

**MAURICE BLANCHOT'S *RÉCIT*  
AS PHENOMENOLOGY OF THOUGHT:  
*L'Arrêt de mort [Death Sentence] read through Husserl and Vygotsky***

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**Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover**

Monash University, Australia  
E-mail: millicent.vladivglover@monash.edu

**Abstract.** *This paper deals with the representation of thought through the aesthetic form of the *récit*, used by the French postmodernist, Maurice Blanchot to deploy a phenomenology of thought which is anti-representational, anti-revelational and anti-ontological. These positions are teased out through a confrontation of Blanchot's literary genre with some major exponents of European phenomenology and cognitive psychology, to wit: Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and Vygotsky.*

**Key words:** *Pure Negative Desire; anty-story; disconnectors or gaps; bracketing out of Dasein; schizo-poetics*

BRACKETING OF THE WORLD AND THE SPACE OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

When Husserl "brackets out" the world – the "total sphere of the *epoche*, including "ourselves with all our *cogitare*" – he does so in order to chart a "new region of being never before delimited in its own peculiarity."<sup>1</sup> This is the region of "pure" "transcendental" consciousness. For Husserl, "consciousness" comprehends "all mental processes." Consciousness has "a being of its own which in its own absolute essence, is not touched by the phenomenological exclusion." It is 'irreducible.' It remains, instead, as "the phenomenological residuum" – "a region of being which is of essential necessity quite unique" and as such becomes the field of a new kind of science: that of phenomenology.<sup>2</sup>

By means of this somewhat circular reasoning, Husserl establishes consciousness as an irreducible phenomenological sphere – "a region of being" – which for him becomes the subject of a new science and a new "eidetic" or 'formal' (*eidōs* = form) method of "analysis". What this means is that consciousness which is an irreducible "region of be-

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Husserl, "Consciousness as Transcendental," *The Essential Husserl: Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology*, ed. Donn Welton (Bloomington and Indianapolis : Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Edmund Husserl, "Consciousness as Transcendental," *opt. cit.*, p. 66-7.

ing" will become a subject for the study of pure morphologies – or the study of the form of forms. The term given by Husserl to this kind of form is *representation*. Representation is for Husserl the "foundational intention" which reminds us of Kant's "categorical imperative" in the teleology of meaning. This "foundational intention" is part of the "transcendental sphere" because it is not directed towards "sense data" in perception. Instead it is directed towards the "intentional object" which is a "totality" and, we gather, not a "partial object" given through the senses.<sup>3</sup> Desire is implicated in Husserl's definition of representation but not – yet - in a psychoanalytic sense. However, to desire an object - for example an ice cream cone - one must always first represent it to oneself. Thus representations "found all other sorts of intentions".<sup>4</sup>

Husserl's notion of "transcendental consciousness" which is directed towards "ideal objects" - objects that may not be given through sense data - can easily be transposed into the aesthetics of European Surrealist art as well as the poetics of European Modernism. Giorgio de Chirico's painting *The Evil Genius of the King* – representing a self-fulfilling prophecy of Descartes' "evil genius" who might transform the *cogito* into the perversion of "I, the deceived, am,"<sup>5</sup> - represents objects that could easily be construed as "ideal objects" of a phenomenologically reduced "pure consciousness." The *stream of consciousness* narrative technique, instituted by F M Dostoevsky in 1846 with his proto-*récit* *The Double*, and subsequently disseminated by Modernists such as James Joyce, is easily recognized as a non-representational or "reduced" mode of consciousness which tries to bypass the sense data of perception and 'present', instead, the movements of the pure "transcendental ego" driven by the "intention" to represent itself.

Blanchot's *récits* overlap with both of these traditions. They feed on Surrealism, with its "literature of the absurd" or "theatre of cruelty" poetics, while their narrative structure is grounded in the tautologously named narrative mode of *récit indirect libre* – the free indirect speech - which emulates an imaginary voice of 'pure' consciousness. This "inner speech" or "autistic speech" as Lev Vygotsky<sup>6</sup> named it, appears to simply "pour forth", "straight" from consciousness, unstoppable in its flow and unmotivated save for its phenomenological compulsion to "appear" or create itself in the act of appearance.

Blanchot connects with the literature of the absurd through a peculiar application of negativity. When the dying heroine J. says to the hero/narrator in *L'Arrêt de mort*: "If you don't kill me, then you're a murderer,"<sup>7</sup> we are witnessing a 'reverse dialectic.' It is not the movement from a positive to a negative via a middle term ("I" to "not-I" via desire), but from a negative to a negative via a logical caesura or gap that does not connect the two terms but, instead, disconnects. Such "disconnectors" or gaps abound in Blanchot's narrative. They do not constitute "digressions" - characteristic of Nietzsche's discourse or Dostoevsky's before him; instead, these "disconnectors" - logical non-sequiturs

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Nenon, "Transcendental Phenomenology: Husserl," *The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia of Continental Philosophy*, ed. Simon Glendinning (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 272-3.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Nenon, "Transcendental Phenomenology: Husserl," *opt. cit.*, p. 273.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Julián Marías, *History of Philosophy*, trans. I. Stanley Appelbaum and Clarence C Strowbridge (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967), p. 216.

<sup>6</sup> Compare Lev S Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, ed. & trans. Eugenia Hanfmann and Gertrude Vakar (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1965). Published in Russian as L S Vygotskii, *Myslhenie i rech : problemy psikhologicheskogo razvitiia rebenka* (Moskva : Izd-stvo Akademii pedagogicheskikh nauk RSFSR, 1956). First posthumous edition 1934.

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *L'arrêt de mort/ death sentence*, trans. Lydia Davis (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill Press, 1978), p. 15.

and absurdities - create *discontinuities*, resisting sense or meaning. The question arises: why does the reader wish to read on? The answer is: because the reader is "maddened" by the withdrawal of the "morphine," just like J. In fact, J.'s "illness" is a "phenomenological reduction" and not a mimetic 'reality.' J.'s "illness" constitutes J. The illness and J. are tautologies. J. is beautiful. The illness is grotesque. This is a contradiction. J. has penetrating "eyes" – and eyes are the windows onto consciousness or the unconscious.<sup>8</sup> One could say, J. is the gaze,<sup>9</sup> which has its 'origins' in the twin figures of tautology and contradiction which are the 'limits' of 'intelligibility' but *not* as "opened by Dasein's practices."<sup>10</sup> These two logical categories are the phenomenological grid which constitutes the potentiality of sense or the condition of possibility of understanding. For this is J.'s "mode of being," reduced to the non-space of a gap or *cæsura* in being.

J. writes letters about Death and faces "mighty terrors" when alone. The narrator is helping J. 'cope' with her predicament: he is a journalist by profession – so a lower order writer or witness of events. In a pre-minimalist, 'pre-reduced' literary tradition he would have been a "chronicler."<sup>11</sup> He reports, in all seriousness, about the occult treatment of J.'s illness, allegedly based on the teachings of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Swiss-German alchemist, Theophrastus Bombastus Paracelsus of Hohenheim, and purports to regard palmistry as a method of prediction of J.'s future. Paracelsus' method of observation and experiment in developing drugs by chemical means was a progressive step in relation to the 'classical' science of imbalances of humours.<sup>12</sup> However, Paracelsus also relied on biblical sources, German mysticism, alchemy and Neoplatonic magic to present a unified picture of Man and the Universe. Man was thus a microcosm, reflecting the nature of the Divine through his immortal soul.

One has to ask: is Paracelsus the target of Blanchot's theatre of the absurd? Or is he aiming closer to home, at say, the Paracelsus of German idealism of the 1930s - Heidegger?<sup>13</sup> With his minimalist ('reduced') approach to the representation of the 'real world', Blanchot could be said to deconstruct Heidegger's Dasein – "'the happening' of a life course, 'stretched out between birth and death'."<sup>14</sup> Blanchot's prose of *inaction* or of actions which negate themselves as acts while at the same time positing themselves as

<sup>8</sup> There are many beautiful, deep-set eyes in the arts of Modernism. Alexander Blok, the Russian Symbolist, portrays his Stranger (*Neznakomka*) with "dark-blue, fathomless eyes, flowering on a distant shore" ["и очей синние, бездонные цветут на дальнем берегу" - "i ochi sinnie, bezdonnyie, tsvetut na dal'nem beregu"] (A. Blok, «*Neznakomka*», 1906, Aleskandar Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh, tom 1 : Stikhotvoreniia i poemy 1898 – 1906*, Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1980), p. 394. The Russian painter, Mikhail Vrubel, portrays his Demon as well as his Muse as androgynous figures, with deep-set eyes that seem to be looking into a distance that emanates from within the seer.

<sup>9</sup> For a model of the gaze in psychoanalytic theory of subjectivity, compare Jacques Lacan, "The split between the eye and the gaze," Jacques Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London : W W Norton and Company, 1981), p. 67 – 78.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Audi (Ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. Second Edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), pg. 372.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Dostoevsky's narrators are, for the most part, "chroniclers."

<sup>12</sup> *Catholic Encyclopaedia : Theophrastus Paracelsus, Volume XI*, Copyright 1911 by Robert Appleton Company, Online Edition Copyright 2003 by K. Knight. Updated 3 November 2004. Monash University, 23.03.05, <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11468a.htm>>

<sup>13</sup> The extended name of Theophrastus Paracelsus – Bombastus sounds comical in both French and English because of its association with the concept of 'bombast' or self-important exaggeration. The epithet 'bombastic' occurs with surprising frequency in characterisations of Heidegger by his friends and intimates.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Audi (Ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. Second Edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), pg. 371.

'facts' cancels out any notion of *ontology* or unity of Dasein. Heidegger's teleology of Dasein as "historicity of a temporal movement, of a becoming" or "point of view" in "being-toward-death" which makes for a totality in/of being, are cancelled out by Blanchot's discourse that emulates, through its structure, the "phenomenologically" reduced world of "pure consciousness" from which Dasein and temporality are bracketed out.

With this "bracketing" of Dasein out of "transcendental consciousness," Blanchot's *récit* could be seen as an attempt to overcome the 'inauthenticity' of das Man (as a constituent of das Volk), as well as the limitations of a "disclosedness" ("the framework of intelligibility") opened by Dasein's "practices." For Blanchot, Truth is not 'unconcealment' because in the *limit* space of Blanchot's discourse, there is only the *pure negative trace*, which is a double *negative movement* of the dialectic.<sup>15</sup> Whereas Hegel's dialectic in the *Phenomenology* is:

Subject – Desire – Object

Blanchot's dialectic is:

Subject/Illness – Negative Desire – Death

Whereby:

S/Illness = [reduced] Negative Desire

And:

Death = [reduced] Negative Desire

Which leaves us with:

Negative Desire - Negative Desire – Negative Desire

The movement between the three moments of Blanchot's dialectic are entirely *tautological* and constitute Pure Negative Desire.

Thus the *phenomenological reduction* attained through Blanchot's dialectic of Pure Negative Desire does not amount to the Subject (and the Subject's Discourse) "folding back upon itself" (Derrida is right!) nor is it "leading into polysemy" (Derrida is wrong!)<sup>16</sup> Instead, it constitutes a 'zero degree prose' that attempts to move in on the 'real' and the *unrepresentable*. This unrepresentable 'real' emerges as the corner-stone or the condition of possibility of *representation*, not only of Blanchot's *récits*, but of the emerging "schizo-poetics" of post-Holocaust poetry and literature in European postmodernism. This is the *paradox* of representation constructed by Blanchot's *récit*: that the *unrepresentable*, approximated via a phenomenological reduction of the represented world, by means of tautologies and contradictions, powered by a Negative dialectic, is the only guarantee of authenticity. This is the *récit* as paradox.

The form of the paradox is: reasoning that leads to a contradiction. According to Wittgenstein, "tautologies and contradictions delimit logical space and set a limit to what

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<sup>15</sup> In August 2021, Jean-Philippe Duranty (Philosophy, Macquarie University) gave a paper at the Research Unit in European Philosophy Seminar and Workshop at Monash University (Caulfield), entitled "Mourning and Melancholia: Reading Hegel with Freud," in which he posited Hegel's "double" negativity – one set up in the *Phenomenology* itself, the expounded in *The Preface* to the *Phenomenology* as a framing of the negativity. With this interpretation, Duranty successfully eliminated any traces of ontology from Hegel's model of "the spirit."

<sup>16</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Living on Border Lines," in : *Deconstruction and Criticism*. (NY: The Seabury Press, 1979), pg.105, footnote text and pg. 109, main text.

can be thought."(4.46)<sup>17</sup> And: "Tautologies and contradictions lack sense." (4.46) The former admit "all possible situations" while the latter admit none.

In Blanchot's *récits*, Death is a transcription (one hesitates to say 'metaphor') of this "impossible space," this phenomenologically reduced "clearing" which negates Heidegger's concept of Dasein as *aletheia*, or 'unconcealment' and 'revelation'. Blanchot's *récit* is anti-revelational. In company with Antonin Artaud, whose "theatre of cruelty" operates on the principle of enacted castration in place of the performance of the 'negative dialectic', Blanchot models a new poetics of representation that becomes widely adopted in European postmodernism. The entire postmodern literary production, from the "nouveau roman" with its construction of boredom ('empty' states of affairs) through repetition, and Beckett's static 'silences' that deconstruct linear time, down to the playful 'magic realism' (of Patrick Süskind, Pavić, Marquez and de Bernières) – all of these 'genres' are infected with the "illness" that Blanchot portrays as part of the "reduced" character profile of the beautiful and dying J.

The "arrêt" is precisely this anti-movement of a "full stop," a punctuation mark that stems the tide of consciousness and the discourses of consciousness, to give a 'breathing space' to the subject of consciousness who is always already tainted by the mysterious "illness" that is tautologous with J (J. can't breathe and coughs a lot). This "illness," which is J.'s and the Subject's Other, is the Other as illness. It is 'beautiful' in its 'decay', that is, by virtue of its 'death' – its 'arrest in time'. But the 'arrest' in time is also like a 'glottal stop' – a basic or 'reduced' sound made at the top of the trachea or wind-pipe, with the vocal chords. It is a 'choking' sound that nevertheless functions as a recognizable unit in phonetics. This 'choking' is almost a proto-sound-image, the trace of a vocal signifier but one that has no follow-up in a signifying chain, one that is a 'still birth'. Thus the 'breathing space' offers no relief from the tide of consciousness – except in the subversion achieved through the reduction of the Other to a glottal stop: language or the Symbolic always already reduced in the *récit* to avoid any risk of descent into Meaning or Interpretation.

According to Derrida, Blanchot's *récit* is defined as a "translation" into the language of the Other.<sup>18</sup> This is not so. As pointed out, Blanchot's *récit* is structured like a 'reduced' speech, resembling Vygotsky's 'autistic' or 'pre-verbal' speech, or the 'stenographic' speech of *récit indirect libre* (also called experienced speech or *erlebte Rede*). This is the 'language of thought' according to Vygotsky, or of the Unconscious, or of Husserl's "transcendental consciousness." L'arrêt functions to 'stop' the translation or transposition of pre-verbal (or its mimicry in representation) into verbal, phenomenological speech. *L'arrêt* is the reduction *beyond* the phenomenon since 'death' is not a phenomenon (death is not an act). Another accumulation of tautologies and contradictions: death as something finite but not a phenomenon and 'the arrest of death' as something that can stop time which does not flow anyway.

To sum up, we must return to Leslie Hill's thought of Blanchot as our "extreme contemporary."<sup>19</sup> What is it to be a 'contemporary' if *epoche* is bracketed out and if there is

<sup>17</sup> Compare Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, tr D F Pears & B F McGuinness, Routledge, 1974 [First published in German 1921, in English 1922]. From now on, references to this text will be given as paragraphs in square brackets in-text.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Living on Border Lines," opt. cit., pg. 89.

<sup>19</sup> Leslie Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*. (London, Routledge, 1997), republished 2001 in the Taylor & Francis e-Library.

no 'present tense' in the discourse of phenomenology – which the *récit* constitutes by its structure? If Blanchot himself has invoked "the inescapable diachrony of the relation of non-relation I entertain with the Other"? In answer to this question, Leslie Hill proposes a phenomenological reading of 'extreme contemporary', where the "present" is understood as "that which is without presence" and which "offers only a false appearance of the present." This makes "the present" more "like the future, the future not as deferred presence but as the outside, that absolute alterity which is chance, which we cannot address precisely because it is what addresses us."<sup>20</sup>

Blanchot's *récit* has something of chance and randomness in its structure while at the same time being highly controlled and rational. Chance and randomness are embodied in the logic of tautologies and contradictions (the logic of the absurd). Control is exercised by the performativity of language ("economy and formalization," just as happens in a "translation."<sup>21</sup> Thus the title or phrase *l'arrêt de mort* partakes of the "logic of the undecidable."<sup>22</sup> What it does *not* do is open "polysemia (and its economy) in the direction of dissemination."<sup>23</sup> If it did this, the *récit* would undermine itself in its purpose, its transcendental 'intention', of staging itself as transcendental reduction that resists meaning and interpretation. This intention is summed up by the narrator in *La folie du jour*, who begins this *récit* with a characteristic contradiction:

"I am not rich, I am not poor."  
An 'other' could add, by way of an echo:  
"I am phenomenologically reduced!"

#### THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF THOUGHT AS INNER SPEECH OR COMMUNION WITH ONE'S SELF

If the form of the *récit* is a representation of the 'form of form', then the question could be asked: does such a form have a content other than its own 'reduced' morphology? An analysis of *L'Arrêt de mort* shows that the *récit* as reduction of the represented world is the frame for a second, embedded reduction which creates the 'space of thought'. It is the movement of 'pure' thought in this space – a movement without teleology, without progress, 'arrested' in its own genesis and expressed through the heaped negative morphology of the *récit*, which constitutes the 'true' content of Blanchot's anty-story. The content of *L'Arrêt de mort* is ultimately Blanchot's own phenomenology of thought, couched in aesthetic form.

Thought in *L'Arrêt de mort* is personified and attributed to Woman. This attribution does not concretize into gender. The 'women' in *L'Arrêt de mort* are ill, hysterical, elusive, promiscuous or at least serially married; Nathalie has a 'daughter; they have jobs in the Ministry of Information, or a library; some inherit property, some play the piano; but none of these character features assist in building up their social profiles which are equally reduced and bracketed. This is achieved through a peculiar mix of concrete and slightly absurd spatial coordinates, reminiscent of Kafka's spaces, in which the women are placed. For example, Nathalie lives in "a sort of run-down attic", "alone" with "her

<sup>20</sup> Leslie Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, opt. cit., pg. 223-4.

<sup>21</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Living on Border Lines," opt. cit., pg. 90.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 91.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 91.

little girl",<sup>24</sup> yet the place seemed to the narrator "an immense place, with an infinite number of rooms, except that they were not rooms but closets..." (55). Later, we find out that Natalie's little girl, called Christiana, was cursed by the Narrator "for being in the country, where she could not stop her mother from getting lost." (65) Collette, the narrator's "neighbour," had been "completely forgotten" by the Narrator until he was reminded of her by Simone, the woman the Narrator encounters in the metro (36) one morning, whom he visits in the evening, in a building on rue M., "where a political by-weekly also had its offices in those days." (43) This woman, like Josef K., also "worked in a bank," whereas N. worked at the "Ministry" (of Information), where the Narrator looks for her "in those empty corridors, and in those offices that were full of people and empty." (64)

The narrator - a journalist who knows all these women, who courts some and proposes to others - is also placed in these concrete/absurd spatial coordinates. He shares some of the women's attributes: he is ill, at least for a while, he is labile, promiscuous, and makes marriage proposals because he is carried away by the language of the proposal.

The 'story' he tells is of 'events' that lie ten years in the past. Although these events and the time of writing appear to be located in concrete, historical time - 1938 and 1948 respectively - history is in fact 'bracketed out' in the narrative. While the narrative is dotted with sporadic allusions to WWII, the bombardment of Paris (61 "at the moment Paris was bombed") and the "madness of blood and arms" (61) that was fascism, "public events" of the past which occupied the Narrator's attention "all the time" remain beyond the narrative. The historical events of WWII not only belong to the Narrator's "past" but are, as he says, "rotting away, their story is dead." (46) These "past" events and even the Narrator's own "life" of the past, cannot be appropriated, for as he says: "the hours and the life which were then mine are dead too." (46) "History" or the "past" is thus akin to the 'real' which emerges in Hegel's dialectic of the universal and the particular in language. According to Hegel's phenomenology, "external objects," which can be defined as "actual, absolutely singular, wholly personal, individual things, each of them absolutely unlike anything else,"<sup>25</sup> still cannot be expressed as anything but as *universals*:

"They mean 'this' bit of paper on which I am writing - or rather have written - 'this'; but what they mean is not what they say. If they actually wanted to say 'this' bit of paper which they mean, if they wanted to say it, then this is impossible, because the sensuous This that is meant *cannot be reached* by language, which belongs to consciousness, i.e. to that which is inherently universal. In the actual attempt to say it, it would therefore crumble away [German *vermodern* = rot away SVG]; those who started to describe it would not be able to complete the description, but would be compelled to leave it to others, who would themselves finally have to admit to speaking about something which is *not*."<sup>26</sup>

"History" or the "events" of history are like Hegel's "external objects." They do not belong to "consciousness" and hence cannot be 'concretised' as either speech or writing.

<sup>24</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *Death Sentence*. Transl. By Lydia Davis. Barrytown, New York: Station Hill Press, 1978), pg. 55. From here on, the quotations from this translation will be given as page numbers in-text.

<sup>25</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), tr. by A.V. Miller, with analysis of text and foreword by J.N. Findlay (Oxford, New York, Toronto, Melbourne, 1977), paragraph 110, p.66.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

"Events" of the past "rot away" (*vermodern* is the verb used in Hegel's original), just like Hegel's deictic pronoun "that" (the *purest* noun in the language), if an attempt is made to 'translate' the sensuous world – the world accessible to our senses and experienced at some point in time as history or event – into language or narrative. According to Blanchot's *récit*, History does not have 'its' narrative. History, even in the form of memory, cannot narrate itself because it is like thought, which cannot remember itself remembering. Thus the Narrator says of N(athalie):

One day I asked her, "What made you think of coming?" By then, I had met her four or five times in an office. She answered, "I've forgotten," and I think it was true. (41)

A little further on, the Narrator replays this internal monologue:

I will add that when she answered the question I asked – "Why have you come?" – by saying, "I've forgotten," that answer was much more exact and more important (in my opinion) than the one this story holds. (52)

The 'true' subject or content of narrative or narration is the 'eloquence' of "the passing moment and the moment that will come after." (46) This "passing moment" "speaks" and as "inner speech" (Vygotsky<sup>27</sup>) it makes up the 'content' of the Narrator's narrative. This "passing moment" which "speaks" is the pure expressivity of thought – represented by the flux of affectivity through which all the characters are sketched - constitutes Blanchot's phenomenology of consciousness.

The poetics of "inner speech" is disclosed in several places of the narrator's narrative, but in particular in the "episode" of the "proposal" by the narrator to Nathalie in the metro, during the bombing of Paris. Without disclosing the exact "ethnic" origins of Nathalie's "mother tongue" (the reader has been told that she was "Slav"), the narrator describes how he began speaking to Nathalie in this language of the "Other" with which he admits he was not very familiar:

"For quite some time I had been talking to her in her mother tongue, which I found all the more moving since I knew very few words of it. As for her, she never actually spoke it, at least not with me, and yet if I began to falter, to string together awkward expressions, to form impossible idioms, she would listen to them with a kind of gaiety, and youth, and in turn would answer me in French, but in a different French from her own, more childish and talkative, as though her speech had become irresponsible, like mine,

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<sup>27</sup> Lev Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*. Ed and trans by Eugenia Hanfmann and Gertrude Vaker. (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1962); also Л. С. Выготский, *Психология*. (Москва: Апрель Пресс, Эксмо-Пресс, 2000), стр. 688. [L. S. Vygotskii, *Psikhologiiia*. (Moscow: April' Press/Eksmo-Press, 2000). "Inner speech" is not, as was thought, "verbal memory." Compare L. S. Vygotsky (1962), p. 130: "An example would be the silent recital of a poem known by heart." While "word memory" is one of the elements of inner speech, it is not its equivalent. Inner speech is also not "speech minus sound" or "sub-vocal speech." "Silent 'pronouncing' of words is not equivalent to the total process of inner speech." "Inner speech" can also not be equated with "an inarticulate inner experience" or an "indefinable, non-sensory and non-motor specific speech experience." See L. S. Vygotsky (1962), p. 131. According to Vygotsky's *Psikhologiiia* (2000), such an "intuitive experience" of speech does not lend itself to a "functional and structural objective analysis." The correct understanding of "inner speech" must issue from the premise that "inner speech" is a specific psychological formation, a specific form of verbal activity, with its own specific characteristics and existing in a complex relationship to other forms of verbal activities. See L. S. Vygotskii [Л. С. Выготский] (2000), p. 477 [My translation from the Russian].



using an unknown language. And it is true that I too felt irresponsible in this other language, so unfamiliar to me; and this unreal stammering, of expressions that were more or less invented, and whose meaning flitted past, far away from my mind, drew from me things I never would have said, or thought, or even left unsaid in real words: it tempted me to let them be heard, and imparted to me, as I expressed them, a slight drunkenness which was no longer aware of its limits and boldly went farther than it should have." (61-2).

The language described here as N's language, in which she did not 'speak' and of which the narrator knew only very few words, is analogous to the language described by the Russian child psychologist, Lev Vygotskii (1896-1934), as "autistic speech," used by children as a problem-solving mental mechanism. It manifests itself as incoherent external speech (when overheard) and consists largely of 'mumbling to oneself'. "Autistic speech," also called "egocentric speech," is not an instrument for communicating with others, but with oneself, with one's unconscious thought. It belongs to an early phase of the child's cognitive development, and precedes the evolution of "inner speech," which follows in tandem with the child's acquisition of concepts. However, both "autistic speech" and "inner speech" share a peculiar elliptical syntax. "Inner speech" comes to expression in predicates in which the subject is absent. It, too, is speech for oneself, speech which is not speech but a kind of communion with one's own thoughts, which are still unformed, not fully expressed. This 'laboratory of thought', which is in the domain of the unconscious as much as in a transcendental consciousness, is the same domain which Husserl described as the space of the phenomenological reduction.

The fleeting "unreal stammering," the language "of expressions that were more or less invented," the "irresponsible" and childish speech in N's language, in which the Narrator communes, is a staged performance of "inner speech" – the Narrator's language game with his own thought, which is mutable, random, imaginative, inventive and seductive – like N. and all the other Women conjured up in the Narrator's recital.

## **PRIPOVEST MORISA BLANŠOA KAO FENOMENOLOGIJA MISLI: *Čitanje dela L'Arrêt de mort [Smrtna presuda] kroz Huserla i Vigotskog***

**Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover**

*Ovaj rad bavi se predstavom misli kroz estetičku formu pripovesti, koju francuski postmodernista Moris Blanšo koristi kako bi razvio jednu fenomenologiju misli koja je anti-reprezentaciona, anti-revelaciona i anti-ontološka. Autor donosi ove stavove na osnovu poređenja Blanšoovog književnog žanra sa nekim od vodećih predstavnika evropske fenomenologije i kognitivne psihologije, i to: Hegelom, Huserlom, Hajdegerom i Vigotskim.*

Ključne reči: *čista negativna požuda; anti-priča; diskonektori ili praznine; "dasein" (tubitak); šizo-poetika*