

Disagreement does not take place: On Blanchot's
site of contestation

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Interstices 08 – Disagreement, 19th September 2006



“literature is not only illegitimate, it is also null, and as long as this nullity is isolated in a state of purity it may constitute an extraordinary force”

M. Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p.22

Blanchot's Contestation

“contradiction does not represent a
decisive separation”

Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*

*Blanchot's Politics of le neutre —
(the neutral)*

Questions of legitimacy and nullity

“Let us suppose,” he writes, “that literature begins at the moment when literature becomes a question”

Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 21.

“One can only write if one arrives at the instant towards which one can only move through space opened up by the movement of writing.”

Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 104.

Ethics as a problem of response

Questioning, experience, communication are narrowly defined terms — to say no more. Questioning is the calling into question of a particular and limited being, and it is also, consequently, an effort to break this particularity and these limits. ... Communication ... begins being authentic only when experience has stripped existence, has withdrawn from it that which linked it to discourse and to action, has opened it up to a nondiscursive interiority where it loses itself, communicates with itself outside of any object that could give it a purpose or that it could serve. It is no more participation of a subject with an object than union by language. (*Faux Pas*, 40, a review of Georges Bataille's *Inner Experience* in 1943.)

*Relations between literature, criticism and
philosophy*

Blanchot's Unavowable Community

A being does not want to be recognised, but to be contested: in order to exist it goes towards the other, which contests and at times negates it, so as to start being only in that privation that makes it conscious (here lies the origin of consciousness) of the impossibility of being itself, of subsisting as its *ipse* or, if you will, as itself as a separate individual: this way it will perhaps ex-ist, experiencing itself as an always prior exteriority, or as an existence shattered through and through, composing itself only as it decomposes itself constantly, violently and in silence.

(The Unavowable Community, 1988, p. 6)

Blanchot's Unavowable Community

“This is not certain, and neither is it clear. Love may be a stumbling block for ethics, unless love simply puts ethics into question by imitating it.”

(The Unavowable Community, 1988, p. 40)

Blanchot's Unavowable Community

“What, then, calls me into question most radically? Not my relation to myself as finite or as the consciousness of being towards death or for death, but my presence for another in as much as this other absents himself by dying. To remain present in the proximity of an other who by dying removes himself definitively, to take upon myself another's death as the only death that concerns me, this is what puts me outside myself, this is the only separation that can open me, in its very possibility, to the Openness of a community.”

(The Unavowable Community, 1988, p. 9.)

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