Introduction: Blanchot's Spaces

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> « L'espace de notre vie n'es ni continu, ni infini, ni homogène ni isotrope. Mais sait-on précisément où il se brise, où il se courbe, où il se déconnecte et où il se ressemble ? On sent confusément des fissures, des hiatus, des points de friction, on a parfois la vague impression que ça se coince quelque part, où que ça éclate, ou que ça se cogne. Nous cherchons rarement à en savoir davantage et le plus souvent nous passons d'un endroit à l'autre, d'un espace à l'autre sans songer à mesurer, à prendre en charge, à prendre en compte ces laps d'espace. Le problème n'est pas d'inventer l'espace, encore moins de le ré-inventer […], mais de l'interroger, ou, plus simplement encore, de le lire […] »
> (Georges Perec, 'Prière d'insérer', in *Espèces d'espace*)

In his *Espèces d'espace*, Perec associated space with doubt (« L'espace est un doute : il me faut sans cesse le marquer, le désigner ; il n'est jamais à moi, il ne m'est jamais donné, il faut que j'en fasse la conquête. »)[1] For Perec who searches the infra-ordinary of each place, doubt does not mean incertitude or ambiguity of space, but rather the forces that make it move, the oscillating rhythms it is composed of. Perec does not define space in precise terms, but he rather looks for different ways of approaching it.

Maurice Blanchot's approach of space was perhaps, above all, a literary rather than a phenomenological experience close to a quest. The notions of 'literature' and 'space' have been more closely related since Blanchot's 'literary space', the formula that has given his most widely-read book its title. For Blanchot, the 'literary space' can be understood in at least three different ways: literature *has* a space, literature *is* a space, literature *invents* a space or rather space*s*. In 'Orpheus' Gaze', the centre of *The Space of Literature* in Blanchot's own words, Orpheus' mistake of looking back at Eurydice is equated with the ruin of the work, 'which is immediately undone'.[2] Eurydice returns to darkness, because the legendary musician and poet betrayed 'the work, and Eurydice, and the night', as he desired not to make Eurydice 'live, but to have living in her the plenitude of her death'.[3] This return opens the space defined by Nicholas Royle as 'night writing',[4] a space which Blanchot relates to obscurity in *The Infinite Conversation.* In the *Work of Fire*, it takes the form of the search of 'the abyss, Lazarus in the tomb'.[5] In Blanchot's *récits*, space escapes definition. The first-person narrator of such texts lives in a liminal space that Ivan Callus connected to the Orphic experience and called 'autothanatography', a term most apt to designate borderline writing 'affecting to be a

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[1] Georges Perec, *Espèces d'espace*, nouvelle édition revue et corrigée (Paris: Galilée, 1974/2000), 179.

[2] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. and Intro Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 171.

[3] Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 171.

[4] Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 115.

[5] Maurice Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 327.

writing *from* rather than merely *of* death'.[6] Such an autothanatographic space made Orpheus desire that Eurydice 'live, but to have living in her the plenitude of her death.'[7]

According to Gerald Bruns in *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy* Blanchot believed that poetry can be related to the history of philosophy − in which he included 'metaphysics, ontology, reason, or subjectivity' − in the sense that philosophy sets the task of bringing the history of poetry to completion. Moreover, from an ontological point of view, poetry is 'linked conceptually to nondiscourse, or to exile, or to the exile's return', transforming the literary space into something 'radically exterior' that Blanchot had named the Outside (*le dehors*),[8] a space corresponding to what Emmanuel Levinas's formulaic *il y a,* 'the very experience of ambiguity'.[9] Calling this space 'neutral', Kevin Hart showed that 'it cannot be transgressed because it is that which enables transgression in the first place.'[10]

A thematic approach of space was proposed by Anne-Lise Schulte Nordholt[11] in the monograph that she dedicated to Blanchot in 1995. Anne-Lise Schulte Nordholt analyzed the space of some of his *récits*, the domestic and the quotidian space of the room (the kitchen, the sitting room, the cubbyhole [guérite]) that the author observed in the dynamics of movements which form and deform it, yet which compose, by their literary conversion, the space itself of the writing. Recent publications approached the problem of space in Blanchot's work. *Blanchot dans son siècle* containing the colloquia of the first Blanchot symposium, organized at Cerisy in 2007,[12] discussed the way in which Blanchot changed not only the rules of the literary space, but also those of the philosophical, and even militant space. In 2008 Jean-Luc Lannoy wrote an ample study on the phenomenology of movement in Blanchot and Merleau-Ponty,[13] in which he examined recurrent themes in the French thinker's work, such as the gait, gesture, immobility, potential mobility, ascension, falling.

Blanchot compared the space of the book with the space of 'a night that would become day: a dark star, unilluminable and calmly giving light. Reading is this calm light. Reading transforms into light that which is not of the order of illumination.'[14] In addition to this, *The Infinite Conversation* proposed the space in-between (*entre*) of its dialogues and *entretiens*, which also represents the space of friendship and has been likened to

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[6] Ivan Callus, '(Auto)thanatography or (Auto)thanatology?: Mark C. Taylor, Simon Critchley, and the Writing of the Dead', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 41 (2005): 427. See also Ivan Callus, 'Comparatism and (Auto)thanatography: Death and Mourning in Blanchot, Derrida, and Tim Parks', *Comparative Critical Studies* 1.3 (2004): 337-58.

[7] Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 171.

[8] Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 82.

[9] See Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), 59.

[10] Kevin Hart, 'Introduction: Philosophy and the Philosophical', in *Clandestine Encounters: Philosophy in the Narratives of Maurice Blanchot*, ed. Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 14.

[11] Anne-Lise Schulte Nordholt, *Maurice Blanchot. L'écriture comme expérience du dehors* (Genève: Droz, 1995).

[12] Monique Antelme *et al*., *Blanchot dans son siècle* (Lyon: Parangon/ Vs, 2009).

[13] Jean-Luc Lannoy, *Langage, perception, mouvement. Blanchot et Merleau-Ponty* (Grenoble: Jêrôme Millon, 2008).

[14] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. and Foreword Susan Hanson (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 318.

Derrida's and Heidegger's polylogues.[15] With its obsession with space 'vast as the night',[16] *The Infinite Conversation* proves to be a capital text for a thematic issue on 'Blanchot's Spaces'. Here Blanchot's thinking operates a displacement which prompts the following questions: to what end and via what processes does this displacement take place, since here space is extended, modulated, transgressed, pushed forward by Blanchot from 'the literary' to other spaces that may be called interrelational, analytic or daily spaces? Since creation is an 'essentially unhappy' activity, for Blanchot it 'gives rise to an essentially happy reading'.[17]

What is at stake in Blanchot's work is not only the space *in* the work (theme, plot) but also the space *of* the work (text, book) as well as the space *for* the work (distribution, reception). In this sense, the literary space is not necessarily isolated, separated from the world; it is not only a space of death, as we have been used to saying in the wake of Blanchot's reading of Mallarmé and the negativity of the sign.[18] There is indeed a dynamics at work in Blanchot's space which comes across as undifferentiated and neutral: the encounter between a text and a reader's life. The literary space then takes over a process of individuation; it appears as a space of life, vital for literature.

Levinas stated that Blanchot is the thinker of the nomadic *par excellence*, who 'uprooted' the Heideggerian universe[19] which he exiled into what Emanuel Alloa called – using Levinas's phrase – a '"placeless sojourn", in the desert, a sojourning where the difference between night and day becomes blurred.'[20] This desert, as Blanchot asserts in *The Step Not Beyond*, can be an infinitely empty space created by words: 'Only the space in which they [the words] reverberate – a space infinitely empty, like a garden where, even after the children have disappeared, their joyful cries continue to be heard […].'[21]

Blanchot neither formulated definitions nor wrote a thesis on space, a reason why all the articles collected in this volume respond to this resistance to a concept. More often than not, the notion of space in Blanchot has given rise to approaches which have been more sensitive to questions of consistency and to relations with the phenomenological space in order to test its several limits. In this volume, we had invited contributions that interrogate Blanchot's space from an enlarged perspective, in order to determine whether it brings new modes of spatialization into operation. The crucial question of its relation to other 'species of spaces' was asked in an effort to recuperate the 'living', 'operative', 'performative' dimension of Blanchot's space, by which we wished to search for modalities of reading whereby Blanchot's works could go on being studied at a distance from the joint fascination and rejection that they have aroused.

We inquired into the possibility to regarding space as rhythm: articulating spatiality, disarticulating places, as opening: mixing genres, forcing limits, and with the

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[15] See for instance Timothy Clark, *Derrida, Heidegger, Blanchot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[16] See Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, 318.

[17] Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, 318.

[18] Blanchot, 'Mallarmé's Experience', in *The Space of Literature*, 38-48.

[19] Emmanuel Levinas, *Sur Maurice Blanchot* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1975), 13.

[20] Emanuel Alloa, 'Bare Exteriority: Philosophy of the Image and the Image of Philosophy in Martin Heidegger and Maurice Blanchot', trans. Millay Hyatt, *Colloquy Text Theory Critique*: 'Blanchot, the Obscure' 10 (2005): 79. For a study on Blanchot's space of death and his extension of the Heideggerian paradigm of finitude towards considering death a passion man has to aspire to, see also Lilian Alweiss, 'Heidegger and the Concept of Time', *History of the Human Sciences* 15.3 (2002): 124.

[21] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond,* trans. and Intro. Lycette Nelson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 19.

intention of discovering gestures of thinking that designate steps in Blanchot's critical processes, we had in mind gestures of reading (Derrida, reader of Blanchot,[22] Foucault, reader of Blanchot),[23] as well as the dramatization of space in Blanchot. We wished to interrogate transgressive space, breaching its unity, opening other spaces, and the means used to perform this operation, as well as the space of the work, areas of reception, including translating Blanchot, political spaces (common, community, communication).

Whilst subscribing to Simon Critchley's view that the key in which Blanchot's criticism can be read is as 'a commentary on his fiction' and that his literature is the production of 'its own theory',[24] we were interested in Blanchot's critical space as an experience of the impossible, as well as in the spatial condition as critical condition.

We asked the question whether one can speak of a model of space in Blanchot, and if so, whether this prototype is functional or effective. We attempted to find out whether, among the connections that could be established between space and writing (*écriture*), we could include the apprehension of space from writing, or the discovery of writing from space. Eventually we proposed to our future contributors to decide whether one can speak of a sensitive space in the work of Blanchot and, if so, to ascertain the subject of this sensitive experience.

Notwithstanding several journal publications or volumes devoted to Blanchot[25] as well as to the notion of space,[26] our aim was to pioneer the first issue of a periodical in Romania on the French writer and critic, focusing more specifically on the multi-faceted nature of 'space'. More broadly, the present collection of essays hopes to put Blanchotian studies more conspicuously on the East-European academic map. To this effect, the editorial team was made up of three academics originating from different geographical spaces and critical expertise: a British philosopher, co-author of the first guide to Blanchot's work in Britain,[27] and two Romanian specialists who could combine their

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[22] See Jacques Derrida, in Maurice Blanchot, *The Instant of My Death*, Jacques Derrida *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Jacques Derrida, *Parages*, ed. John P. Leavey, trans. Tom Conley *et al.* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

[23] Michel Foucault, *Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside*. Maurice Blanchot, *Michel Foucault as I Imagine Him*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman and Brian Massumi (New York: Zone Books, 1990).

[24] See Simon Critchley, *Very Little ... Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 39. For a very detailed commentary on the fragment, see also Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism Intersections* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988).

[25] Thomas Pepper (ed.), *Yale French Studies: 'The Place of Maurice Blanchot'*, 93 (1998); Rhonda Khatab *et.al.*, *Colloquy Text Theory Critique*: 'Blanchot, the Obscure' 10 (2005); William Large (ed.), *Parallax: 'Blanchot'* 12.2 (2006); Leslie Hill and Michael Holland (eds), *Paragraph*: 'Blanchot's Epoch' 30.3 (2007); Christophe Bident, *Maurice Blanchot: partenaire invisible* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1998); Monique Antelme *et al.*, *Cahiers Maurice Blanchot*, vol. 1-3 (Dijon : Les presses du réel, 2011-2014); Éric Hoppenot and Dominique Rabaté (dir.), *Cahier de l'Herne:* 'Maurice Blanchot' (Paris: Éditions de l'Herne, 2014); Georges Préli, « L'espace du détour », *La force du dehors. Extériorité, limite et non-pouvoir à partir de Blanchot* (Fontenay-sous-Bois: Éditions Recherches, 1977), 207-240.

[26] Stefan Herbrechter, Ivan Callus and Laurent Milesi (eds), *Parallax*: 'Deconstruction – Space – Ethics' 21.1 (2015).

[27] Ullrich Haase and William Large, *Maurice Blanchot* (London: Routledge, 2001). William Large has also published two essays on Blanchot: 'The Being of Language: The Literary Theory of Maurice Blanchot', *Textual Practice* 11.2 (1997): 305-322. 'The Question of Literature: Maurice Blanchot's Theory of Literature' *The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 30.1 (1999): 88-96.

respective backgrounds in the Anglo-American and Francophone domains of Blanchot's critical reception.[28]

'Blanchot's Spaces' is grouped into four main sections: 'Literary Spaces', 'Opening Space', 'Opened Space' and 'Creative Spaces', followed by a section containing one review and one review-article relevant for the thematic issue.

The first section comprises three articles that engage in close readings with three texts written by Blanchot, *Celui qui ne m'accompagnait pas, Thomas l'Obscur*, and *L'Attente L'Oubli* from very different perspectives which nevertheless have in common the search for the movements of the space of the work. In her article 'Distance mobile de la voix narrative', Tatiana Nikishina sets as her main task, through a subtle and detailed analysis, identifying the types of distance (its features, its functions, its usages) that puts in practice the narrative voice in Blanchot's work and analysing its ambiguities, its tensions, its contradictions, and, above all, its insistence in *Celui qui ne m'accompagnait pas*. In a meticulous examination of the notion of space in Blanchot's *Thomas l'Obscur* entitled 'Poétique de l'espace littéraire chez Maurice Blanchot: Stratégies de construction et de déconstruction spatiales dans *Thomas l'Obscur*', Khalid Lyamlahy proposes a close reading of the novella in order to show the double movement of construction and deconstruction of the space of the work. From the sensible space to the space of the work, the essay endeavours to formulate Blanchot's 'spatial preoccupation' and by bringing together different spatial representations linked to the structure of the novel itself, to make a sense of spatial dynamics, be they at the narrative, sensorial or literary level.

William S. Allen's 'To Articulate the Void by a Void: Aporetic Writing and Thinking in *L'Attente l'oubli*' starts from the analysis of the relation between the space of its sentences and that of the room they describe. Allen's subtle and limpid essay, written in the same brilliant and erudite style as his book, *Ellipsis: Of Poetry and the Experience of Language after Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Blanchot* (2007), makes us search for an imaginary centre which is based on Blanchot's thinking of space as both eccentric and aporetic, a space capable to reveal the nature and possibility of relation as an exposure to the outside. Allen's conclusion is that the failure of the sentence 'to reach its goal' is beneficial, since, 'by its eccentricity, its extravagance and errancy', it perseveres to turn 'aside into a line rigorously prolonged away from any centre' (66).

'Opening Space' discusses works which are analyzed in parallel with Blanchot's, as well as, on the one hand, texts incorporated within the French writer's work, and on the other, some that remain always outside his space in a relation of (non-)encounter. Although varied, the essays included in this section share a philosophical project that responds to the fundamental questions raised by Blanchot. The search for the Outside, otherwise a recurrent theme of the present issue, requires a new language, that opens 'the space between me and an Other, thus providing the essential condition for all possible communication and understanding'.[29] The essays included in this part respond to a certain extent to what Ulrich Haase and William Large called 'literary language as the

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[28] Arleen Ionescu, 'Spacing Literature between Blanchot and Derrida', *Parallax*: 'Deconstruction Space Ethics' 21.1 (2015): 58-78; Arleen Ionescu, 'Waiting for Blanchot: A Third Act for Beckett's Play', *Partial Answers* 11.1 (2013): 71-84; Arleen Ionescu, 'Pas-de-noms / Plus de noms: Derrida and Blanchot', *Word and Text – A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics* 1.1 (2011): 59-69. Laura Marin, *Le Neutre. Lire Blanchot dans les traces de Levinas et Derrida* (Bucharest: Bucharest University Press, 2013); Laura Marin, « D'une 'médiocrité indécise'. Entre le blanc et le neutre », *Word and Text –A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics* 3.2 (2013): 41-52.

[29] Rodolphe Gasché, 'The Felicities of Paradox', in Carolyn Bailey Gill (ed.), *Maurice Blanchot: The Demand of Writing* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 53.

displacement of the subject', which represented 'the kernel of what would later be called deconstruction.'[30]

Caroline Sheaffer-Jones's 'Maurice Blanchot and Space as Opening: Revelations of the Impossible' attempts to identify the limits of textual space. Looking for such instances of pre-discursive forms of signification, Sheaffer-Jones identifies in such spaces possible revelations of an opening. These openings are found in Blanchot's writing on writers like Rilke, Broch, Sade or Nietzsche and they can reveal either the extreme experience of the poet Orpheus 'which is, in a sense impossible' (72), the opening of language in *L'Entretien infini*, with reference to Emmanuel Levinas, or that of the paradox in relation to Nietzsche's fragmentary writing or the eternal return. The author repeatedly tells us that we are dealing with a deconstructive analysis on space and this is precisely a good way to introduce the next essay, Mario Aquilina's '"Everything and Nothing": Shakespeare in Blanchot' which discusses the space of the English playwright's oeuvre in Blanchot's work. Aquilina shows that, unlike in the case of Derrida and Levinas, for whom Shakespeare represented 'a decisive figure' to inspire part of their major work, for Blanchot, the English playwright's work did not lead to any comment, except in a discussion of 'Hamlet' in *The Space of Literature*. Thus, the article explores rather a (non-)relation with Shakespeare, in a similar way in which the (non-)relation between Derrida and Beckett was analyzed in Asja Szafraniec's monograph *Beckett, Derrida, and the Event of Literature*,[31] attempting to demonstrate what this strange absence discloses about Blanchot's thought.

In her essay, 'La chambre: espace de vie, espace de résonance', Laura Marin explores the dynamics of interior spaces as well as the space of the room. The latter is a space of life, a microcosm where the writer creates, which he co-habits, yet, at the same time, in the *récits* and novellas, it is a conflictual universe, a space of 'aberrant' movements, of distorted proportions, of tensed significances; it is also the place where a reversal between *dedans* and *dehors* takes place in order to open the space towards new 'possibilities of being'.[32]

Taking as starting point three different texts, Blanchot's *Thomas l'Obscur*, Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit* and Foucault's *Mots et les choses*, Thomas Carrier-Lafleur established links between these apparently unrelated texts by launching the question of the Outside (*le dehors*), a term that simultaneously designates the space in the work and the space of the work, as well as a certain manner of envisaging and practising literature, defined, according to the author, as belonging to the age of modernity. Otherwise, the essay seems to establish a few directions in the practice of writing that are deepened in three excellent essays belonging to the next section, that engage with the concept of the Outside from different theoretical and philosophical perspectives, Cosmin Toma's, Kevin Hart's and Olivier Campa's essays.

The essays assembled in the Section 'Opened Space' are mainly concerned with deconstruction's 'im/possible' spaces, bringing different experiences of the impossible that convey a radical undecidability, in matters such as the Outside (*le dehors*), modernity, geocriticism, the Platonic *chora*, Post-Shoah representation, and friendship.

The Outside is the main concern of Olivier Campa's essay 'Hors de soi'; in his analysis of both some of Blanchot's *récits* and critical essays, Campa perceives the

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[30] Haase and Large, *Maurice Blanchot,* 133.

[31] Asja Szafraniec, *Beckett, Derrida, and the Event of Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

[32] Jean-Luc Chrétien, *L'Espace intérieur* (Paris, Minuit, 2014), 12.

experience of space in Blanchot as one belonging to an outside that escapes spatialisation. The writing (*l'écriture*) endures this experience in an external way that translates in intensity rather than in spatial terms. Such an intensity can be determined by two movements: one that makes the subject completely exterior to the notion of space (that is achieved by de-subjectivation or by the Blanchotian impersonal) and one that emerges from de-subjectivation and that accedes to a real experience of space in which the extensive is transformed into intensive.

Anca Băicoianu's 'Eccentric Modernities: Shklovsky, Benjamin, Blanchot' starts with an image, that of the statue of Tsar Alexander III on horseback, erected at the beginning of the twentieth century in front of Nikolaevsky Railway Station in Saint Petersburg, hidden under wooden boards and covered up in slogans celebrating liberty and revolution later on. Viktor Shklovsky's description of the place as 'strange' and empty 'beneath the boards between the tsar and the revolution'[33] brings him close to Benjamin's and Blanchot's reflections on the construction of space as a series of successive displacements. The essay analyzes several intellectual affinities between the three authors in relation to the understanding space that they shared, affinities which, in spite of being obvious, did not represent the object of theoretical attention. Thus, Anca Băicoianu's comparative approach tackles the common theme of *displacement* by which she understands 'a fluid concept describing both physical motion and the intricate paths of reflection' (141) and which can be related to modernity.

Cosmin Toma asks the question of space in Blanchot's work, first of all, via geocriticism which yet, in its positivism, seems insufficient to reveal the crises that are implied in the thinking of space. Further on, the essay turns to a less positivistic critical approach based on Blanchot's *The Space of Literature* and explores the Derridean *khôra* that reveals the neuter of space and the space of the neuter. In this way he notes a choreography rather than a cartography of the space without concept that Blanchot calls 'literary'. There are two seemingly distinct concerns that Toma brings together, first of all Derrida's analysis of the crypt, where hauntology performs, being linked to what the author considers 'a quintessentially Blanchot-esque type of architecture' (168), and secondly, his deconstructionist take on the Platonic *chora*, which accentuates the neutrality of space. The closing of the essay brings us to the next taking on space, that space of the 'dis/aster,' writing, and outer-space which is further developed by Kevin Hart's essay, '"The *Absolute* Event of History": The Shoah and the Outside'. Hart investigates two kinds of disaster considered in Blanchot's reflections on 'the utter horror of the Shoah and the anguish produced by the approach of the Outside' (169) in *The Writing of the Disaster.*

A few preliminary considerations are needed to introduce Kevin Hart's essay. As early as 'The Writers' Silence' (19 April, 1941), Blanchot had pointed out that in the post-war '[…] it appears to many people that the thinking to be found in great books or great canvases is heretical, and conflicts with the wisdom of these times given over to disaster and turmoil.'[34] Later on, in 'Do Not Forget', he coined 'the immemorial', a concept that reveals that once a disastrous event occurs, it is forever lost. Following the Jewish duty to speak (*Zakhor*), in *Our Clandestine Companion*, Blanchot paid a tribute to the work of his Jewish friend, Levinas, in which he attempted to 'render him witness'; in Lars Iyer's

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[33] Viktor Shklovsky, *The Knight's Move,* trans. Richard Sheldon (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005), 126-7. The translation has been amended by Anca Băicoianu.

[34] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Writers' Silence', in *Into Disaster: Chronicles of Intellectual Life*, trans. Michael Holland (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 16.

view rendering witness is 'structurally' similar 'to the witnessing of Auschwitz', since such a gesture means 'to create a space such that the relation in question is not subsumed.'[35] *The Writing of the Disaster*, Blanchot's maturity work dealing with the Holocaust, engages with issues of trauma, representation and the task of writing in a post-Shoah world. According to Blanchot, the space of the disaster could bring about the only perspective from which one can speak about the Holocaust admitting his/her impossibility to 'know': 'How can thought be made the keeper of the holocaust where all was lost, including guardian thought? In the mortal intensity, the fleeing silence of the countless cry.'[36]

In this context of the space as trauma, Kevin Hart's article questions, passionately but also forensically, whether fragmentary writing responds adequately to the horror of Shoah and gives an account on the way Blanchot approached suffering and the way in which the French thinker's reading of Robert Antelme's *L'Espece humaine* (1947) played its role in the composition of *L'Écriture du désastre*.

The last essay included in this section, Michał Krzykawski's 'Espaces d'amitié. Blanchot, Bataille: faux amis?', revisits the entire *nexus* of Blanchot's and Bataille's complicated relationship. Drawing heavily on the two writers' lives, the article tackles the paradoxical friendship that Blanchot witnessed after the death of Bataille, bringing forth a major criticism of the former that suggests he may not have taken seriously what was important to the latter. Krzykawski's implies that Blanchot misrepresented his friend's writing through selective quotations and misquotations. In this sense, resting on a crossed reading of Blanchot and Bataille with the purpose of better understanding the complex and difficult links connecting the two works and their reception, the essay interrogates the space of friendship and the friendship as space in the sense that Leslie Hill gave it in *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*; Hill included political upheaval and fidelity to friendship within history, yet with the possibility of interrupting it, and considered that 'they allow the opening of a space in which a relation with otherness intervenes to defer historical closure'.[37]

Leo Luks said once that 'Blanchot's text vibrates in the interspaces between writing and non-writing, having a dialogue with other (non-)writers, such as Mallarme and Kafka'.[38] We allow ourselves a paraphrase of Luks to define the last section as a space where Blanchot's thinking vibrates in the interspace of others, from William Large's 'Letter to Kafka', to Carl Lavery's 'Waiting with Beckett and Blanchot: Theatre and the Time of the Sacred' and Brian Macaskill's composition on Coetzee and Joyce in exile and exiling themselves there is a whole infinite space that responds to the singularity of the work.

William Large's essay testifies through its very personal tone to a pure relation of literature one can have as a child, when his sense of reading is not imposed by any scholar or academic curricula, but by a personal choice which 'deeply affects one's own sense of self' (209). Large has become a reader of Kafka quite by chance, and that chance can be described best via Blanchot: the book to come is the one that makes possible the meeting of an author with the work, yet incessantly escapes them both as well as the reader who can be changed forever as a result of the work he read. Kafka's *oeuvre* that 'suffered the

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[35] Lars Iyer, '"Write, Write": Testimony, Judaism and the Infinite in Blanchot, Kofman and Levinas', *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 5.1 (December 2003): 68.

[36] Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster,* 47.

[37] Leslie Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary* (London and New York, Routledge, 1997), 6.

[38] Leo Luks, 'Philosophy and Literature: Two Lines of Fusion', *Problemos* 77 (2010): 135.

same fate as all Jewish writing under the Nazis and was banned and burnt' (211), and was moved to New York under the responsibility of Schocken Books, came to the little boy, giving him 'a feeling at the edge of everything', what we could easily equate with 'the infinite, but not as one normally understands it, as something beyond this world, but that which lies under or beneath all existence, a dark abyss on which we all stand' (212) The essay confesses on 'the terror of writing, in the way that Kafka felt it', but it may as well be the illustration of Blanchot's thoughts on the need to write, the terror which writers like Kafka and Hölderlin 'still felt and the force of the upheaval which he could not undergo to the limit',[39] as well as the fear of the writer who both 'wants to make a work and make of death his work'.[40] That prompts us to remember Blanchot's notion of the *désoeuvré* writer, translated by Ann Smock in *The Space of Literature* as 'that the writer is idled or out of Work', and defined by the same translator in her Prefatory Note as 'emphasizing how the work to be realized requires nothing of him, gives him nothing to do − perversely demands that he *do*: nothing − but also stressing how the work excludes him, sets him *outside* it.'[41]

Carl Lavery's essay is a vivid dramatization of Blanchot's literary space via Samuel Beckett. Starting from the premise that the Aristotelian theatre devotes an impressive amount of space to the theological notion of time, the essay analyzes the experience of 'presentness' in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. By 'presentness', Lavery understands 'an act of metaphysical self-coincidence' that belong to a 'sacred time' (216) which is very close to Blanchot's notion of time as disaster or catastrophe.

The final essay in this issue is the last instalment of a serial creative-cum-critical composition by Brian Macaskill on Coetzee, Joyce, ethics and mathematics. An extension of the creative-critical interface seen above, Macaskill's virtuoso 'Track Two', which has been once more time exceptionally allowed its own formatting experimentation, develops the third part of a contrapuntal ('fugal') method of reading these two nomadic writers in exile (*fugere* and *fugare*: to flee and to pursue) by further overlaps and parallel synchronies. As Macaskill warns us, similarly to the two previous instalments, the essay pursues its prey, yet it has itself entered into exile, that word or rather 'space, and place Maurice Blanchot associates with literature, Kafka, and "the poetic condition"' (235).

In the last section, Mario Aquilina's innovative book, *The Event of Style in Literature*, published by Palgrave Macmillan (2014), a 'profound and erudite guide to style mainly through a discussion on Derrida, Blanchot and Gadamer, coming to a brilliant close reading of Paul Celan's poetry' (261) is analyzed in detail by Arleen Ionescu in a review-article that tends to show the way in which a brilliant 'exercise de style',[42] a book on style featuring mostly Blanchot, Derrida and Gadamer, can convince twenty-first century writers, academics as well as readers outside the academic sphere, that style still exists because it 'is ineluctable in any discussion of the relation between the specific and the general, the unique and the repeatable' and secondly, because one has to 'pre-occupy oneself too much with programmability, thus foreclosing the force of the event of style that may or may not arrive in every singular instance, differently'.[43]

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[39] Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 52.
[40] Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 123.
[41] Ann Smock, 'Translation Introduction' to Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 12.
[42] Reference to Raymond Queneau, *Exercises de Style*, trans. Barbara Wright (London: Gaberbocchus, 1958).
[43] Mario Aquilina, *The Event of Style in Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 212.

Éric Hoppenot and Dominique Rabaté's issue on Blanchot from *Cahier de l'Herne* (2014) is reviewed by Thibaut Chaix-Bryan who emphasizes the qualities of this issue containing contributions of several authors attracted by the French thinker's richness of themes, but also many documents, photos, manuscripts that allow us to '(re)discover Blanchot in all his singularity' (269).

Without further deferral, we allow ourselves and our readers to open the space of the critical and creative engagements with Blanchot's work, whilst following Derrida's succinct word of advice from his spatially experimental *Glas*: 'Let us space'.[44]

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[44] Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 75.

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