, ‘we shut ourselves up in a mutual kindness, we mother each other reciprocally, we return to the root of all relations, where need and desire join.’

characterized by the same kind of neediness and typically falls in the category of appreciative love. 'Friendship is – in a sense not at all derogatory to it – the least *natural* of loves; the least instinctive, organic, biological, gregarious and necessary. [...] there is nothing throaty about it; nothing that quickens the pulse or turns you red and pale'⁸. This non-natural and non-necessary character of friendship was one of the reasons why friendship came under pressure during Romanticism:

But then came Romanticism and 'tearful comedy' and 'return to nature' and the exaltation of Sentiment; and in their train all that great wallow of emotion which, though often criticised, has lasted ever since. [...] Under this new dispensation all that had once commended this love now began to work against it. It had not tearful smiles and keepsakes and baby-talk enough to please sentimentalists. [...] It looked thin and etiolated; a sort of vegetarian substitute for the more organic loves⁹.

In ancient and medieval times, friendship was often considered to be the happiest and most complete of all loves. Today this is quite different, says Lewis. Obviously in this day and age, too, one will readily admit the benefits of having a few friends next to family and one's 'significant other.' Yet the very tone of that admission as well as the kind of relationships one is ready to refer to as 'friendship,' make it quite evident that it has little in common with the '*philia*' Aristotle counted among the virtues or the '*amicitia*' to which Cicero dedicated a book. This is how Santayana formulates it: 'The ancients [...] were masters in

friendship [...] In modern times, the sentiment and the literature of love have been immensely developed and overdeveloped, but friendship has lost its ancient importance, and in its heroic forms has become obsolete.'¹⁰ Friendship seems to have become of secondary importance, something which mainly serves for leisure purposes. We have friends as if it were only in order to be able to fill a free evening.

Friendship has not merely been sidelined in today's post-romantic culture. According to both Lewis and Santayana, theorists also often fail to do proper justice to the specific nature of friendship. Their analysis and observations may serve to illustrate how Honneth's theory, too, contains a number of dubious presuppositions.

Honneth's account under pressure

According to Honneth, friendship, like love in general, must be thought of in terms of a 'symbiotically nourished bond, which emerges through [...] demarcation', and 'that produces the degree of basic individual self-confidence indispensable for autonomous participation in public life'¹¹. Three constituent elements or stages can be distinguished. First, a symbiotic tendency or 'a desire to be merged with another person'¹²; second, a process of demarcation; finally, as a result of this 'refracted symbiosis'¹³, the emergence of autonomy and self-confidence. None of these stages is really typical of friendship.

(R. Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse, Fragments*, trans. R. Howard, London, Penguin, 1978, p. 224.)

⁸ Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁰ G. Santayana, *Friendship*, in G. Santayana, *The Birth of Reason & Other Essays*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1968, p. 78.

¹¹ A. Honneth, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 105.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 105.

To begin with, friendship is not characterized by a symbiotic tendency. Friendship is evidently different from *eros* in this respect. Lewis describes this most suitably, by using spatial metaphors: 'Lovers are normally face to face, absorbed in each other; Friends, side by side, absorbed in some common interest'¹⁴. To lose oneself in a common interest is not the same thing as losing oneself in one another. Honneth appears to have forgotten this when he mentions 'losing oneself in a good conversation' as an example of the symbiotic tendency in friendship. (Note also that lovers sometimes feel the urge to devour one another, so to speak. This desire for complete fusion is conspicuously absent in friendship.)

If there can be no talk of fusion, then neither does it make sense to talk of a painful and disappointing process of demarcation. On the contrary, according to Santayana, friendship is 'the union of two freely ranging souls that meet by chance, recognise and prize each other, but remain free'¹⁵. Indeed, 'that luminous, tranquil, rational world of relationships freely chosen'¹⁶ stands in sharp contrast to the feverish, involuntary character of being in love – a difference which is already apparent in our use of language ('to *fall* in love' vs 'to *make* friends'). Thus, in friendship individual autonomy does not have to be won through tedious exertion. In a certain sense the reverse is true. A bond of

friendship *presupposes* the autonomy of the friends: 'it is a relation between men at their highest individuality'¹⁷.

According to Honneth, friendship as a form of love may be defined as the affectional expression of care retained over distance. In essence, a friend is someone who gives you the space to be alone, but at the same time is always there for you should the need arise. This seems self-evident. And yet Lewis objects to such a description. In his view, the pivotal question of friendship is not: Will you be there for me should the need arise?

In this kind of love, as Emerson says, *Do you love me?* means *Do you see the same truth?* – Or at least, *Do you care about* the same truth? Where the truthful answer to the question *Do you see the same truth?* would be 'I see nothing and I don't care about the truth; I only want a Friend,' no Friendship can arise¹⁸.

Lewis does not deny that friends should stand up for each another and take care of each other in case of illness or misfortune. But he emphasizes that:

Such good offices are not the stuff of Friendship. The occasions for them are almost interruptions. They are in one way relevant to it, in another not. Relevant, because you would be a false friend if you would not do them when the need arose; irrelevant, because the role of benefactor always remains accidental, even a little alien, to that of a Friend. It is almost embarrassing¹⁹.

Santayana shares this view: 'Naturally a friend will help a friend in need, as any Christian would help any man if he could: but that is an embarrassment and a danger to friendship'²⁰. It is not hard to see why both Santayana and Lewis stress

¹⁴ C.S. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 57-58. Lovers continuously speak about their love for each other, which friends hardly do. Furthermore, the absence of the desire to become one may explain why 'jealousy, masterfulness, the desire to monopolize are absent in friendship.' (G. Santayana, *op. cit.*, p. 85). Or as Lewis notes: 'Friendship is the least jealous of all loves.' (p. 58)

¹⁵ G. Santayana, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

¹⁶ C.S. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 62-63.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

²⁰ G. Santayana, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

this point. By helping a friend he or she will become indebted to you and, in so far as friendship presupposes the equality and independence of the people involved, this would indeed be a threat to, rather than a strengthening of, the bond of friendship.

To sum up, in friendship we do not confront each other as children in need. On the contrary, as Lewis puts it poetically, ‘we meet like sovereign princes of independent states, abroad, on neutral ground, freed from our contexts’²¹. What Honneth considers the core of friendship – care and responsibility for one another – is thus repeatedly bracketed.

Objections and Replies

In the next section, I will substantiate these observations by means of the film *Casablanca* (1942). But first I will attempt to dispel some of the worries and objections that might arise at this point. In the process it will hopefully become clear how Lewis’s ‘traditionalist’ account of friendship is in fact not one far removed from more recent deconstructionist views on the topic.

There is a strong tendency, as Derrida points out in *The Politics of Friendship* (*Politiques de l’amitié*), to think of a true friend as an ideal image of oneself. To illustrate this, he describes the not uncommon daydream of the funeral eulogy whereby one imagines hearing one’s own

²¹ C.S. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 66-67. Lewis continues: ‘This love (essentially) ignores not only our physical bodies but that whole embodiment which consists of our family, job, past and connections.’ G. Santayana: ‘One of the blessings of friendship is that it lifts us out of our physical commitments. From this it follows that all the material and involuntary part of our lives must be presupposed and must go on automatically before friendship arises; and that it would be an anomaly for friendship to interfere with that fundamental order’ (*op. cit.*, p. 85).

words of sympathy and admiration voiced by friends standing besides one’s grave. According to Derrida, this kind of narcissism really means the death of friendship. For a friend, if anything, is someone who is *not* me and whose difference from me is a *conditio sine qua non* for friendship. Thus, true friendship can never be reduced to the logic of the same. But, one might wonder, isn’t Lewis precisely advocating this kind of reduction when he claims that seeing the same truth is central to friendship?

I think it would be unfair to describe Lewis’s account as fundamentally narcissistic. First of all, Lewis characterises friendship as a bond between men ‘at their highest individuality,’ which indicates that he does not consider a friend to be just an ideal copy of oneself. He also stresses that friends should care about the same truth, but not necessarily share the same opinion. This is an important difference. There is no doubt, moreover, that Derrida would fully endorse Lewis’s idea of friendship as something that is not born out of or fed by (narcissistic) neediness. In *The Politics of Friendship* Derrida repeatedly underlines how a friend loves unconditionally and not merely in return for being loved. That is why he goes on to argue that true friendship reveals itself not in the anticipatory enjoyment of one’s own funeral eulogy but rather in the anticipatory mourning of a friend. As Derrida puts it: ‘I could not love the other without feeling myself in advance engaged to love the other beyond death’²². Loving one who has died is the best example of a love without return value.

Another worry regarding Lewis’s account is this. Lewis claims that friend-

²² J. Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, transl. G. Collins, Verso, London/New York, 1997, p. 12.

ships are basically freely chosen. At the same time, however, he also says that friends should care about the same truth. Now, given that one's cares and concerns are often not a matter of personal choice, one might think there is a potential conflict between these two claims. For how to reconcile the essentially voluntary character of friendship with the fact that friendship is based on something that is, at least in large part, involuntary, namely shared values and concerns?

The conflict is more apparent than real. If Lewis had stated that friendship is a matter of *arbitrary* choice or, conversely, that caring about the same things will inevitably lead to friendship, then there would have been a real contradiction. But, as it stands, Lewis does not defend any of these claims. Remember that in his analysis of friendship he mainly attempts to delineate this kind of love from sexual love. He emphasises the element of free choice in friendship precisely to draw a contrast with *eros*. And he does have a point here. People may say things like 'I didn't want to fall in love with her, but I couldn't help myself' but rarely if ever will anyone say something similar about a friend ('I didn't want to be his friend but I couldn't help myself'). However, even though the element of choice is always present in friendship, that does not mean that friends are chosen randomly. Lewis is very explicit about this. Friendship is always built on certain shared concerns. Again, this is something that distinguishes friendship from erotic love. In erotic love this kind of 'common ground' is not always required.

In a recent essay on friendship, David Webb explores some of Foucault's ideas as developed in *Friendship as a Way of Life* and he makes the following observation:

'It is only when I discover friendship already burgeoning, springing from something we share (however obscure), that I may choose to strengthen it through a particular gesture or act'²³. This simple and accurate description is completely in line with Lewis's account and shows how there is no real conflict between the two aspects mentioned above.

Casablanca

Casablanca takes place during the Second World War and tells the story of Rick (Humphrey Bogart), an American former freedom fighter who has been abandoned by the love of his life and has since lapsed into cynicism. 'I stick my neck out for nobody,' is his oft repeated credo. He runs a night club and gambling den in French Morocco, which was neutral ground during the war. There he attempts to forget his happy days with Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman), until one evening she suddenly shows up in *Rick's Café*. Their encounter tears open old wounds, all the more so since Ilsa now appears to be married to Victor Laszlo (Paul Henreid), a key figure in the underground resistance who hopes to obtain a visa to America in Casablanca. Major Strasser, commandant of the local *Wehrmacht*, attempts to prevent this and appeals to Captain Louis Renault (Claude Rains), head of the French Police force and a regular in *Rick's Café*. Through a confluence of various coincidences Rick comes into possession of the much desired visa papers and in so doing is faced with a terrible dilemma: to do his moral duty and help Laszlo and Ilsa out of the country, or to follow his heart and use

²³ D. Webb, 'On Friendship: Derrida, Foucault, and the Practice of Becoming,' *Research in Phenomenology*, 2003, p. 138.

the visa himself to escape with the woman he loves.

Casablanca is romantic to the bone and the chemistry between Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman is legendary. But *Casablanca* is also a film about friendship and the subtly portrayed *camaraderie* between some of the protagonists lends the film that extra depth and warmth that truly make it a classic. On the one hand, there is the budding friendship between Rick and Laszlo. Though they both love the same woman, they respect and genuinely admire each other and, at the end of the story, it seems that Rick does the right thing not only to secure Ilsa's affection ('We'll always have Paris') but also to save his friendship with Laszlo. On the other hand, there are the fascinating interactions between Rick and Captain Renault. As Roger Ebert notes, despite the wisecracks at each others expense, 'the two men like each other and indeed in a way respect each other because both of them understand things that can never be said'²⁴.

C.S. Lewis compares an encounter between friends to a meeting of foreign princes on neutral ground, freed from their context. This metaphorical description almost literally applies to the protagonists of *Casablanca*. They all meet on the neutral territory of Morocco, plucked from their habitual context. Like princes, they seem in full self-command, not dependent on anyone but themselves. Indeed, what we see are encounters between men at their highest individuality. At no point are we witnesses to a painful process of demarcation following an initial state of oneness.

The film also lends plausibility to the ideas of Lewis and Santayana in various

other ways. Take the final scene. The lovers, Ilsa and Rick, look at one another passionately, completely enthralled by each other²⁵. The friends, Rick and Captain Renault, walk away side-by-side, talking about the shared adventures they will have. It is significant in this respect that Rick says the famous closing line of the movie, 'Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship', only after it has become apparent that they are fighting for the same cause. The friendship only truly begins once both 'care about the same truth'. Not so with the romance between Rick and Ilsa. During the early days of their affair in Paris they want to forget and get away from the war. In Morocco, too, they initially decide to betray their ideals to vouchsafe their personal happiness. Santayana's assessment of the contrast between love and friendship seems fairly accurate:

In friendship what excites the imagination is not the friendship itself, as in the case of falling in love, when the whole world becomes unimportant and an intruder, if only the love be returned. What fills the imagination of friends is the world, as a scene for action and an object for judgement²⁶.

Ultimately Rick puts duty before the heart²⁷. His subsequent leave-taking from Ilsa is as heart-rending and passionate as being in love. What a difference with that 'luminous, tranquil, rational world' of friendship. The lucid and controlled conversations between Rick and Louis provide the perfect example. Even after the shooting of Major

²⁵ 'Here's lookin' at you, kid' are Rick's consoling words.

²⁶ G. Santayana, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

²⁷ Perhaps this opposition is misleading, since by doing his moral duty Rick knows that he will always be sure of Ilsa's heart: 'We'll always have Paris'.

²⁴ He makes this comment on the commentary track of the Special Edition DVD.

Strasser, and the realization that they are both fugitives now, they leave the scene calmly talking to each other. Furthermore, this last conversation lends credibility to the claim that helping one another is more an inconvenient interruption of friendship than its culminating moment. Louis has just saved Rick's life, but not the slightest mention is made of the incident, as if it had been no more than *un accident de parcours*. In order to diffuse the embarrassing situation Rick even jokes about the bet that Louis has lost, as they disappear together into the mist.

A cautionary note may be in appropriate here. The impression might arise that friendship and *eros* are mutually exclusive. This is obviously not the case and it is far from Lewis and Santayana to defend such a view. Both philosophers merely wish to emphasize how friendship is fundamentally different from the sexual or romantic forms love may take. They also, as we have seen, take issue with the secondary status that is often assigned to friendship ever since 'sentimental romanticism' arrived on the world stage. It is interesting to see how this diagnosis, too, is reflected in Hollywood filmmaking (which, of course, has never shunned away from the 'exaltation of sentiment'). Many more films are made about romantic themes than about friendship. Friendship is almost exclusively relegated to the world of sub-plots and sidekicks. Even when friendship constitutes a large part of the appeal of a movie and is pervasive throughout the entire plot-line, as is the case in *Casablanca*, it does not always receive its due recognition. Take the Special Edition DVD of *Casablanca* where Lauren Bacall introduces the film in the following way: 'The lure of *Casablanca* lies in its romance, intrigue and mystery.

But those are common elements for many movies. I think what makes *Casablanca* a landmark film and a touchstone for so many movies is largely because of its *romance*.²⁷ She then goes on to describe and praise the chemistry between Bogart and Bergman. Her point is clear: *Casablanca* is about the passionate liaison between Rick and Ilsa and that is that. Not a word about the friendship between Rick, Laszlo or Louis. This sidelining of the friendship theme is even more striking in the *International Movie Database (IMDb)*. This online database is one of the most comprehensive in the world and the use of key words for every film facilitates its search and categorization. There are more than 120 catchwords for *Casablanca*, among which are: 'lovesick', 'heartache', 'doomed-romance', 'broken-heart', 'old flame', 'love triangle', 'love', 'frustrated love', 'war-time-romance', 'tragic-romance', 'tragic-love'. However, the term 'friendship' is noticeable by its absence.

In closing, I would like to refer to the film, *Black Cat, White Cat*, by the Bosnian director Emir Kusturica. In the beginning of this movie, we see how one of the protagonists, the old mafia boss Uncle Grga, watches a videotape of *Casablanca*, rewinding the final scene over and over in order to hear the famous line: '*Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship*'. This amusing sequence seems to serve a double purpose. On the one hand, it foreshadows the central role that friendship will play in *Black Cat, White Cat*: the friendship between Uncle Grga and Zarije, but also between Zarije and his grandson Zare, or between Dadan and Matko²⁸. On the other hand, one has the impression that

²⁸ In the hilarious final scene with Dadan and Matko, Bogart's famous line is repeated once more.

Kusturica wants to say something about *Casablanca* itself. It is as if he repeats the memorable dialogue between Rick and Louis in order to emphasize that this film – listed in the *IMDb* as the no 1. romantic movie – is more than just a romantic love story; that *Casablanca* is also about friendship and the kind of heroic *camaraderie* which has been a main theme of many of Kusturica's own movies. Interestingly, among the key words that classify *Black Cat*, *White Cat* in the *IMDb*, one term is again undeservingly absent: 'friendship.'

Conclusion

Axel Honneth argues that every love relationship is the result of an interactional process by which two people detach themselves from an initial state of

oneness in such a way that, in the end, they learn to accept each other as independent persons. A distance is created, but at the same time mutual care and responsibility are retained. In this essay, I have tried to show how friendship, though surely a form of love, cannot be fitted by this particular model. Both the philosophical reflections on friendship by C.S. Lewis and Santayana, and the concrete story and characters of *Casablanca* prove how Honneth's account needs enlarging on several levels. They show us how, instead of constructing a thin, all-encompassing theory of love, we rather need a substantial account of friendship that acknowledges its unique importance and character among the other types of love.

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