

Thematization of Death in Philosophy and Art

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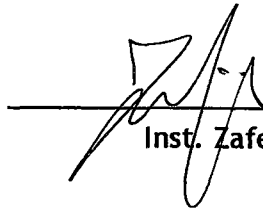
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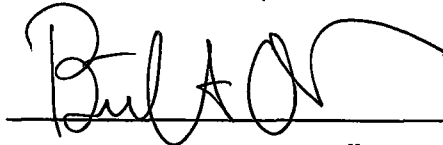
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ABSTRACT

THEMATIZATION OF DEATH IN PHILOSOPHY AND ART

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This study takes the theme of death in philosophy and art as its explicit focus, concentrating mainly of contemporary French philosopher Maurice Blanchot's literary and philosophical texts. The 'aporias' in the discourses of death are examined through an aporetic experience of the concepts, possible- impossible, absence-presence, finite, infinite involving in a discussion concerning the concepts of limit and representation.

Keywords: Death, aporia, impossible, image, experience

ÖZET

SANATTA VE FELSEFEDE ÖLÜM TEMASI

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Grafik Tasarım Bölümü

Yüksek Lisans

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Bu çalışma, merkezine çağdaş Fransız filozofu Maurice Blanchot'nun edebi ve felsefi metinlerini alarak sanat ve felsefi söylemlerde ölüm temasının izini sürmeyi amaçlamıştır. 'Ölüm' le ilgili söylemlerde öne çıkan 'aporia' lar ; olanaklı- olanaksız, Var olan- olmayan, sonlu, sonsuz kavramlarının 'aporetik' deneyimi çerçevesinde, limit ve yeniden- sunum kavramları tartışılarak ortaya konmaya çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ölüm, aporia, olanaksız, imge, deneyim

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Dedicated to Olgu and Reyya

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Introduction

This study takes death as its explicit focus, yet the aporias that discourses on death are constructed around has also become the main concern. The theme of death in art and philosophy is scrutinized through a reading mainly of French contemporary philosopher Maurice Blanchot but not restricted as such. Death, finitude and negativity are the concepts which are traced as any philosophy provides the ground of a discussion which produces art in the movement of aporia.

Scope, Objective and Ethics

The first chapter with its structure and the way of holding the issues in question, has become more different than others and risked to have been read as irrelevant to the overall subject. The importance of this chapter would be that only such a beginning can provide a threshold to understanding the notions of contemporary philosophy in general. The first chapter is a reading of Blanchot, having in mind his questioning of some

concepts he was influenced by -especially from the works of Hegel and Nietzsche- in his book *The Infinite Conversation*. This book ought to be distinguished from his other books on account of its stylistic variety as it includes not only essays but also a certain criticism of Platonic dialogues by mimicking them without being attracted by the dialectical unity they suggest. If *The Space of Literature* attempts to overthrow Platonism by suggesting a resemblance theory which demarginalizes the simulacrum together with other philosophies of difference, *The Infinite Conversation*, does this -overthrow Platonism - by questioning the dialectics.

Dialectics, ontology and the critique of ontology have the same postulate: all three deliver themselves over to the One... 'the most profound question' is the question that escapes reference to the One? It is the other question, the question of the Other, but also that is always other. (Blanchot, 1993: 440)

Blanchot's 'the most profound question' has its roots in the question of being that dies away and this question has to take the Other as problematic and has to escape all the confusions concerning the problematic, such as attempts at making death possible. The philosophies of Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger are considered to belong to that attitude- making death possible-. The first two of these philosophies will be questioned from the point of view of Blanchot in the first chapter.

What Blanchot finds in the philosophy of Nietzsche is the self contradictions that constructs the essential movement and goes along with Blanchot's double affirmation at the expense of the thought of Eternal Return. The influence of Nietzsche determines not only Blanchot's but the whole contemporary philosophy's shift from rationalism to irrationalism. It is Nietzsche who defined to a large extent many of the key concepts of the discussion of contemporary philosophy in which together with Blanchot, Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault have participated.

But on Heidegger's account, together with other reasons, Jacques Derrida's question "Is my death possible" (1993: 21) opens up the horizon as he suggest an aporetic experience mentioning the aporias involved in Heideggerian philosophy in terms of the concept of death- at least from the point of view of the debates on the possibility of death. If the first chapter can be understood as a certain kind of reading of *The Infinite Conversation*, the second chapter then can be taken as a reading of Derrida who says that all his writing is on death, focusing on his book *Aporias*.

Heidegger's texts play the central role in *Aporias* but in the early pages of the book before explicitly invoking Heidegger, Derrida writes; "concerning the threshold of death, we are engaged here toward a certain possibility of the impossible (1993: 11). This 'possibility of the impossible ' is paraphrased from Heidegger's *Being and Time* in which it is repeated

several times as a phenomenological definition of death. But Heidegger's suggestion that, Dasein is its possibilities as possibilities, - living through possibilities rather than grasping them theoretically- characterizes Dasein as a being-possible and signifies the attempt that Blanchot escapes. Heidegger and Derrida share the same subject of concern in terms of 'impossible' as deconstruction is defined by Derrida as a certain aporetic experience of the impossible. The parallelism between Derrida's definition of deconstruction and Heidegger's phenomenological definition of death may well lead us to the view that Derrida substitutes Heidegger's possibility with his aporetic experience. Questioning the possibility of death then necessitates an aporetic experience.

Despite the different implications of two philosophies, suggesting a parallelism between Derrida's 'aporetic experience' and Blanchot's 'limit experience' seems plausible as they are both involved in a question of being, experience and limit. Just like Blanchot's 'the most profound question', Derrida's understanding of aporetic experience refers to an other question, the question of the Other and perhaps any criticism toward Heidegger should approach Dasein from the privileged position of its own death.

"The death of the other - or for the other- that which institutes our self and our responsibility, would correspond to a more originary experience" says Derrida in his book *The Gift of Death* (1995: 4).

The possibility in Heidegger's discourse does not correspond to the experience of the instant of death and thus is not ruined by the logical possibility that death is the end of experience. Derrida on the other hand accentuates on my death's impossibility that if death turns out to entail the end of experience and I cannot even experience this end of experience then my death does not happen to me. "Here dying would be the aporia, the impossibility of being dead, the impossibility of living or rather 'existing' one's death" (Derrida, 1993: 73). This echoes a very Epicurian theme as it suggests the impossibility of a co-temporality of death and presence. According to Derrida this is a disaster- in the sense of Blanchot- that I cannot die. I never meet my death.

The third chapter aims to discuss the problem of representation grounded on absence of the object of reference, departing from Blanchot's definition of image as "what is given us by a contact at a distance" (1982: 32) and his resemblance theory. According to Blanchot the corpse and the image share the quality of 'strangeness'. The corpse is neither the same as the one who was alive, nor someone or something else. The cadaverous presence both belongs to the world of the living and the world of the dead. It occupies two spaces, the here and nowhere. From here Blanchot suggests the double character of the image. In terms of the corpse the strangeness is that it has no specific point of reference as it resembles nothing but itself. Hence it signifies nothing and brings forth a possibility for the image to exist as a double resembling to itself. And behind this

resemblance lies the ungraspable, inaccessible, uncontrollable idea of death that which suggests an undecidability in terms of the place of death. Where it belongs and the impossibility for it to establish a relation to the world. Then, what is the image when it is no longer an image of something ?

In the account of death and representation Elizabeth Bronfen's book *Over Her Death Body* provides a clear path which traces the theory of representation through a reading of literary history, art criticism and psychoanalysis. The aporia of representation for instance according to Bronfen; "seems to be that the part of putting the real under erasure means articulating it, enacting that is not only how representations falter and stumble before the real but how the real must also fail before representation"(1992: 53).

To read Blanchot - with Hegel, with Nietzsche or Heidegger- actually does not say so much as is consistent with his remarks on 'oeuvre'; a failure is inevitable as this failure opens the space of literature. On the other hand the experience Blanchot suggests through concepts he inherits from these thinkers is necessary though the concepts themselves lead nowhere they nevertheless maintain the thinking of negativity, finitude, death and Eternal Return in Blanchot's thinking.

'Blanchot' is the name of an infinite dispersion:
language itself as a pure potentia, or as the emptiness or

pure exteriority that is not a 'beyond' but instead an eternal return to a never- having- been or an extreme youth (Wall, 1999: 6).



Chapter 1: Sources of Blanchot's Philosophy

The debates about death provides a unique point from the birth of philosophy throughout Western metaphysics and finally leads me to theoretical and esthetic discourses of critical theory. Death is as Schopenhauer puts it 'the muse of philosophy' and I will try to enlarge on this claim, that it is also the 'muse of art'. Death, finitude and negativity are the issues which seem to construct the ground of a universal which produces art in the movement of aporia.

"The decision to be without being is possibility itself; the possibility of death" (Blanchot, 1982: 96). Blanchot mentions three systems of thought that challenges him with their attitude towards this decision. He claims that Hegel's, Nietzsche's and Heidegger's systems of thought attempt to account for this decision and can be taken as attempts at making death possible.

1.1 Hegel

Before making a reading of Blanchot through his aporetic concepts we need to look at his path which passes from these three thinkers as he owes much to them. Reference to German philosophy especially to Hegel and Heidegger is quite clear in most of Blanchot's works. In terms of Hegel he shares the same path with Georges Bataille. Their intellectual affinity has its roots in the attraction to certain concepts contained in the philosophy of Hegel. The most important of these are death and negativity. Ann Smock in the introduction to her translation of *The Space of Literature* claims that;

With Hegel, Blanchot recognizes negativity as the moving force of the dialectic. It is the power that informs history; it is death, creative and masterful, at work in the world. Indeed Blanchot hails the impending completion of this labor which is the realization of human possibilities, the unfolding of truth. (1982: 6)

What Blanchot finds in Hegelian philosophy is the idea that objective reality and human existence are Nothingness. This Nothingness makes possible the negative and creative action. Therefore he puts death, man's negativity which is essentially voluntary as the principle of action. The man who negates nature gains his own possibility of action in this negativity which is not necessarily given in consciousness. Bataille in his

article "Hegel, Death and Sacrifice" claims that in consciousness that which exists in itself appears but only to disappear,

...this negation is exteriorized, really (in itself) changes the reality of Nature. Man works and fights; he transforms the given; he transforms Nature and in destroying it he creates a world, a world which was not.
(Bataille: 10)

Blanchot's critical approach to Hegel's assimilation of death to negation, and his understanding of death as the limit within which we all strive, the ultimate horizon which is the source of our activity, mastery and accomplishments, leads him to a reappraisal of death and negativity. Together with Bataille, Blanchot's attitude is the rejection of a notion of death which is reduced to a constructive negativity. Bataille says in a letter to Kojève that; "If action ('doing') is -as Hegel says- negativity, the question then becomes one of knowing if the negativity of someone who has 'nothing more to do' disappears or subsists in a state of 'unemployable negativity'; personally, I can settle this question in one way only, being myself exactly this 'unemployable negativity' (I could not define myself any more precisely)" (Gregg: 11). Blanchot suggests that the essence of death is to be found in its incompleteness and this character of death is ignored in Hegel as he insists on seeing death as an instrument of negativity.

Death- if we wish so to name that unreality- is the most terrible thing there is and to uphold the work of

death is the task which demands the greatest strength. Impotent beauty hates this awareness, because understanding makes this demand of beauty, a requirement which beauty cannot fulfill. Now the life of Spirit is not that life which is frightened of death, and spares itself destruction, but that life which assumes death and lives with it. Spirit attains its truth only by finding itself in absolute dismemberment. It is not that (prodigious) power by being the Positive that turns away from the Negative, as when we say of something; this is nothing or (this is) false and having (thus) disposed of it, pass from there to something else; no, Spirit is that power only to the degree in which it contemplates the Negative face to face (and) dwells with it. This prolonged sojourn is the magical force which transposes the negative into given-Being. (Bataille:14)

The magical force of Hegel's exposes Man to his own Negativity. Bataille would call it a struggle of Man against Nature where Man constitutes himself as 'Subject'. This is the point Blanchot and Bataille see as problematic.

This 'subject' is powerless to do anything else except to await his own death's approach. But it is not just that passivity towards death that creates anguish. There is always something incomplete whenever dying is at work. The impossibility to grasp death in its entirety, the fear of this impossibility to die completely create anguish. We have all the fears of mortals and desires of immortals, as Cicero correctly states. Being mortal we necessarily possess the idea of death as a possibility and by dying we

lose the power of a certain kind of negative as it appears as an impossibility. Hegel's way of overcoming this dual status of death is by means of his famous concept of 'Aufhebung' which suggests an act of transgression in which what is transgressed is at the same time preserved . For Hegel, dialectics is a process of 'Aufhebung' which literally means "lifting up". But the problem here for Blanchot is that this word also suggests a double meaning of conservation and negation. Instead of 'Aufhebung', Blanchot prefers Bataille's abstract theory of transgression. Bataille converges constructive negativity, excess negativity and transgression under his discussions of sacrifice. Sacrifice for Bataille is a transgressive act as it is the breaking of the rule permitted by the rule. This is a permission to violate the established limits- which are also supposed to be respected-, under certain circumstances. He claims that these interdictions are there to be violated. Michel Foucault in his article "A Preface to Transgression" defines transgression as;

Transgression is an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage, but perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin; it is likely that transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses. The play of limits and transgression seems to be regulated by a simple obstinacy: transgression incessantly crosses and recrosses a line which closes up behind it in a wave of extremely short duration, and thus it is made to return once more right to the horizon of the uncrossable. (1998: 27)

Jacques Derrida in his essay "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve" questions whether transgression overcomes the problematic of suppression and reserve in Hegelian 'Aufhebung', still remaining in the domain of restricted economy. John Gregg in his book *Maurice Blanchot and the Literature of Transgression* clearly states that despite the certain disregard for the rule -in order to maintain the functioning of the restricted economy- there is always the tolerations of the infractions as they stimulate and and revive this economy. "No transgression is ever complete; the law always survives the infraction because the latter is in the service of the former" (Gregg: 13). To put it in Bataille's words; a conservative wisdom orders and limits it. Bataille's criticism of Hegel points to negativity. Destruction, suppression, death and sacrifice loses their negativity in the system as they constitute an expenditure and a negativity without reserve. Negativity enters the process of production and representation of meaning for the sake of positivity; that is to say, in Derrida's words, "aufhebung turns negativity into an investment by amortizing absolute expenditure" (1978: 257). By not taking the negative seriously Hegel loses the grounds for a negativity as a resource. Bataille comes to such a point when he neglects the transgression of transgression which is necessary for Derrida. Bataille's transgression is always in the service of other systems and cannot become a dominant law itself.

Blanchot's reading of Hegel in his book *The Infinite Conversation* suggests an awaiting the Hegelian dialectic for continuity and this continuity is defined as one engendering itself, moving from the center to the periphery, from the abstract to the concrete. A continuity which is other than the continuity of a synchronic whole as it adds itself the parameter of duration and history. By doing so it constitutes itself as a totality that is finite and unlimited, and moves according to the circular demand. The features of such a continuity are the principle of understanding and the principle of negation. Blanchot claims that this principle of understanding is satisfied only by identity through repetition. While the principle of reason requires an overcoming through negation, the speech of dialectics on the other hand seeks to include the moment of discontinuity by moving from one term to its opposite. From Being to Nothingness. Blanchot finds between these opposites a nothingness more essential than Nothingness itself "the void of an interval that continually hollows out and in hollowing itself out becomes distended: the nothing as work and movement" (1993: 7). Blanchot says that the third term of dialectics fills this void. The synthesis closes the interval by maintaining it. And by maintaining it, accomplishes it, "realizes in its very lack, and thus makes of this lack a capacity, another possibility" (Blanchot, 1993: 7).

The system of thought criticized by Blanchot as being an attempt at making death possible is this. This is man's encounter with himself in the certainty of his mortality. Blanchot says that man considers this condition

in terms of making his death possible. "It doesn't suffice for him that he is mortal; he understands that he has to become mortal, that he must be mortal twice over: sovereignly, extremely mortal." (Blanchot, 1982: 96)

Making his own death man attributes himself the status of a maker who has the power of giving meaning and truth to his Being. "The decision to be without being is possibility itself" (Blanchot, 1982: 96).

To transgress on the other hand is to lose that as negativity. This means to lose that power of mastery over death. That is to say encounter it as an impossibility.

The 'I' will never arrive at it, nor will the individual, this particle of dust that I am, nor even the self of all of us that is supposed to represent absolute self-consciousness. Only the ignorance that I-who-dies would incarnate by acceding to that space where in dying it never dies in the first person as an 'I' will reach it. (Blanchot, 1993: 209-210)

Blanchot interprets Hegelian attitude towards death- making it possible- in relation with the cultural attitude towards death. For Blanchot "the task of culture has always been to restore a kind of purity to death, to make it authentic, personal, proper-but also to make it possible" (1993: 180). Blanchot replaces himself on the opposite side and holds an anticultural attitude; departing from Bataille's 'unemployable negativity' he insists on the inauthentic, impersonal, and impossible characteristics of

death. Blanchot sees the possibility of such death in art which embodies the dual status of death.

This possibility for art is revealed most evidently in literature for Blanchot. His way of dealing with this dual status of death passes from his principle of 'contestation' which suggests the possibility of non-positive affirmation. Michel Foucault in his essay "A Preface to Transgression" defines 'contestation' as an act that does not imply a generalized negation but as an affirmation that affirms nothing.

Rather than being a process of thought for denying existences or values, contestation is the act which carries them all to their limits, and from there, to the Limit where an ontological decision achieves its end; to contest is to proceed until one reaches the empty core where being achieves its limit and where the limit defines being. (1998: 29)

There is a denial of the possibility of transforming the negativity into action in contestation. Blanchot rejects the idea that man exhaust his negativity in action, transforms all the nothingness that he is into power.

Perhaps he can reach the absolute by making himself equal to the whole and by becoming conscious of the whole. But then more extreme than this absolute is the passion of negative thought; for faced with this response, negative thought is still capable of introducing the question that suspends it, and, faced with the accomplishment of

the whole, still capable of maintaining the other exigency that again raises the issue of the infinite in the form of contestation. (Blanchot, 1993: 205)

Blanchot points towards the necessity of a limit experience in order not to stop or get lost in the circularity of the whole. Given that we'll all die we admit that sovereignty has passed to death. Blanchot sees the only possible way of gaining man's true sovereignty in affirmation. Affirming himself he is not only himself, not only nature but also that which is not nature.

The limit experience is the experience of what is outside the whole when the whole excludes every outside; the experience of what is still to be attained when all is attained and what is still to be known when all is known: the inaccessible, the unknown itself. (Blanchot, 1993: 205)

For Blanchot, the experience of the inaccessible, the unknown cannot be distinguished from Bataille's notion of inner experience. Radical negation is affirmed in inner experience. Blanchot claims that there is a risk of substantializing nothingness in this affirmation. In this respect, the limit experience is still more extreme than inner experience. Limit experience gives us the possibility of (a) new origin(s) which offers to thought an affirmation. This affirmation does not affirm itself rather it is the possibility of affirmation. For Blanchot, this experience only comes from the edge of the limit when the limits unveil. This is what Blanchot

calls the 'ultimate exigency'. Blanchot claims that this is an endless process that never offers itself as completed.

Blanchot's notion of double affirmation cannot be thought as a way for general truth which defines the elements in discourses. In fact, what Blanchot aims in his discourse is the plurality of speech with the second affirmation. The heterogeneity is acquired in this form of experience which shows more than one ground for the play of thought. By erasing (the) grounds in discourses, Blanchot constructs the play of difference between two persons, a dialogue which makes plurality of speech possible. The process of affirmation in Bataille's work links meaning to itself in order to generate meaning. In this respect, Blanchot constructs a new way of affirmation which affirms nothing and only affirms affirmation. Therefore, the double affirmation in Blanchot escapes from the discourse that makes man independent from other beings, so the negation put at stake is always for the sake of difference which is the possibility of man's freedom. Blanchot searches the basis for the infinite affirmation of thought rather than the transgression of limits in which transgression is always linked to meaning and itself. Blanchot always places the impossible experience at the heart of his discourse, because the infinite affirmation of thought can only be grasped when it escapes from us.

Blanchot's approach to art can be understood by following his path that suggests limit-experience. The artwork is not an object for Blanchot.

"It is as if a secret law required of the work that it always be concealed in what it shows and that it only shows what must remain concealed and that finally it only shows what must stay hidden by concealing it" (Blanchot, 1982: 232-233).



1.2 Nietzsche

Blanchot suggests that the essential movement in Nietzsche's thought consists in self-contradiction. This is to say that each time it affirms, the affirmation must be put in relation with the one opposing it. Blanchot characterizes this as an act of search for the true in the depths. The way which leads to truth should pass from contradiction. This act of search necessarily turns around itself. This is ignoring the idea of center, origin and suggests a non-originary origin.

Nietzsche's influence in Blanchot's works is evident especially in his later writings. His article written in 1958 *Nietzsche, today* forms the first part of the sixth chapter of *The Infinite Conversation*, 'Reflections on nihilism', which can also be read historically as the attempt of the writer's confronting his own political experience. But the main concern shared by these two thinkers can also be traced in these chapters which is Nietzsche's denial of the privileged status of truth, or the idea that truth is the product of error. John Gregg, in his previously mentioned book suggests that Blanchot insists on the limited, restricted nature of truths produced by such errors. Nietzsche rejects the fundamental doctrines of epistemology, the correspondence theory of truth and the referential theory of meaning. That is to say there is no conformity of mind with

object and following this supposition, no adequate relation with the world through language.

What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms- in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer coins. (Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth*, 84)

Nietzsche questions the grounds of both truth and language. For Nietzsche according to Gregg, philosophy forgets the metaphorical origins that lie hidden deep within concepts. "Concepts are actually congealed metaphors, and the error of philosophy resides in its blindness to the fact that concepts succeed in passing themselves off as something they are not" (Gregg: 175).

Nietzsche sees knowledge as nothing but working with metaphors. Blanchot gives priority to poetry over everyday language, the way Nietzsche does to metaphor over concept. "Transitive language subordinated to the logic of means and ends arrests the murmur of

contestation at the origin of language just as metaphors solidify to become concepts" (Gregg: 176).

Nietzsche's influence cannot be limited with his critical approach to epistemology. Blanchot also borrows Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return which suggests that there is simply no present to be constituted. The present is a limit that is effaced, and therefore not present as it is always crossed too late or too soon. This is the conception of the non-present temporality of the present.

What Nietzsche suggests is the reversal of time in order for man not to be limited in his temporal dimension. The will that wills nothingness is the will that wills eternity. This is a typical Nietzschean act which turns into itself and 'will' loses its meaning or maybe we should say becomes the will to will.

Having thus recovered the idea of eternity, and the idea of 'being', love of the eternal and knowledge of the depths of 'being', ...we are at the heart of nihilism.
(Blanchot, 1993: 149)

Blanchot says that the philosophy of Nietzsche "takes its distance from dialectical philosophy less in contesting it than in repeating it, that is, in repeating the principle concepts or moments that it deflects" (1993: 159). These concepts are the idea of contradiction, the idea of going beyond, the idea of transvaluation, the idea of totality and especially the

idea of circularity that suggests the circularity of truth and affirmation together with all the other concepts mentioned.

The idea of going beyond-whether understood in a Hegelian or a Nietzschean sense, a creation that does not preserve but destroys- seems sufficient for Nietzsche. If nihilism as Nietzsche himself states, is that the highest values devaluated themselves and if these values are for example the ideal, consciousness, reason or culture, then man has the power to destroy these values by creating their meaning. That is to say man has the power to create his own world and attribute a meaning to it. This seems as a suggestion that ignores the limits to man's activity. Everything is permitted because above all knowing everything is permitted. Nietzsche says;

We have a still undiscovered country before us, the boundaries of which no one has seen, a beyond to all countries and corners of the ideal known hitherto, a world so over-rich in the beautiful, the strange, the unquestionable, the frightful. (Nietzsche quoted in Blanchot, 1993: 145)

Blanchot nonetheless points to some possible misunderstandings of Nietzsche. His attempt can still be seen as a constitution of a system as he first introduces the death of God and then as the consequence of this, nihilism is suggested and finally and not suprisingly as the consequence of nihilism Nietzsche affirms the Eternal return and its overturning. Blanchot's

own questioning of Nietzsche must be traced through his own words as he says;

But does affirming the return mean to come around, to circulate, to make of the circle an accomplished sovereignty? Clearly not. If only because the eternity of the return- the infinite of the return- does not permit assigning to the figure a center, even less an infinity of centers, just as the infinite of the repetition cannot be totalized in order to produce the unity of a figure strictly delimited and whose construction would escape the law it figures forth. If the Eternal Return can affirm itself, it affirms neither the return nor the primacy of the One, nor the Whole, and not even by way of the necessity that through the Eternal Return 'everything returns', for the circle and the circle of all circles do not give it a figure any more than the Whole can encompass the Eternal Return, or coincide with it. Even if 'everything returns', it is not the whole that returns, but rather: it returns, the return returns (as neutral). (1993: 275)

Blanchot's understanding of art as influenced heavily from Nietzsche's eternal recurrence particularly manifests itself in *Friendship*: Blanchot suggests "Just as the world of art is tied to absence, so the time of art is related to eternal repetition" (33). Art must realize the possibility of detaching itself from the truth of the world by intertwining with absence.

Chapter 2: Death and Experience

2.1 Aporetic Experience

Rudolphe Gasché in his book *The Tain of the Mirror*, explicates the importance of aporias as a philosophical method both in terms of Heidegger and Derrida. He claims it to be a philosophical method which has consisted in starting off from difficulties and conflicting arguments that seem to offer no way out. But he mentions a dialectical process, until a way out (euporia) is found, a process passes from the hopelessness of aporetic situations. (Gasché: 86) In Derrida's case, it becomes hard to talk about a dialectics which aims to find that way out of hopeless situations, rather, as Gasché claims; we face a kind of emphasis on the philosophical path that leads from aporias to their harmonious unity.

The term aporias is chosen in order to suggest a way of understanding Blanchot's philosophy which insistently constructs arguments by using -to put it in Derrida's words -'nondialectizable contradictions'. Blanchot's attitudes towards art in general, passes through his conception of death -as they share the same destiny of incompleteness-, which excludes

any attempts at making death possible. One of the most significant attempt comes from Heidegger and Derrida's reading of 'Being and Time'- concentrating mostly on the chapters concerning Dasein's possibility of Being-a-whole and Being-towards-death - may present itself as a model of an overcoming such an attitude by generating an aporetic experience.

Discourses on death put into question many concepts; such as possibility, impossibility, finitude, infinity and limit. These concepts will hopefully gain importance in Blanchot's texts in the light of Derrida's concern with these concepts in his aporetic experience, he also defines deconstruction as a certain aporetic experience of the impossible.

The difficulty of the subject lies in its relation with the concept of truth as it suggests the concept of 'limit' and a 'beyond'. Derrida's quotation from Diderot is crucial; "letting oneself be carried beyond the limits of truth" (Derrida,1993: 1). That quotation reminds us of Blanchot's claims about the limited, restricted nature of truths produced by errors. If truth as Derrida continues his discussion, suggests a certain relation to what terminates or determines it, what has to be questioned is not truth but what produces it. If there is a kind of error, it belongs to our understanding of limit or border.

The difference between 'border' and 'limit' can be explained as such; border is what one produces in order to construct discourses on death or

on something else. The point is that it is put and this gives us a possibility to deny our conditions as mortals,

...the absolute imminence of death at every instant.

This imminence of a disappearance that is by essence premature seals the union of the possible and the impossible, of fear and desire, and of mortality and immortality, in being to death. (Derrida, 1993: 4)

'Border' brings the impossibility of referring to a 'beyond'. Derrida says that any statement be it negative, affirmative or interrogative share the same difficulty. But in terms of limit we encounter another difficulty as this word suggests an experience of it. What Derrida calls aporetic experience is the experience of a nonpassage, an impasse which no longer ignores the fact that there is no limit. Death for Blanchot is only a metaphor to be used in representing the idea of limit which is at the same time excluded by the limit. My intention is to claim that Blanchot's limit-experience has the same goals of Derrida's aporetic experience. There is a parallelism between the experience of the aporia which has the possibility of an affirmation put in a negative form despite its impossibility and impracticability and 'limit- experience' of Blanchot's which suggests a movement of contestation and a passion of negative thought. To put it in Blanchot's words;

The limit-experience is experience itself; thought thinking that which will not let itself be thought; thought thinking more than it is able by an affirmation that affirms more than can be affirmed. This more itself is the experience: affirming only by an excess of affirmation and in this surplus, affirming without anything being affirmed- finally affirming nothing. (1993: 209)

The word "aporia" is important for Derrida as it suggests more than the word "problem". To see these concepts as problematic necessitates their being seen as a projection or protection. Derrida says that,

...problema can signify projection or protection, that which one poses or throws in front of oneself, either as the projection of a project, of a task to accomplish, or as the protection created by a substitute, a prosthesis that we put forth in order to represent, replace, shelter, or dissimulate ourselves. (1993: 11)

That is to say that there is a certain kind of determination in terms of problem. There is at least the idea of a solution. This means that problem points a direction to follow while on the other hand 'aporia' is this indeterminate, unknowable path to follow. It is "...not knowing where to go" (Derrida, 1993: 12). What 'aporia' suggests is a nonpassage and an experience of nonpassage. This experience makes it impossible for us to constitute a problem. The subject of this experience cannot be found in the context but rather in the experience itself. Derrida talks about a kind of fascination in this nonpassage which is "paralyzing us...in a way that is

not necessarily negative: before a door, a threshold, a border, a line, or simply the edge or the approach of the other as such" (1993, 12).

Placing Heidegger and his thoughts about death as the subject of concern necessitates an approach from the side of the aporia of time in order to support the impossibility of determining time as entity and nonentity. Derrida indicates that the fault in Heidegger's thinking of death has its roots in this misconception of time. For Heidegger time becomes a question only in relation to death or vice versa because Dasein must be understood as being-towards-death. "The now is and is not what it is...it only 'scarcely is what it is. Insofar as it has been, it no longer is. But insofar as it will be, as future comes or as death, it is not yet" (Derrida, 1993: 14).

Derrida's concern is not to demonstrate Heidegger's or any other philosophy's misconstrued therefore impracticable conceptions but rather to question the possibility of an experience of the aporetic which may or may not be the outcome of such a misconception.

I believe that we would misunderstand it if we tried to hold it to its most literal meaning; an absence of path, a paralysis before roadblocks, the immobilization of thinking, the impossibility of advancing a barrier blocking the future. On the contrary, it seems to me that the experience of the aporia, such as de Man deciphers it, gives or promises the thinking of the path, provokes the thinking of the very

possibility of what still remains unthinkable or unthought, indeed, impossible. (Derrida, 1989: 132)

For Derrida, the importance of aporias internal to Heidegger's discourse nevertheless threatens his philosophy. "These aporias risk interrupting the very possibility of its functioning and leading it to ruin" (Derrida, 1993: s28).

2.1.1 Possibility of my own death

Death in Heidegger, for Derrida is the most important aporia as Dasein must be understood as being-towards death. That is the pure possibility for Dasein and it is conceived as my possibility that is to say any relation with death is always a relation with 'my death'. What must be understood from 'Dasein' is, to put it in Heidegger's words, 'Being-the-Da'.

The entity which is essentially constituted by Being-in-the-world is itself in every case its 'there' (Da). According to the familiar signification of the word, the 'there' points to a 'here' and a 'yonder'...'here' and 'yonder' are possible only in a 'there'- that is to say , only if there is an entity which has made a disclosure of spatiality as the Being of the 'there'. This entity carries in its ownmost Being the character of not being closed off. In the expression 'there' we have in view this essential disclosedness... (1962: 171)

Dasein; being-there is importance in terms of death as the term itself suggests a border and loses its meaning when being passes to the other side by dying. What I understand from this term is something like being's being addressed to this side of the border in its broadest sense. Having Heidegger's emphasis on Dasein in mind we can say that he is not actually interested in 'beyond'. He only mentions entity's situation as the only possibility that passes -as if towards- this so called 'beyond' and Dasein's impossibility as such.

Heidegger says that; with death, Dasein encounters what still stands before it, and what is always impending. Death is a character of Dasein, which belongs to it and constitutes the totality of it but can only be understood as such when it reaches its wholeness and is conceived as such.

With death, which at its time is only my dying, my ownmost being stands before me, is imminent: I stand before my can-be at every moment. The being that I will be in the 'last' of my Dasein, that I can be at any moment, this possibility is that of my ownmost 'I am', which means that I will be my ownmost I. I myself am this possibility, where death is my death. There is no such thing as death in general. (Heidegger, 1992: 313)

In *Aporias*, Derrida mentions this imminent character of death by quoting from Louis-Vincent Thomas who says that, a human being is old enough to die when he is born, and this claim is incorrectly attributed to Heidegger by him. Derrida departing from this claim states that Heidegger

places Dasein in a position of surpassing, transgressing a borderline, a limit, an end of his own being. Derrida's suggestion of an aporetic experience works at this point; dealing with the possibilities of the "coming to pass" by surpassing at this limit; "Perhaps nothing ever comes to pass except on the line of transgression, the death of some 'trespassing'" (Derrida, 1993: 33).

"When Dasein reaches wholeness in death, then it can no longer be experienced by me as mine" (Heidegger, 1992: 308). What does Heidegger mean by that? The essence of being according to him is to have something before itself, that is to say Dasein's incompleteness is the essence of its being because Dasein reaches completeness only at an end, in death. The whole in Heidegger is never given but there is still the possibility of reaching wholeness for Dasein which at the same time brings the impossibility of it as it becomes no longer Dasein when it reaches its wholeness. Giorgio Agamben in his book *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity* states Heidegger's concern as such;

...the experience of death in question takes the form of an 'anticipation' of its own possibility, although this possibility boasts no positive factual content. It gives Dasein nothing to be actualized, nothing which Dasein, as actual, could itself be. Instead it represents the possibility of the impossibility of existence in general, of the disappearance of every reference to...and of all existing. Only in the purely negative register of this being- for-

death, when it experiences the most radical impossibility, can Dasein reach its ownmost proper dwelling place and comprehend itself as totality. (2)

Dasein always lacks something insofar as it is, always incomplete. What then is the use of talking about a wholeness which makes it impossible as an entity. This wholeness belongs to something no longer existent. There is the impossibility of a non-existing entity's possession. A conclusion as such can be drawn; in essence what is in each instance mine is an incomplete Dasein. The wholeness achieved by death makes Dasein vanish. Possibility of a complete Dasein is the impossibility of Dasein itself. This also points to an impossibility of experiencing my own Dasein in its wholeness. Heidegger grounds his argument by making a characterization of being . Dasein as being-in-the-world necessitates this incompleteness to define his being as the being-with -one- another. Heidegger suggests that what is impossible for me -experiencing my own death- is possible for the others who used to define my being in terms of Dasein's being- with-one-another. "For with the dying and the death of the others, an entity is still on hand, but certainly not their Dasein" (Heidegger, 1992: 309). Heidegger makes a distinction between the being of Dasein and the entity as such which is the 'world-thing'.

When Dasein reaches the mode of being in which nothing more in it is outstanding, that is, when finished as Dasein, then in its being- finished it no longer is what it is. Being- finished, when asserted about Dasein, means no-

longer- being. By contrast , an entity encountered in concern can totally fulfill its function as something used or produced only when it is finished. Being-finished, asserted about a world- thing on hand and becoming available. (Heidegger, 1992: 311)

Derrida will claim that these distinctions are not clear enough throughout the whole discourse on death but I think this point is important in order to understand Blanchot's theory of resemblance which will be explored in the next chapter as he mentions image's and cadaver's resembling each other. This issue is crucial as it may be interpreted as an attempt to reduce the principle resource of art to cadavers.

Dasein's being- with- one-another and construction as Being-towards -death provides a relation with oneself through which the 'I' is grasped as a Subject. This helps Heidegger to define the self in terms of its fate and community in terms of destiny. Some other definitions of community may be recalled at this point with their relation to death; Giorgio Agamben's community for example, which has necessarily a negative ground. For him the fate and destiny of a community does not have its origin in itself or outside itself except on negative grounds like death. Heidegger also places his community on the bases of a sharing finitude, which suggests a common destiny for all individuals namely death. We can also consider Blanchot's community'; Leslie Hill, mentioning Blanchot's affinity to Levinas, states

that for these two death is the impossibility of possibility and that the logic of 'il y a' (*there is*) excludes:

...not being available as experience at all, it belongs to the realm not of possibility but rather impossibility...Death, then, is not self-relation but a relation (without relation) with Otherness and the community to which death gives rise, as Blanchot argues in *The Unavowable Community*, is not a community that embodies propriety and truth, but a community, in so far as it is founded at all, that is necessarily traversed by impossibility and irreducible heteronomy. (Gill, 15)

This is a community which suggests a form of continual 'limit-experience' through which relation to others and self questioning is possible. "If human existence is an existence that puts itself radically and constantly in question, it cannot itself alone have that possibility which always goes beyond it, for then the question would always be a lacking question" (quoted from Clark, 140). If we understand Heidegger's aim in *Being and Time* as putting human existence in question departing from death, and consider that Derrida derives an aporetic experience from here, we can again see the parallelism between aporetic experience and limit-experience which is necessarily the death of another. "One's own death is not one's 'own', since it is not an experience, there is no self to experience it" (Clark: 140).

Heidegger may be trying to overcome this aporia by claiming that Dasein in its everyday self-interpretation constructs a relation with itself through which Dasein sees, interprets, considers and names itself in terms of what it does. If one is what one does then there is the possibility of an exchange of experiences among beings as being- in -the- world. That is to say "one can within limits take over the Dasein of the other" (Heidegger,1992: 310). Heidegger himself accepts that this supposition also fails when what is replaced is the being of what constitutes the end of Dasein aiming at its wholeness. "No one can relieve the other of his own dying" (Heidegger,1992: 310). Because the experience as such is unique and one can die only for once. "...death is in each instance and in its time my own death; it belongs to me insofar as I am" (Heidegger,1992: 310).

Heidegger puts Dasein's being towards death as an authentic possibility of being and claims that this should be understood as an indefinite certainty of being. This authentic relationship of being has to be maintained as a possibility because 'being' is this possibility itself. Here we need to understand what is meant by 'possibility'. The possible, says Blanchot, is an empty frame as it doesn't suggest a reality, it is more than reality in the sense that it carries the power to 'be'. "Possibility establishes and founds reality: one is what one is only if one has the power to be" (Blanchot, 1993: 42). Blanchot repeats Heidegger's claim that; "...man not only has possibilities, but is his possibility" (1993: 42) or impossibility?

To put an end to the subject I want to return to the discussions in Derrida's *Aporias*. Derrida sees the whole existential analysis of death as a thinking of the possible. But this possibility of possible does not only suggest Dasein's running forward toward death which is the "utmost, though indefinite, yet certain possibility", but also a Dasein as an entity. Derrida points out possible confusions of distinguishing Dasein from entity.

He mentions three types of entity in Heideggerian discourse; Dasein, being-present-at-hand (Vorhandensein) and being-ready-to-hand (Zuhandensein), and claims that he grounds his whole discourse on death on the distinctions between these three types of entity. Derrida claims that Heidegger does not clearly draw these distinctions.

If being-possible is the being proper to Dasein, then the existential analysis of the death of Dasein will have to make of this possibility its theme...the analysis of death is submitted to the ontological law that rules the being of Dasein, whose name is 'possibility'. But death is possibility par excellence... (1993: 63)

Heidegger on the other hand warns that, if death is to be understood in terms of the characteristics of Being of Dasein then we have to mention Dasein's existence, facticity and falling which are fundamental characteristics.

2.1.2 Being-towards-death

If death is the possibility of the impossibility of Dasein and carries the possibility of taking place at any moment, then this indeterminacy of its arrival must be examined in terms of Heidegger's understanding of time. Mark C. Taylor in his article "Back to the Future" points out Heideggerian relations between time and death in Blanchot and claims that their attitude put Being as a tendency towards future. "Being is being toward the nonarrival of that which comes toward" (Taylor: 18). Blanchot concludes that ;

The 'I' will never arrive at it, nor will the individual, this particle of dust that I am, nor even the self of all of us that is supposed to represent absolute self-consciousness. Only the ignorance that the I- who- dies would incarnate by acceding to the space where in dying it never dies in the first person as an 'I' will reach it. (1993: 209)

Blanchot here defines a future which is not mine, an infinite future which is ungraspable and impossible, which therefore belongs to an Other in the sense that it is always ahead of me. Blanchot's 'neuter' comes out of such an impossibility of my own future which opens space for alterity .

Derrida claims that Dasein's attitude is awaiting itself by awaiting its most proper possibility, and ownmost potentiality-for-being. Then he immediately mentions that waiting necessitates an arrivant, an other.

There is also the possibility of waiting for each other which ruins Heideggerian discourse in the sense that to be able to meet at a border one should arrive late and this is contradictory with Dasein's being-towards-death.

Derrida departing from Heidegger's aporia -possibility of impossibility- concludes that, if "death- to be expected- is the unique occurrence of this possibility of impossibility" (1993: 72) and only Dasein can grasp and in a sense overcomes this aporia then a certain relation should have been constructed between possible and impossible by Heidegger who may be just talking about the improbable character of death - improbable in a Blanchotian sense that " ...were there a meeting point between possibility and impossibility , the improbable would be this point" (Blanchot, 1993: 41) -. Actually what Heidegger does is to show the impossibility of death for 'this' as the possibility of it for 'that'. Derrida says that; "It is nothing less than the end of the world, with each death, each time that we expect no longer to be able to await ourselves and each other, hence no longer to be able to understand each other" (1993: 75).

2.1.3 Possibility as Impossibility

Derrida departing from Blanchot's *The Writing of the Disaster*, claims that Heidegger and Blanchot may have different interests but same outcome in their thinking of death as 'the possibility of impossibility'. Their

construction of 'future' differs as Blanchot never neglects Nietzschean 'eternal recurrence' which excludes present in such a construction. What is suggested through 'eternal recurrence' is to live in the past what is future and live the future as past says Blanchot: "The emptiness of the future: death holds our future there and the emptiness of the past: there death has its tomb" (Holland: 294). Contrary to Heidegger, Blanchot refers to an immemorial past in terms of death when he says:

Dying means: you are dead already, in an immemorial past, of a death which was not yours, which you have thus neither known nor lived, but under the threat of which you believe you are called upon to live, you await it henceforth in the future, constructing a future to make it possible at last- possible as something that will take place and will belong to the realm of experience.(1995: 65)

In his article "The Exigency of the Return" published in 1970, Blanchot takes death as something we are unused to in the sense that our attitude towards death always entails a fear of something unfamiliar, horrifying. Blanchot says that the thoughts of death do not necessarily put death as something to be thought not even thinking about death. The impossibility of dying and thinking instantaneously creates the impossibility of thinking of death as any last thought would inevitably belong to 'living'.

Death, as the possibility of the impossible as such, is a figure of the aporia in which 'death' and death can

replace- and this is a metonymy that carries the name beyond the name of name - all that is only possible as impossible, if there is such a thing...(Derrida, 1993: 79)

Derrida's emphasis on aporia of death's being a metonymy brings to one's mind Blanchot's approach which suggests that we have to name it in order to master and get rid of it. According to Blanchot the word has meaning, provided that it rids us of the object it names by pushing us towards an unawareness of its presence and concrete reminder. This is the possibility of authentic language's destructive function which goes along with the representative one. Blanchot says that; authentic language brings about disappearances and renders the object absent and annihilates it. This point is important in order to understand 'limit-experience' which necessarily privileges language to be able to construct the passivity through which the impossibility of death is drawn from its 'non-event' character. Blanchot questions the relations between philosophy and art in terms of death and negation. What he names as "the loss of death" is simply the naming itself which makes it possible for us to grasp the loss of the presence which is present in its disappearance. Any response affirms this loss and through affirming tries to master it. This mastering is nothing but a control over the extreme, namely death. We might recall here "supreme mastery" in Bataille but Blanchot's concern is to capture the power of the negative interiorized by death. What Blanchot borrows from Hegel is his approach to language which works through negation, -negation

as an imminent character of thought that continually deconstructs it-, which ,to put it in Hegel's words; "...immediately overturns what it names in order to transform it into something else" (Blanchot, 1993: 35). Blanchot finds the traces of power and capacity attributed to death in language. What makes death impossible is its relation with the idea of an infinite future which always remains beyond one's experience. We lose power when we think in terms of a possibility which inevitably refers to an obscure future. The possible experience of this obscurity should be questioned,

...this experience were that of a time out of synchrony and as though deprived of the dimension of passing beyond, henceforth neither passing nor ever having had to pass. (Blanchot, 1993: 44)

This is the point where this so-called power passes to language. Blanchot in his article "Literature and the Right to Death" clearly states a writer's- or an artist's - relation to this infinite future as a privilege of being master of everything; "But he is only master of everything, he possesses only the infinite; he lacks the finite, limit escapes him" (Blanchot, 1999: 373).

What we overcome by death is our relation to a limit. Any philosophy or art influenced by the idea of death questions 'limit' as it has to refer to an infinite which does not necessarily leave behind the

impossibility of passing beyond. Any infinite oriented experience should forget 'limit' as it is suggested by 'possibility'. This experience has its roots in 'impossibility'. The impossible in Blanchot is a "non-power (non-pouvoir) that would not be the simple negation of power" (1993: 44). This non-power character of impossibility is the source of its impotence which escapes all mastering, achievement or completion.

...where dying means losing the time in which one can still come to an end and entering into the infinite 'present' of a death impossible to die, a present toward which the experience of suffering is manifestly oriented, the suffering that no longer allows us the time to put a limit to it- even by dying- since we will also have lost death as a limit. (Blanchot, 1993; 45)

This nevertheless leads us to a passivity as Taylor says; "For Blanchot, as for Heidegger, that which is beyond being and non-being approaches when one 'waits for something that will not have taken place' " (Taylor: 19). Impossibility put neither as a negation nor as an affirmation but to a certain extent grasp of the being which has already preceded being. That is what through death disappears but cannot be grasped. This is the grasp of the immediate present and presence through which impossibility is situated in relation with the Outside. "Impossibility is relation with the Outside; and since this relation without relation is the passion of that does not allow itself to be mastered through patience, impossibility is the passion of the Outside" (Blanchot, 1993: 46).

There still remains a question in terms of 'limit -experience' which is supposed to be the experience "...affirming without anything being affirmed finally affirming nothing." Any work of art, using the power of language which suggests an experience of the infinite, and thus attempts to construct the real, the possible -mimicking the world- fails to fulfill its promise. Following Blanchot through his article we can find what is meant by this promise;

The realm of the imaginary is not a strange region situated beyond the world, it is the world itself, but the world as entire, manifold, the world as a whole. That's why it is not in the world, because it is the world, grasped and realized in its entirety by the global negation of all the individual realities contained in it, by their disqualification, their absence, by the realization of that absence itself. (1999: 373)

What is excluded in this promise is the time of the possible. The world of art on the other hand does not simply suggest an impossibility. Blanchot says that it answers to it, reminds the possibility of impossibility; "naming the possible, responding to the impossible" (1993: 48). Any rational answer is included in this response; as it is a response to "what is not yet heard, an attentive response in which the impatient waiting for the unknown and the desiring hope for presence are affirmed" (Blanchot, 1993: 48).

2.2 Limit -Experience

Blanchot in his book *The Infinite Conversation* radically questions 'experience' and he does this by rethinking 'experience' together with philosophers of 'experience'. It can be said that he comes very close to the idea of 'inner experience' -in terms of Bataille who claims that interior experience "is the manner in which the radical negation that no longer has anything to negate is affirmed" (208) - by suggesting 'contestation'. Interior experience's emphasis on 'nothing' in terms of affirmation, manifestation and communication seem problematic for Blanchot as this 'nothing' should be placed on safe grounds other than a dialectical movement. He mentions 'dialectics' as it belongs to the time of the possible and never neglects the power by which 'nothing' can be affirmed.

Blanchot insists on the extremity of the impossible and the non-power of it. And the proper experience of this impossible is the 'limit experience'. He says that;

For thought, the limit-experience represents something like a new origin. What it offers to thought is the essential gift, the prodigality of affirmation; an affirmation, for the first time, that is not a product (the result of a double negation), and thereby escapes all the movements, oppositions and reversals of dialectical reason, which, having completed itself before this affirmation, can no longer reserve a role for it under its reign. (Blanchot, 1993: 209)

This experience suggests the fall of the limits which can only reach us at the limit. This is the handling of the obscure future by making it present. "The experience of non-experience. Detour from everything visible and invisible" (Blanchot, 1993: 210).

The limitlessness beyond the limit may be understood as an alternative law since for Blanchot limitlessness is itself inherent in the limit. Leslie Hill in his book, *Blanchot; Extreme Contemporary*, states that;

...though the two exigencies - that of the limit and that of the limitlessness of the limit- are disjoined from one another, they do not exist in isolation from each other; and while the limitlessness beyond the limit belongs to the limit, so to speak, as its very condition of possibility and impossibility, the reverse is also true, for without the interval inscribed by the limit the limitlessness that lies beyond it would not be possible either. In this way, the limitlessness beyond the limit may be said both to follow and precede the limit; just as the demand of limitlessness exceeds that of the limit, limitlessness itself is inseparable from its own necessary interruption. (93-94)

What Blanchot suggests about the paradox inherent in the context of limit-limitlessness is that once the limitlessness of the limit is grasped in its necessary impossibility then the structure of the limit or limitlessness allows one (Blanchot) to generate relations between inside- outside, possible, impossible, perhaps through Derrida's 'chiasmic double

invagination' as Hill suggests. This experience finds its necessary condition in literary space in Blanchot.



Chapter 3: Death and Representation

3.1 Image Experience

to read the word death without negation is to withdraw from it the cutting edge of decision and the power to negate; it is to cut oneself off from possibility and the true, and also from death as true event. It is to surrender to the indistinct and the undetermined, to the emptiness anterior to events, where the end has all the heaviness of starting over. (Blanchot, 1982: 242)

Blanchot's writing supposes a pass from 'I' to 'He', il, the Neuter. What he calls the space of literature in which the real is already imaginary and detached from its truth and identity, which is interminable and incessant, is the Neuter. The Neuter suggests an inaction and a potentiality to not-be. Blanchot describes it as the shadow of time, of the real. Writing process does not work with the intention of the writer's expressing himself through words, rather with the shadow, the appearance of the words that reveal independent of the will of the writer. That is why the writer is the one without a self.

The loss of subjectivity in writing can be understood as a kind of dying. From this perspective, death becomes what dying produces as the work of art, the trace of dying which nevertheless avoids to refer to a completion and manifests itself as the presence of everything finished. To put it in Blanchot's words quoted by Bruns; "The book is to writing what death would be to the movement of dying" (Bruns: 82).

The Neuter has no power to be able to say 'I' and has no power to create characters whose freedom is given. Wall quoting from Blanchot's *The Essential Solitude*, defines the writing process as;

To write, to enter the Neuter, is to arrange language under fascination and, through language, in language, to remain in contact with the absolute milieu, where the thing becomes an image again, where the image, which had been allusion to a figure, becomes an illusion to what is without figure... when there is no world yet. (116)

The absolute milieu refers to an impossibility of pertaining to any place in the world, and points to a detachment from the real in the absence of inside or outside. "To write is to lose oneself in the region where there is nothing to be revealed, expressed, meant or shown, because nothing is. It is the region of ambiguity, abandoned, by references, emptied of subject and object- where all is such as it is. Irreparably so" (Wall: 117). Blanchot privileges writing as it affirms existence- the thing in itself , the real. This is a pure taking place of the

real. By suggesting a taking place of the 'real' Blanchot intentionally risks the presence of real.

This is the experience of art which indicates the passion for Outside, neuter, limitlessness and absence through which nothingness reveals. For Blanchot, the artist neither creates nor reveals. Art's concern has to be understood in terms of 'image'. Blanchot's approach to art can be traced in his approach to philosophy which plays with the eternity of concepts, as in terms of art 'image' takes the place of concepts. This is not simply a substitution of image for concept rather, -not rejecting this approach-transgression of the concept. What is suggested here is a link between concepts of Blanchot's philosophy to his understanding of 'image' which necessitates a certain kind of understanding from the point of view of his philosophy. Art is the most proper medium to generate an approach to life and death as it suggests a withdrawal from 'power' and 'present' and creates the possibility of a passivity. Any so called withdrawal does not necessarily carry the possibility of a new beginning or a promise of beyond but nevertheless points to a release from ourselves.

"The whole of our world, with its elementary and intellectually elaborated givens, can touch us musically, can become an image" says Levinas. This is the possibility for the subject to experience itself other than as itself and impossibility of grasping the difference between art and life which is not a necessary category.

Blanchot in his book *The Space of Literature* goes along with Heidegger and says that the work of art is not any sort of thing at all rather, it *is*- and nothing more. "Beyond that it is nothing. Whoever wants to make it express more finds nothing, finds that it expresses nothing" (Blanchot, 1982: 22). Levinas would define this as 'existence without existents', and it is 'existence without being' in Blanchot. "Existence that is external to anything existing, but not as an outside is external to an inside, nor as a domain is to occupants" (Bruns: 58). Existence without being is the disclosure of being for which there is not a necessary category of visible presence or invisible absence. This being- consistent with Levinas' *il y a* - appears rather as the presence of an absence, appears in its disappearance. Even through the conditions of nothingness is achieved the fact that 'there is' is undeniable. Not that there is this or that in particular, but rather that the very scene of being is opened; 'there is'. Being's effacement itself' is Blanchot's concern in *The Space of Literature* where he speaks of resemblance, the duplicity of revelation- which shares the same concern with Heidegger's ontological revelation - according to which, what reveals itself at the same time conceals itself and does not take refuge in simple invisibility. (1993: 29)

The image is the duplicity of revelation. The image is what veils by revealing; it is the veil that reveals by revealing in all the ambiguous indecision of the word reveal. The image is image by means of this duplicity, being not the object's double, but the initial division that

then permits the thing to be figured; still further back than this doubling it is a folding, a turn of the turning , the 'version' that is always in the process of inverting itself and that in itself bears the back and forth of a divergence. (Blanchot, 1993: 30)

3.2 Resemblance Theory

Understanding Blanchot's approach to the problem of representation necessitates another aporetic experience. He takes the subject in terms of image and using certain elements that constructs our world of representation such as identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance, derives a theory of resemblance. As Foucault has shown, the classical world of representation, along with other principles of reason, suggests the resemblance of perception. Levinas claims that a sign directly refers to its object, but an image resembles it. Departing from Levinas, Thomas Carl Wall states that " an image resembles an object, but resemblance is not the result of a comparison between two realms; the real and the imaginary" (Wall: 17). There is a certain fact that the image is the possibility of the object to be represented and possibility of representation itself. As the real is always already approached by its image, resemblance can be traced in the real itself. Blanchot's theory suggests more from the point of view of the thing's and its image's relation in terms of resemblance. "Resemblance is not a means of imitating life but of making it inaccessible, of establishing it in a double that is permanent and escapes

from life" (Blanchot, 1997: 32). That is why resemblance theory includes cadaverous resemblance and does not make living figures its subject matter. "Men are without resemblance" (Blanchot, 1997: 32). This attitude of Blanchot's which privileges image instead of the object itself -"we see then we imagine" (1982: 255)-, is consistent with his theory of language which gives precedence to poetic language over ordinary language. Blanchot will go further and say that he gives ontological priority to the corpse over the living person. "One must wait for the cadaverous appearance, the idealization by death and the eternalization of the end for a being to take on the great beauty that is resemblance, the truth of itself in a reflection" (Blanchot, 1997: 32)

Yes , it is he, the dear living person, but all the same it is more than he. He is more beautiful, more imposing; he is really monumental and so absolutely himself that it is as if he were doubled by himself, joined to his solemn impersonality by resemblance and by the image. This magnified being, imposing and proud, which impresses the living as the appearance of the original never perceived until now...may well bring to mind the great images of classical art. (Blanchot, 1982: 258)

The dear departed we perceive is nothing but the cadaver lying stateless. But on the other hand it is not the same thing as the corpse either. We cannot talk about its being identical with the cadaver. There is certainly a non-existence of the departed, yet in the corpse, the departed comes to resemble herself. As soon as we perceive something resembling

the departed, despite the fact that what we perceive is the resemblance itself- through which we pass to the realm of the real- we nonetheless derive a presence from its absence.

Blanchot's "Two Versions of the Imaginary" begins by asking "What is an image". Image finds its necessary condition when there is nothing and the affirmation of this nothingness makes it disappear. Blanchot's formulations of image as the presence of absence, the impossibility that death be present in person or appearance of disappearance itself when everything disappears, all relate us to the obscurity of the existence. Art in this sense affirms that there is nothing other than the world, nothing beyond it. There is only the nothing. Through art we grasp what we already defined as existence. But the only existence as such belongs to art itself. Art then points to a beyond but insofar as art itself remains this side of the 'beyond' what it points to belongs to this side as well.

A cadavre is the perfect form of the image, that which resembles itself and falls into the absolute milieu as it oscillates between here and nowher, between what is called real and imaginary. It carries the characteristics of a double or a mirror image of the original but it is itself the original and has the power to risk the reality of what it resembles as it is marked by death. Death functions as the imagination in terms of the cadavre.

Death produces a form of the imaginary more fascinating than any original because it haunts the original, haunts the world of the original, which is the world left behind: what remains with the remains. (Bruns: 66)

Blanchot speaks of resemblance, the duplicity of revelation- which is the same as Heidegger's ontological revelation- in which what reveals itself does not give itself up to sight, just as it does not take refuge in simple invisibility.

Heidegger in his famous article "The Origin of the Work of Art" makes a parallelism between works of art and broken tools in the sense that they share the same capacity to disclose the original being of things which has been covered up by their having been adapted to perform particular functions" (Gregg: 23).

By analogy, we might also recall that a tool, when damaged, becomes its image...In this case the tool, no longer disappearing into its use, appears. This appearance of the object is that of resemblance and reflection; the object's double, if you will. The category of art is linked to the possibility for objects to 'appear', to surrender, that is to the pure and simple resemblance behind which there is nothing -but being ...only that which is abandoned to the image appears, and everything that appears is, in this sense imaginary. (Blanchot, 1982: 258-259)

The work of art according to Blanchot, presents itself in a metamorphoses through which it eternalizes itself and become equal to all

arts. This becoming equal to all arts points toward a return to absence which is not other than eternity. "The image, we feel, is joy, for it is a limit beside the indefinite, the possibility of suspension at the heart of a shifting movement" (Blanchot, 1997: 40). The image is nothingness in the sense that it appears at the limit of image . The image and nothingness find their necessary conditions at the limit.

But perhaps one must add that the image, capable of negating nothingness, is also the gaze of nothingness upon us....that is why the image seems so profound and so empty, so threatening and so attractive , always richer in meaning than those with which we provide it, and also poor, null, and silent, for in this dark powerlessness, deprived of a master, advances; it is the powerlessness of death as a beginning-again (Blanchot, 1997: 40).

Chapter 4: Psychoanalysis And Death

Blanchot suggests that death has two aspects. One is personal and concerns the 'I' who encounters this aspect of death in a present where everything comes to pass and signifies the personal disappearance of the person. "Despite appearances, this death always comes from without, even at the moment when it constitutes the most personal possibility, and from the past, even at the moment when it is most present" (Deleuze, 113). The second is impersonal and it belongs neither to present nor past but is always in the mood of coming. Gilles Deleuze in his book *Difference and Repetition* claims that it is in the second aspect of death that Blanchot is more interested,

...refers to the state of free differences when they are no longer subject to the form imposed upon them by an 'I' or an ego, when they assume a shape which excludes my own coherence no less than that of any identity whatsoever. (113)

Blanchot makes these two aspects of death irrelational to each other and claims that even in the case of suicide they don't coincide with one another or become identical. "...What never happens to me, so that

never do I die, but 'they die', people always die other than themselves, at the level of neutrality and the impersonality of an eternal They" (Blanchot, 1982: 241).

Freudian psychoanalysis on the other hand deals with the first aspect of death in Blanchot. As the main concern of this thesis was to follow Blanchot's path in understanding the theme of death in terms of philosophy and art, psychoanalytic approaches to death and representation is intentionally excluded from the thesis despite the fact that certain links could have been constructed. Mentioning these possibilities seems to be necessary because the importance of death to any theory of representation makes psychoanalysis a subject to be questioned.

Freud's discussion links the presence of death to aspects of repetition- to the compulsion to repeat, the uncanniness of the double that repeats its model and which is destined to be repeated-. Blanchot states a similar uncanniness in terms of the corpse and representation by positing an analogy between the corpse and the image. The uncanniness in Blanchot relates to the corpse's belonging to an indefinite reference point or a stable position in time and space. This is most clear in his resemblance theory according to which cadavreous presence occupies two places, the here and nowhere. The other aspect of resemblance theory which has the uncanniness in its character is the suggestion that the corpse resembles its own double. Referring to the world of the dead it also

occupies a place in the world of the living as an appearance in terms of an image. Bronfen interprets it as an chiasmic relation; "the corpse as uncanny image / the image uncannily as corpse" (1993: 12).

Bronfen quoting from Sarah Kofman says that she, elaborating on Blanchot, suggests that;

the analogy between a representation and a corpse resides in the former's seeming status of revenant. What makes art effective, she argues, is its self-reflexive moment. That moment emerges because, in its contingency on loss, art exemplifies a surplus meaning. Substituting for an absent object, art represents something it both is and is not. At the same time the aesthetic form both is and is not eternal. Both a representation and a corpse have no clear position even as they elicit a desire for stability. Based on a relation of resemblance and doubling, a representation functions like a revenant and thus, always has death as one of its signifieds. (1993: 12)

One of the possible concern in terms of psychoanalysis is that it too suggests aporias and necessitates an aporetic experience to grasp the relation between eros and thanatos which is most clear in Jean Laplanche's *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* reading of death drive, and pleasure-unpleasure relations in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Laplanche suggests that the drives in Freudian psychoanalysis correspond to the principles of operations. According to this, he couples the life drive and the pleasure principle functioning accordingly and the death drive and the

Nirvana principle. What he points out is the abolishing of the oppositions and equations in the common sense. In terms of pleasure- unpleasure he mentions the motive which puts present unpleasure in opposition to the pleasure in prospect and provides an equilibrium by suggesting that what is pleasure for one system functions as unpleasure for another one. At this point then, it can be questioned whether pleasure is equal to unpleasure;

If for reasons of convenience , we designate the two members of the equation as a positive pole and a negative pole, we can continue to state that positive= negative only if the 'positive' is not quite a positive, and the 'negative' not quite a negative. Or rather; the negative is not quite the negative of the positive it is opposed to. (Laplanche: 105)

The same ambivalence can be traced in the relation between eros and thanatos. Laplanche finds the final aim of life's being put as death, problematic- which can be deduced from Freud's claim that "the organism wants not simply to die but to die in its own way" - (Laplanche: 107). Laplanche mentions that contrary to Eros, the death drive does not possess its own energy. If the death drive's energy is libido according to Laplanche, then it may well be concluded that "death drive is the very soul, the constitutive principle, of libidinal circulation" (124). That is to say some aspects of erotic love are already identified with the death drive in Freudian psychoanalysis. Death as both the opposite of life and its ground- its sustaining force-.

Derrida in his book *The Post Card (From Socrates to Freud and Beyond)* states the intentional use of 'beyond's a-thetic functioning reminding us of Blanchotian 'step beyond' (pas au-dela) and says that the athesis of beyond points towards some undecidability;

It is not fortuitous that the a-thesis is indefinitely suspended as concerns *life death*. It is not fortuitous that it speaks of the enigmatic death drive which appears disappears, appears to disappear, appears in order to disappear in Beyond... I call it enigmatic because it appears disappears while telling many stories and making many scenes, causing or permitting them to be told. Occasionally these are called fables or myths. (1987: 262)

Derrida puts Freudian death as that which is not opposable therefore already, life death. He also suggests that Freud manages to stay in the realm of dialectics despite the structure of alteration without opposition he sets.

4.1 Repetition and Representation

Another concern would be -departing from Blanchot's claim that: "The cadaverous presence establishes a relation between here and nowhere" (Blanchot, 1982: 256) - a mourning process which involves an identification between the mourner and the dead one as -to put it in Elizabeth Bronfen's words- "they are both situated between the world of the living and the world of the dead" (1993: 106). The mourning subject

makes it possible to question death in terms of psychoanalysis as it necessitates a questioning of the concepts of repetition and representation. She claims that both representation and mourning processes puts the repetition of a lost object, a beloved or a model at the heart of their concerns. Therefore mourning can be seen analogous to representation in the sense that "they both deny a loss they are simultaneously forced to acknowledge" (Bronfen, 1993: 13).

Bronfen in her book *Over Her Dead Body* suggests that representations of death in art gives us a strange pleasure as they give the impression of confronting that which doesn't belong to life or the realm of real but nonetheless confirm the belief in our own immortality. There is certainly death but we never face it in terms of our own. It is always the death of the other and this otherness is maintained as we are confronted with it as someone else's body -unless someone else's body is a work of art- and as an image. The aesthetic representations of death in this respect provides the most proper way of repressing our knowledge of the reality of death.

Freud's *Beyond The Pleasure Principle* provides a necessary theoretical base to sustain a relation between representations of death and psychoanalysis as Freud introduces his conception of death drive by using a game of presence and absence, disappearance and re-representing, namely the *fort, da* game of his grandson whose mother's death is said to

shape the death drive. At the age of one and a half, this little boy who used to be very attached to his mother forms the habit of taking small objects and throwing away them and quietly picking up them. Freud observes that after throwing these little objects he makes a loud sound like; o-o-o-o which was interpreted by his mother as German word 'fort' which means 'gone', with an expression of interest and satisfaction on his face. Then the child generates this game and plays it with a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it so that to be able to pull back what he throws immediately and with the reappearance of the object he makes a sound like 'da' which means 'there'. This game of little boy's can be interpreted in several ways but Freud in this sense avoids symbolizations. Bronfen suggests that "Freud shifts from maternal loss to paternal castration, from the position of mourning to that of rivalry and possession" (1992: 28).

Taking into account that the mother of the little boy, Freud's daughter Sophie's death inevitably points towards some symbolization both in terms of the child's game and Freud's writing of his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Bronfen talks about the narcissistic wound experienced by Freud and his postponing the mourning by replacing it with work. She says that; "there is a coupling of the narcissistically wounding experience of the disappearance of the maternal body with a form of symbolic repetition that uncannily articulates both the notion of re-presencing return ('da') and self -absence ('bebi o-o-o')" (Bronfen, 1992: 29). What

Bronfen suggests is that "the real loss is not just caught up in symbolization but also catches up with symbolization."

Derrida approaches Freud's text from the point of view of the repetition compulsion, which is put into communication with the death drive. He suggests that the game is dominated by the repetition compulsion, and through the pleasure principle, linked to the death drive. The importance of following Freud's writing is that according to Derrida, his writing too demonstrates repetition compulsions,- which does not necessarily mean to return a previous point-, through which he continuously finds out something else that should be put forward: "He makes the hypothesis comes back, only as that which has not truly come back, that which has only passed by in the specter of its presence" (Derrida, 1987: 295).

Bronfen seems to share the same reading when she says that;

The dialectic within which repetition, grounded on or inspired by death engages the survivor is one where the interplay of absence and presence of the maternal body is embedded within a matrix of presence /absence, the latter in respect to a return to equilibrium and control. If this game of fort-da is about mastery over loss and absence, it also enacts the absence of mastery. (1992: 31)

By putting repetition as an act of overcoming the narcissistic wound which can never be healed, Bronfen introduces the subject of mourning.

The act of writing - in Freud's own case - functions as a repetition which includes negation of the real world. Representation of death in this sense, brings out the discourse of presence in absence and at the same time confirms it. Bronfen quoting from A. Green suggests that the work of writing presupposes a wound and a loss, a work of mourning. Gillian Rose her article "Potter's Field" suggests that "If all meaning is mourning, and mourning (or absence) must become our norm (or absence) for there to be morning (dawning or future), and not interminable dying, then all meaning and all mourning must belong to the city, to the polis" (191).

That which belongs to the city belongs to the culturally constructed structure of death. Culture has to construct death in order to generate a power over it which is necessary for the culture to maintain and represent itself. Bronfen suggests that; "Representations of death often serve as metatropes for the process of representation itself: its necessity, its excess, its failure, and its uses for the polis" (1993: 4). The relation between culture and death is discussed in the context of death's possibility and authenticity in Blanchot. "The task of culture has always been to restore a kind of purity to death, to make it authentic, personal, proper- but also to make it possible" (Blanchot, 1993: 180).

Representation and death drive can be put in relation as they both have their roots in loss. "Any encounter with the real, is an encounter with the death drive, as the more that lies behind or disrupts stable

representations" (Bronfen, 1993: 13). Derrida's claim on Freud's attitude which doesn't oppose life and death and therefore already as life-death brings to one's mind the attempt in representations of death that pulls death into the realm of real. What is at stake in this sense in the representation of death is not just death's but also life's status in terms of real. Having in mind that "Every representation of death is a misrepresentation" (Bronfen, 1993: 20) then it must be taken into account not just what they attempt to represent but also what else also is represented in these representations. From this perspective, the underlying intention in representation of death may be both risked or secured when the idea that life and death, by nature, cannot be taken as a binary opposition, becomes so reasonable.

Conclusion

5.1 On Unworking in Blanchot

In his discussions in which art is necessarily questioned through aporetic formulations, Blanchot concludes that- concludes in a manner that conclusion itself becomes impossible- image, art, or poetry is the presence of absence, the impossibility that nothingness (or death) be present in person. To put it in a Blanchotian way, when everything disappears, disappearance itself appears. It remains a task to grasp the fact that the touch on the naked existence in the realm of art doesn't suggest a 'beyond' to this world. Rather, although the process Blanchot involves us suggests us in a kind of obscurity that there is nothing other than the world, nothing beyond it, or only the nothing.

Writing says, each time, *there is* (nothing else, more, or beyond). An Orphic glance can detach from the thing of the world its predicates, its knowability, its features and distinguishing marks, its history and its form- none of which are other than it and all of which touch upon its ipseity. And, it is there, in this detachment, 'beside

itself', as an originary image, that the thing takes place. Art 'shows' this. The detachment is its 'each time' - a singular, articulated instant, a fatal and dying instant unable to give itself its end. Writing gives this to us as such; but we cannot grasp this 'gift' for it is no-thing-like. It is how it is. By the same token, the being of writing itself is 'beside itself' in poetry. (Wall: 73)

The writing process according to Blanchot refers to 'désouvement' (unworking) which should not be understood as a mere impossibility of writing, unworking rather suggest the paradoxical condition of a writing. Blanchot introduces 'unworking' in terms of image in his account of Orpheus' Gaze which by turning on Eurydice, unexpectedly causes a transformation in her from body to image. The task of Orpheus is to bring light out of darkness, to bring Eurydice into the daylight and by doing so, through the visibility of her, reveal the daylight, give it a form, shape and a reality. In this sense his forbidden look at her which makes her disappear is a betrayal not for Eurydice but of the law which is already violated, which forbids him to 'turn back'. According to Blanchot, Orpheus transgresses this law;

This remark implies that Orpheus has in fact never ceased to be turned toward Eurydice: he saw her invisible, he touched her intact, in her shadowy absence, in that veiled presence which did not hide her absence, which was the presence of her infinite absence. Had he not looked at her, he would not have drawn her toward him; and doubtless she is not there, but in this glance back, he

himself is absent. He is no less dead than she- dead, not of that tranquil worldly death which is rest, silence, and end, but of that other death which is death without end, the ordeal of the end's absence. (1982: 172)

The movement of truth or negation which makes life out of death suggests a parallel movement with Orpheus' move towards Eurydice. The movement of art as "the power by which night opens" (Blanchot, 1982: 171). The radiance of truth for art is what Eurydice- not her concealment, not her beauty or desire for her but Eurydice herself- is for Orpheus. Blanchot's own position is the search for exigency of writing that "speaks outside all power to represent and to signify" (Blanchot, 1993: 183). Orpheus' forgetting of his work he is to achieve -this forgetting is necessary according to Blanchot-, pertains to the impossibility of the completion of work but not the work itself. A betrayal is necessary for the work, as the work itself demands it. "Writing begins with the gaze of Orpheus" as this gaze no longer unveils what it sees; it throws what is there to be seen outside the realm of the visible-invisible. That's why words appear on the page only to return back to their own image, so that the difference between being and appearing is extinguishes. "Orpheus' impatience is thus at the same time, a proper movement; in it begins what will become his own passion, his highest patience, his infinite sojourn in death" (Blanchot, 1982: 173).

Here lies the paradoxical condition of unworking, which makes it possible for the work to perform its own disappearance. In his essay "Characteristic of the Work of Art", Blanchot suggests that the artwork makes what disappears in the object appear;

The statue glorifies the marble. The painting is not made from material ingredients added to canvas; it is the presence of this matter, which without it would remain hidden to us. And the poem likewise is not made with ideas, or with words; it is the point from which words begin to become their appearance, and the *elemental depth* upon which this appearance is opened while at the same time it closes. (1982: 223)

Art uses the matter such that it is unused- unworked- just like words' detachment from referentiality make them return to their own image as an appearance. "It is the appearance of matter that is, eminently, what the work of art is made of" (Wall: 69). The matter does not appear in the work of art in its thingly character, rather in its appearing as such. The appearance -disappearance of the object refers to the elemental depth which is opened at the same time it is closed, which "does not reveal itself directly; it is only disclosed hidden in the work" (Blanchot, 1982: 171).

Jacques Derrida in his article "By Force of Mourning" defines 'work' as;

that which makes for a work, for an oeuvre, indeed that which works - and works to open; opus and opening, oeuvre and ouverture: the work or labor of the oeuvre insofar as it engenders, produces, and brings to light, but also labor or travail as suffering, as the enduring of force, as the pain of the one who gives. Of the one who gives birth, who brings to the light of day and gives something to be seen, who enables or empowers, who gives the force to know and to be able to see- and all these are powers of the image, the pain of what is given and of the one who takes the pains to help us see, read, and think. (171)

To read these lines from the perspective of Blanchot and his concept of 'désouvrement' may seem irrelevant. Contrary to Blanchot who approaches the work from the point of view of the work itself Derrida takes the process in terms of the writer, painter, thinker as he asks "what does one do when one works?" (1996: 171).

In Blanchot's oeuvre, death and dying functions for the sake of a mode of mourning, emphasizing the interminable characteristics of these concepts. As Gillian Rose suggests in her article *Potter's Field*,

Mourning in Blanchot becomes poiesis, or 'making', which is the elegy to Orpheus, hymn and witness to incessant 'désouvrement'- Being without work. For Blanchot, the letting go of mourning is not for morning or dawning, for commencing, but for the endless reality of ending, which our workful beginnings can only, and must always, violate. (192)

What Derrida does is to introduce a discourse on "the work of mourning" and opens up a space for the aporias of death and the impossible as mourning is always already interminable, inconsolable and irreconcilable.

Right up until death- that is what whoever works at mourning knows, working at mourning as both their object and their resource, working at mourning as one would speak of a painter working at a painting but also of a machine working at such and such an energy level, the theme of work thus becoming their very force, and their term, a principle. (1996: 173)

Derrida reflecting on Louis Marin's "Des Pouvoirs de l'image", questions the aporetic use of force on the subject of mourning, by quoting from him "the modalities of a work of mourning of the absolute of force." Derrida claims that the mourning in question and the work of mourning are not self-evident. "It is a question, in truth, of the impossible itself" (Derrida, 1996: 173). The aporia arises according to Derrida in terms of the law of mourning.

...the law of mourning, and the law of law, always in mourning, that it would have to fail in order to succeed, it would well have to fail, to fail well. It would well have to fail, for this is what has to be so, in failing well. That is what would have to be. And while it is always promised, it will never be assured. (1996: 173)

The structure of this aporia is not different from any other aporias mentioned in the previous chapters, as the renunciation of force in Louis Marin refers to an impossibility and unavoidability; "... both at once, as inaccessible as it is ineluctable" (Derrida, 1996: 174). Departing from psychoanalytic discourse on mourning which suggests the possibility of both a successful 'work of mourning' and 'melancholia' as a failure of mourning, Derrida puts the relation between work and force- or without force- as aporetic and asks whether 'without- force' refers to our attitude towards death - defenselessness of death or dead's defenselessness or "without force of the survivors faced with death" -(1996: 174). The powers of the image -which is Marin's concern in his book- suggests that to put these concepts -power, force, image- in any ontological question would be to miss the image and its force as there is always the possibility for these concepts to come into being in couples. That is what Derrida calls dynamis which links in a crucial way the concepts of force, power and virtue- the force in the image and of the image- with the possible or the virtual whose going into action has nothing to do with its virtual power- this doesn't belong to the logic of the act and acting and that is at stake for Derrida-.

It would have to do with a possible that is in potential of being only on the condition of remaining possible as possible, and of marking within itself- the scar of a wound and the potentialization of force- the interruption of this going into action, this enactment, an absolute interruption that bears no other seal here than

that of death: whence a thought of the virtual work, one might also say of a virtual space, of an opus, that would accomplish the possible as such without effacing it or even enacting it in reality. (1996: 175)

Derrida suggests that, only in terms of 'mourning', such an action involves a thought of death and fulfills the thought of a spectral power of the virtual work which is not defined as a category of work or image among others as it is the non-essential essence of the work that remains possible as such. Marin claims that the being of the image would be its force. Taken into account that the greatest force is the renunciation of force then,

Death, or rather mourning, the mourning of the absolute force; that is the name or one of the names, of this affect that unites force to the with-out force, thereby relating the manifestation of force, as image, to the being without- force of that which it manifests or lets be seen, right before our very eyes and according to our mourning. (Derrida, 1996: 176)

Derrida in his article posits the question in two ways. Death and representation and the representation of death. Having in mind Bronfen's assertion in *Death and Representation* that "the most obvious thing about death is that it is always, only, represented " (1993, 4).

Here is death, then, there where the image annuls its representative presence, there where, more precisely, the non-productive intensity of the re- of representation

gains in power what the present that it represents loses
presence. (Derrida, 1996: 178)



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