

Chapter 1

**PLURAL WORD AND INVENTIVE WRITING:
THE LEGACY OF POSTMODERN
SOCIAL THEORY**

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ABSTRACT

The problem of writing is how to produce utterances that abandon the principles at all times expressed by the law - and by the institutions that introduce it into the social body through all sorts of routines of disciplinary and unitary representation of cultural inheritance, making use of knowledge as a body of prescriptions and a circle in which truths unfold - by drawing language out of its usual furrows and making it communicate with what will be its own exterior. The chapter addresses the great problem of university research, which we try to transpose into the reality of the text, which is and will always be to force the present to leave the existing signification processes and their prohibited correlates and to become available to all kinds of encounters with the unknown. As if writing could

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take on not only a skeptical dimension but more rigorously an agonistic force - in which what is assumed to be universal, necessary and obligatory is perceived as singular, contingent, and arbitrary - and whose ultimate effect is that of unleashing ourselves from the predictability and disciplinary homogeneity with which contemporary identities and ways of life present themselves, even if they are set to circulate with the labeling of subjectivity and the widest individual diversity. As if it compelled us to enter into the unknown and thus pressed us to establish new covenants between the subject of enunciation and the subject of conduct. It is from here that the hypothesis of an inventive, experimental writing derives.

Keywords: writing, postmodern social theory, university research, language philosophy

Perhaps patient meditation and painstaking investigation on and around what is still provisionally called writing, far from falling short of a science of writing or of hastily dismissing it by some obscurantist reaction, letting it rather develop its positivity as far as possible, are the wanderings of a way of thinking that is faithful and attentive to the ineluctable world of the future which proclaims itself at present, beyond the closure of knowledge. The future can only be anticipated in the form of an absolute danger. It is that which breaks absolutely with constituted normality and can only be proclaimed, presented, as a sort of monstrosity. For that future world and for that within it which will have put into question the values of sign, word, and writing, for that which guides our future anterior, there is as yet no exergue.

Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (2000, p. 6)

INTRODUCTION

After the seventeenth century, our civilization has treated scientific descriptions as if they were deities themselves, and from the end of the following century, we superimposed God on the subject and “ourselves, in the worship of our own spiritual nature or deep poetic” (Rorty, 1994, p. 45). This text proposes to face this tradition. I will defend the thesis that a sea of

creative possibilities will open up before us when we decentralize ourselves from the *transcendental subject*. It is a question of substituting the essentiality of identity for a permanent work of *redescription* of the subject, that takes self-sacrifice as the ultimate goal of research and writing. **Writing practices** should impose themselves, as being sovereign, erasing or even burying all the declarations that around us do not cease to theorize and treat identity in the same way as self-consciousness or possession of the truth of itself. Through this route of restlessness regarding identity and distrust with respect to what is known of thought, **academic writing** would certainly become more open to the reinvention of the actual ethical and aesthetic conditions of writers themselves. In a word, to one's own self-transformation.

POSTMODERN SOCIAL THEORY

It is widely emphasized that the project of taking the social as object, theorizing and decomposing it for the purpose of systematizing it, was a concern of modernity, whose origins go back to the Enlightenment and the hypotheses formulated by the great *philosophes* around the emancipation of reason and freedom. At the same time, it will be easy to see that the reiterated obstinacy, characteristic of the science of Enlightenment, with rationality, universalism and the idea of progress, has been openly questioned and debated both epistemologically and ethically in the last decades of our time. This is settled and has no doubts. But to be rigorous, we should also recognize that a whole tradition of reflection, formerly in time, already anticipated postmodernism, through a very strong critical surveillance of the limits and restrictions of the modern **social order**. Indeed, both the premises of this and its cultural artifacts have been openly shaken, *avant la lettre* and only to name the best known, by Nietzsche, Heidegger - seen as the founders of the so-called philosophy of difference - Simmel, Weber, Benjamin, Adorno, Horkheimer. To them, we owe, in fact, the first attempts to problematize and frontally question the analytical propositions of modern social thought. And above all I would like to emphasize the criticisms both

of the reiterated assumption that knowledge is progressive, cumulative, total, universal and rational, a notion that the classical image of the *encyclopedia* embodies as well as the principle that it is the *subject* which must be at the center of analysis and theory, and at the same time the source of thought and action. As if through the texts and interpretations handed down to us by those born in the nineteenth century, we could begin to understand, and sometimes very intensely, how much the programmatic bases of modernity were historically so far removed from the *truth* that the world was in the meanwhile evidencing. Reflecting on the postulates, practices, and achievements of modern life, these authors explored the “complexity, irregularity, and unpredictability of the consequences of **modernity**.” They, therefore, point out to us that the rationalization that was successively made over political-social life was obscure - or even refused, through utterances, presented with the value of truth, in which modern man emerges as the bound hero only to the ethical-political cause of peace and social harmony - the understanding of the contradictions and the most dramatic and brutal bursts that she herself engendered (Smart, 2002, p. 405-407).

The condition of the social analysis to deepen therefore presupposes the recognition that all the explanation that is imagined absolute and omnipotent, wanting to clarify the *order of the world of men and things*, is only in the service of legitimation, that is, of a series of practices, a cultural self-image, a dominant discourse and, at the most, an institution. Now what we try to do, from the variety of disciplinary fields in which we find ourselves today, often deliberately ignoring them to transpose them, is to continue this gesture that seeks to produce an *instability of meaning in the face of the modern episteme*, since we admit that not only scientific knowledge as the idea of rational and autonomous subject have to be questioned in the most diverse ways. We work for a *metaphysics of presence* that breaks with the closed circuits of meaning and interpretation that for centuries have mediated and impoverished our relationship with reality. I am thinking here of the prologue that **Deleuze** wrote for *Difference and Repetition*, a book that appeared in 1968. He expressed it as “the air of time” which was then breathed “a generalized anti-Hegelianism.” One in which the “primacy of identity” was no longer enough to define “the world of

representation.” The postwar realities reaffirmed the bankruptcy of all the old forces that acted “under the representation of the identical.” For Deleuze, the spectacle that the world already presented was that of the “simulacra.” And it was explained: “In him, man does not survive God, nor does the identity of the subject survive the identity of substance; all identities are only simulated, produced as an *optical* effect by a deeper game, which is that of difference and repetition “(2000b, p. 36).

He also claimed Nietzsche's legacy there, stating that he had inaugurated the search for “new means of philosophical expression” in the clear demarcation of all those who wished to keep philosophy in the past. Deleuze then affirmed that thanks to the author of *The Gay Science* we could all “discover the untimely as being deeper than time and eternity,” it is in this perspective that the current philosophy goes beyond “the temporal-timeless alternative, historical-eternal, particular -universal, “or rather take as a starting point a radical critique of the subjective assumptions and postulates that the discipline itself has assumed to be natural. Otherwise: after Nietzsche, philosophy is no longer the philosophy of history and the eternal, but “untimely, always and only untimely, that is, against this time, in favor, I hope, of a time to come.” Hence Deleuze went on to a methodological confession in which he assumed inventive work as being far removed from any anthropological predicates: “I do, I redo and undo my concepts from a moving horizon, a center always off-center, a periphery always displaced repeats and differentiates them.” The positivity of our time is what makes us believe in a world in which “individuations are impersonal” and “pre-individual singularities.” For these reasons, Deleuze assumed that a philosophy book should be like a detective novel or a science fiction. In the first case, it took the principle of specificity, meaning that concepts must intervene in the narrative economy only to solve a “local situation,” which means that they change with problems (Deleuze 2000b, p. 37-38). In the second he had in mind the principle that the plot of the philosophical text should, as in science fiction, point to a coherence to come, which would no longer be of the order of the world. From this derives the hypothesis of inventive, experimental writing, that opens up and feels the unknown. Deleuze expressed himself in these terms:

How else can one write but of those things which one doesn't know, or knows badly? It is precisely there that we imagine having something to say. We write only at the frontiers of our knowledge, at the border which separates our knowledge from our ignorance and *transforms the one into the other*. Only in this manner are we resolved to write. To satisfy ignorance is to put off writing until tomorrow - or rather, to make it impossible. Perhaps writing has a relation to silence altogether more threatening than that which it is supposed to entertain with death. We are therefore well aware, unfortunately, that we have spoken about science in a manner which was not scientific. (Deleuze, 2000b, p. 38)

Systematizing, the critical relationship with modernity tends to be consensual around the repudiation of universals, on the assumption that there is no common denominator that guarantees the unity of the world, invoking for it either Nature, God, Truth or Man himself. As Lyotard (2003) has also suggested in *The postmodern condition*, first published in 1979, modernity would have replaced the divine and providential narratives of human destiny with others, markedly secular, but none the less universalistic or *metanarratives*: the predominance of Reason and the Enlightenment project; the dialectic of the spirit and the self-consciousness in the sequence of the Hegelian philosophy; the emancipation of the rational or working subjects fixed by the Marxist currents. The postmodern age in which we live - “a social formation in which the impact of secularization, democratization, computing, and consumption has been redesigning maps and rewriting the status of knowledge” (Jenkins, 1991, p. 60), - disbelief in the face of this essentialist view of humanity. The social landscapes that are offered to our interpretation no longer hold the truth that science speaks through a subject who imagines himself sovereign. The analysis that is required of us will instead have to account for the multiplication and malleability of identities, for the “complexity and incommensurability of human worlds,” for “crossing borders,” for “hybridity,” for “collage” of contemporary discourses, “montage and *pastiche*” in artistic and cultural productions; it becomes the obligation of the researcher to perceive and respond to the complexity of the proposals and solutions of social life, to proceed through

“irony, ambiguity and ambivalence” through “contingency and provisionality” or even “indeterminacy, insecurity, contradiction and violence” (Bauman 1993, Connor 2000, Harvey 1989). The texts that we will be led to produce in this interpretative context will assume exactly the same: as interpretations. And in conscience, they can only serve one service - that of the perpetual expansion of the explanation. There is no common denominator that guarantees that the world is one or that it supports the possibility of natural and objective thought. The main, and perhaps only, the *law* of postmodernism will be that information does not cease to multiply. The increase in social production recorded in our time will therefore only correspond to an accumulation of perspectives, models, angles, and contingent points of view of the researchers who subscribe them. This is how the universality of truth assertions is questioned, and it is argued that *meaning* is an active construct, dependent on both the pragmatics of context and the rules proper to discursive regimes. In this context, it is as if the *dialectic work* of Hegel's was replaced by the plays of the *will of the power* of which Nietzsche spoke so much.

It is important for us to dwell on *Lyotard's* influential text with some wandering since it is the “condition of knowledge in more developed societies” which is taken as the object of study. The diagnosis that *The postmodern condition* presents to us in the first pages is that of the crisis or disuse in contemporary times of “the metanarrative device of legitimation,” which corresponds, in particular, “to the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the *university institution* that depended on it.” Lyotard then takes the evidence according to which the narrative function is losing “its functors, the great hero, the great dangers, the great périplos, and the great objective,” to disperse “in clouds of *narrative* but also denotative elements of *language*, prescriptive, descriptive, etc., each conveying programmatic *sui generis* valences.” In their own way, these are the *crossroads* in which each contemporary subject is immersed. The essential point of the argument is made explicit when Lyotard states that “we do not form necessarily stable combinations of language and the properties of which we form are not necessarily communicable” (2003, p. 11-12).

The problem of knowledge legitimation arises in entirely different terms, in a society and in a culture that no longer recognizes credibility in any unifying or totalizing discourse, even if it takes the form of speculation or emancipation. Lyotard argues that thanks to the development of techniques and technologies since World War II, there has been a shift from the “accent to the means of action to the detriment of its ends.” Since then, the crisis of **scientific knowledge** seems invariable to result from the erosion, on the one hand, of “the encyclopedic web in which each science should take its place” and, on the other, of the so-called independence of the interlocutors involved in the dissemination of knowledge. As for the first of these aspects, it should be pointed out that the classical configurations of the various scientific disciplines have undergone an intense “problematic work,” which has been translated in the “disappearance of certain knowledge,” in the production of “overlappings at the frontiers of sciences” and, finally, the birth of “new territories.” But for **Lyotard**, the institutional rearrangement of the “speculative hierarchy of knowledge” has led “the 'old' colleges to disintegrate into institutes and foundations of all kinds,” a situation which leads, in most tertiary schools, to a logic of mechanical, and therefore impoverished, transposition of the “judged established knowledges” and by ensuring, through didactics, “more the reproduction of teachers than that of sages.” As for the second aspect, *The postmodern condition*, the element that had already emerged with *Aufklärung*, here called the “device of **emancipation**,” is also emphasized. It is the current notion that tends to ground the legitimacy of science and its truth from the “autonomy of the interlocutors engaged in ethical, social and political practice.” Now, Lyotard notes in this regard, current science no longer has the conditions to support the existence of cognitive and denotative statements that are considered to be of practical value, of universal scope, that one wishes to impose as positive laws. This is an important thesis about **postmodernity**, which argues that “science plays its own game and can not legitimize other games of language; for example, that of prescription escapes him.” This is how this author also points to the self-reflexive exercise when he argues that the striking feature of the science of our time is the “self-

immanence of the discourse on the rules that validate it” (Lyotard, 2003, p. 81-82 and 111).

Once away from a metadiscourse of **knowledge**, one must then try to think of the change in the status of science from the “research pragmatics” and its craftsmanship. In our time the legitimacy of knowledge comes to Lyotard, in the first line, from *performativity*. The “enrichment of arguments” and the complexity of “evidence management” are the fundamental characteristics that mark our office of researchers. The acceptance of scientific statements today is based on the “flexibility” of their means and the “multiplicity” of languages. And the most challenging of all this is that the development of knowledge may correspond to either an unexpected unfolding, a new throw of the argument, or the invention of new rules, that is, a change of the game itself. **Lyotard** discovers in this practice of multiplicity and multiplication an important shift in the very idea of reason. Instead of a universal metalanguage and a dialectic of the spirit, we have before us a plurality of systems that can even be publicly assumed to be “formal and axiomatic,” but which we all know to be finite in time and space. And it is explained: “that which went by paradox or even by paralognism in the knowledge of classical and modern science can find in one of these systems a force of new conviction and obtain a nod in the community of experts.” The sense of knowledge in postmodernity is thus shifted from the realm of knowledge and prediction to a logic of evolution seen as “discontinuous,” “catastrophic,” “unrectifiable,” and even “paradoxical.” The science we seek to do “produces not the known but the unknown,” he acknowledges. This is the essential to me: research becomes useful not because it has a **scientific method**,” but rather because it presents a theoretical and empirical methodology of work which, by making manifest the presuppositions on which it is built, allows immediately thereafter the appearance of new ideas and new statements. The model of legitimation is now marked by the unexpected, or rather by a differentiating activity or imagination. And the concept of difference is translated by Lyotard by “paralogy,” referring directly to the notions of *open system*, of *co-variation*, of *local consensus*, and of *complete information at the time considered*, of *finite and limited meta-argumentation*. The scenario of scientific policy in

which we are, and at the same time why we struggle within the university institution, despite the setbacks and reflexes, is, according to his words, marked by the “desire for justice and the unknown” (Lyotard, 2003, p. 87-90, 119 and 133).

Returning to the description of scientific pragmatics (section 7), it is now dissension that must be emphasized. Consensus is a horizon that is never reached. Research that takes place under the aegis of a paradigm tends to stabilize; it is like the exploitation of a technological, economic, or artistic “idea.” It cannot be discounted. But what is striking is that someone always comes along to disturb the order of “reason.” It is necessary to posit the existence of a power that destabilizes the capacity for an explanation, manifested in the promulgation of new norms for understanding or, if one prefers, in a proposal to establish new rules circumscribing a new field of research for the language of science. This, in the context of the scientific discussion, is the same process Thorn calls morphogenesis. It is not without rules (there are classes of catastrophes), but it is always locally determined. Applied to scientific discussion and placed in a temporal framework, this property implies that “discoveries” are unpredictable. (Lyotard, 2003, p. 122)

PREPARE TO MEET THE UNKNOWN

I believe that the great problem with the investigation, which we try to transpose into the *reality of the text*, is and will always be to force the present to leave the existing processes of signification and their forbidden correlates, to be made available to any type of encounter with the **unknown**. That is why it is important to underline that the research objects are delimited, deepened and concretized in an individual resistance, proper of the ethical-political order, which is determined in confronting the statements that circulate and are taken for consensual certainties, in order to change **self-consciousness**. It is, therefore, work on the subject and not so much on others. As if **writing** could take on not only a skeptical dimension but more rigorously an agonistic force - in which what is assumed to be universal, necessary and

obligatory is perceived as singular, contingent, and arbitrary - and whose ultimate effect is that of ourselves disregarding the predictability and disciplinary homogeneity with which contemporary identities and ways of life present themselves, even if they are set to circulate with the labeling of subjectivity and the widest individual diversity. As if it compelled us to enter into *the unknown* and thus pressed us to establish *new covenants between the subject of enunciation and the subject of conduct*. I have already returned to Deleuze once again and to his considerations on the power of writing, I mean, on the very production of life:

To write is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience (...). Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience. It is a process, that is, a passage of Life that traverses both the livable and the lived. Writing is inseparable from becoming: in writing, one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or vegetable, become molecule to the point of becoming-imperceptible. (...) To become is not to attain a form (identification, imitation, Mimesis) but to find the zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or indifferenciation where one can no longer be distinguished from a woman, an animal, or a molecule-neither imprecise nor general, but unforeseen and non preexistent, singularized out of a population rather than determined in a form.” (Deleuze, 2000a, p. 11-12)

Someone writes to try to access the manifold of existence. In this perspective, it must be admitted that the figures of the *One* and the *Last* - those which in our culture best symbolize the closure of both the subject's **identity** and **scientific knowledge** - are exactly what language, as we understand it here, makes impossible to pronounce. Also in several books composed of texts-fragment of the philosopher Giorgio Agamben, the considerations about writing follow as a practical exercise of shock against statements that feed on the illusion of identity and truth. It reminds us, in *Profanations* and comparing in this respect Michel **Foucault**, that writing is a human device and that the history of men is none other “than the incessant body with devices that they themselves have produced - and before any

other, language.” Here too, we will begin to be able to critically discuss the reasons why the figure of the *author*, still so mystified among us, must be subordinated - in Agamben's terminology: “remain unexpressed” - regarding the work and the non-knowledge that language always determines and holds. If some subjectivity exists, it is produced at the moment in which the living being finds language, and in this **comes** into play “without reservations.” We are what we can display in this irreducibility. What is at stake in writing “is not so much the expression of a subject as the opening of a space in which the subject who writes does not cease to disappear,” clarifies **Agamben** (2006: 100 and 83-84). “Anyone is the figure of pure uniqueness,” he says in *The Coming Community*, a book in which he seeks to work the problem of knowledge out of the dichotomy between the “character of the individual” and the “intelligibility of universals.” The being that is missing, the being to come is, for Agamben, the “whatever being.” And this pure uniqueness of which he speaks to us does not refer to identity, but rather to “indetermination” and to the relation to the idea, that is, in its precise definition “for the totality of its possibilities.” So what someone, anyone adds to a singularity, is only the displacement of a “limit,” an “empty space,” and “pure exteriority.” Anything must, therefore, be taken as “the happening of the exterior” (1993, p. 11-12 and 53-54).

In *Profanations* there is a detailed discussion about the etymology, meaning and uses of Genius, a god that the Latin tradition began to present as the protector of every man from his birth. There Agamben shows, collecting examples of different origins - recording his constant presence in narratives that reiterate an approach of the genius either of the act of the generation, or of the innate physical and moral qualities of each one, or of a secret relation that each one can have with its god - how this concept has also been associated with what is “more impersonal, the personalization of what surpasses and exceeds us.” It suggests, with this analysis, that spirituality does not refer only to what is considered noble and transcendent. Agamben's thesis in this particular instance is that “all the impersonal in us is genius,” that our life is played around what does not belong to us or that any initiative to appropriate Genius, “to force him to sign on his behalf, is necessarily doomed to fail.” It is in the light of this evidence that one can

understand both the ironic operations of the avant-gardes - of inoperability, de-characterization, de-creation, or even destruction of the work of art itself - and the idea often associated with Duchamp that the truly genius artist “is he who is devoid of work.” Nevertheless, the fundamental point is to understand that accepting to live with the presence of Genius means that one admits an intimate relationship of a strange being, “to be constantly in relation to a zone of non-knowledge,” which overlaps with the notion of oneself and **consciousness**. Great is here synonymous with impersonal, you see. And the creation, the consubstantiation of this walk into the unknown, in which the “I” watches, joyfully, its own shattering.” Translating and adapting to the **desire to write**:

“I feel that, somewhere, Genius exists, that there is in me an impersonal power that impels writing.” And Agamben concludes: “Genius is our life in what does not belong to us.” (2006, p. 9-23)

So other forces cross us, capture us and put us in play when we write. We can take sides, separate, divide, confront – in effect, say *something* - but never express the *Whole* about things or ourselves. Duplicity and non-oneness are what results from abandonment of insistent work on the word. Any “finishing act of thought,” Agamben stresses in *Idea of prose*, “must dissolve entirely in language,” thus making it possible to project and decipher new forms of life. And his conclusion in this respect could only refer us to the evidence that “it is precisely the absence of an object of knowledge that saves us from the sadness without remedy of things” (1999, p. 102 and 46). It is the lack - the incessant lack - that writing expresses.

The imperious need to associate its exercise with an *awareness of the infinity of language* will inevitably lead us to Maurice **Blanchot**, and to have to remain close to his texts with the utmost attention, such is the range of plans, surfaces, and figures that he brings with the purpose of giving an account of this enigma, of that *strange passion of the incessant* to which the name of writing is also given. This, for Blanchot, affirms a vast, sparse, discontinuous, split, impersonal self; it materializes a narrative that produces and narrates itself, which changes direction incessantly because, in the

search for the event, it leaves it behind and sees the reflection, at its core, of the difference, the contradictory, if not the absurd; it makes one dream the work as a navigation against the emptiness or the smallest gap, but what happens most is to connect to an indeterminate another-time, until, when at last the moment of its own realization occurs, it is once again perceived as being exposed to an emptiness, to an erasure, to the desert, at a distance, to a new setting on the way. Blanchot did everything to convince us that the **happiness of creation** presupposes the indetermination of the work, the exclusion of any allusion to an ultimate end or destiny - always questioning and, as with Agamben, the same movement of seeking and affirming exteriority. He will meticulously decompose the thousand problems that the practice of writing unearths. He never ceases to link it to metamorphosis, and therefore, in his view, the secret law of this practice is that of the *book to come*.

It is precisely to this field, of all the least reflected upon, that I want to go, through its texts. Blanchot prefers literature as a preferential domain, but his analysis of the writings of Homer, Mallarmé, Sade, Proust, Kafka, Melville, Musil, Joyce, Borges, Beckett, among many others, have often made him also enter the territories of philosophy, with frequent references to Heraclitus, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Levinas, etc. In addition, his voice shines without stopping in many of the theoretical-methodological *beginning movements* of Barthes, Deleuze, Foucault or Derrida, names that do not cease to visit us in this text. The *Blanchot effect* is associated, I believe, with the possibility that a research around language can add arguments in favor of the *plural word* - no longer grounded in a logic of the antinomic pairs equality-inequality, predominance-subordination, but rather in dissymmetry and in reversibility - and in the understanding of the “power of infinity” that **writing** carries within it. The first of the three volumes of *The Infinite Conversation*, published in France in 1969, begins by announcing and explaining the “requirement of writing” as being at the service of the thesis of the “end of the book” or the “absence of a book.” A vast theoretical program seems to build on case studies designed to question and shake the movement toward the unification and totality of the “civilization of the Book.” The research on the literature that

Blanchot undertakes seeks to establish, in the writers who precede us in time, the transgressive **performativity of writing**, or in other words, the *limit-experience* that it manifests (2001, p. 36 and 39, 8 and 9). In his view, scriptural work has always been affected by a multiplying effect or by approximation to other spaces, because it is the very truth or law that is called into question by it. I take from the opening of that first volume by Maurice **Blanchot** a fragment which, in the general scheme of my narrative, I would liken to a manifesto, on the decisive question of making explicit a territory around which one assumes an irrevocable commitment, a transgressive vital belonging:

“Writing, the exigency to writing: no longer the writing that has always (through a necessity in no way avoidable) been in the service of the speech or thought that is called idealistic (that is to say, moralizing), but rather the writing that through its own slowly liberated force (the aleatory force of absence), seems to devote itself solely to itself, as something that remains without identity, and little by little brings forth possibilities that are entirely other: an anonymous, distracted, deferred, and dispersed way of being in relation, by which everything is brought into question – and first of all, the idea of God, of the Self, of the Subject, then of Truth and the One, then finally the idea of Book and Work - so that this writing (understood in its enigmatic rigor), far from having the Book as its goal rather signals its end: a writing that could be said to be outside the discourse, outside the language. (...)

When I speak of 'the end of the book', or better 'the absence of the book', I do not mean to allude to developments in the audiovisual means of communication with which so many experts are concerned. If one ceased publishing books in favor of communication by voice, image, or machine, this would in no way change the reality of what is called 'book'; on the contrary, language, like speech, would thereby affirm all the more predominance and its certitude of a possible truth. In other words, the Book always indicates an order submitted to *unity*, a system of notions in which are affirmed the primacy of speech over writing, of thought over language, and the promise of communication that would one day be immediate and transparent.

Now it may be that writing requires the abandonment of all these principles, that is to say, the end and also the coming to completion of everything that guarantees our culture - not so that we might in idyllically fashion turn back, but rather so we might to go beyond, that is, to the limit, in order to attempt to break the circle, the circle of circles: the *totality* of the concepts that found history, that develops in history, and whose development history is. To write in this sense (...) supposes a radical change of epoch – interruption, death itself - or, to speak hyperbolically, the 'end of history'. Writing in this way passes through the advent of communism, recognized as the ultimate affirmation - communism being still always beyond communism. Writing thus becomes a terrible responsibility. Invisibly, writing is called upon to undo the discourse in which, however unhappy we believe ourselves to be, we who have it at our disposal remain comfortably installed. From this point of view, writing is the greatest violence, for it transgresses the law, every law, and its own.” (Blanchot, 2001, p. 8-9)

Those who withdraw and preserve themselves in the solitude of writing are forced to understand that the work does not end. What is expressed in one book will be restarted or even destroyed in another. In *The Space of Literature*, a volume still published in the mid-1950s, Blanchot refers to this evidence as being the “privilege of the infinite” - the existence of a concrete, closed place, where the most essential solitude gives shape to a practice which never ceases. All the endings or outcomes that the writer or the artist experience, whether by pressure from the publisher, for financial reasons or other circumstances of ordinary life, do not prevent the continuation and recovery of the work left behind. In this perspective, one must then understand that “the infinite of the work is only the infinite of the spirit itself.” The writer writes “a book, but the book is not yet the work”; he happens to finish and publish the first but he knows that he only belongs to the second. And so he goes *back to his work*, to saying again, he returns to a privileged theme, rethinks, he picks up the word at some point and then disperses again into a new diversity of thoughts or matters. The narrative expresses a *nascent power* that fails to find a firm outcome. On this

preservation at the *new beginning*, however, it is necessary to draw some conclusions. This is already true: the text belongs “to the shadow of events, not to reality, to the image, to the object.” For Blanchot, words can be confused with “appearances,” and it is therefore imperative that we make no mistakes about them by taking them as representing the “power of truth.” The work only reveals that writing “is the endless, the incessant.” The writer, he continues, “no longer belongs to the masterly domain in which to express himself means to express the accuracy and certainty of things and values in the sense of their limits” (2001, p. 11-16).

In this way, the authority of a written statement becomes what is written and no longer the signature of the author. For this important reason, Blanchot also insists both on the need to “break the bond” or on “breaking the link” that unites “the word to the self.” The relationship is not between an author who speaks to a reader with the authority of one who dominates and provides the understanding. And if it is accepted that to write more is not to discover and incorporate the interminable and the incessant, then one will have to go deeper and take another consequence. Blanchot notes here a decisive transformation. It involves renouncing the self, accepting that “the writer belongs to the language that no one speaks, that addresses no one, that has no center, that reveals nothing; he may believe that he asserts himself in this language, but what he claims is entirely deprived of himself.” In the writer lies the mediation and the murmur that allow language, in a process of infinite dissemination, to become an image and an argument. He echoes what cannot fail to be said. The changes that are detected in the course of language do not assume that the writer works in a region moved by rational principles, which lead to the glorification of consciousness, progress, and overcoming, in an upward movement towards the ultimate truth and the universal. And we return to the central argument that brings me here. The writer - the researcher - is not on the path of “a safer, more beautiful, more justified world, where everything would be ordered according to the clarity of a fair day”; neither does he “discover the beautiful language that speaks honorably to all.” What is expressed in him, Blanchot argues, derives from the fact that “in one way or another, he is no longer himself, he is no longer anyone.” So, the endless machine of language determines the “erasure” of

the one who writes. And instead of the authority of a sovereign subject or a hero, we are faced with enigmas and questions that take turns (2001, p. 17-18).

The literary writings of Stéphane Mallarmé and Jorge Luís Borges can be taken as impressive illustrations of the infinity of language and consequent erasure of the author. In a short chapter in *The Book to Come*, and on the subject of this Argentinian writer, Blanchot begins by stating that the whole truth of literature is “in the error of the finite,” thus clarifying to us that it is being on the way - this circumstance of the writer to dream the end without however being able to face it - that allows what is imagined finite to be transformed into infinity. Here Borges is considered as the “essentially literary man,” that is, the one who appears to us “always ready to understand according to the mode of understanding that literature authorizes.” Borges's fictions and forgeries, which account for a “desert and labyrinthine” subject - who walks without stopping - reiterate the idea that the world and the book are eternally reflected and confused in a “sparkling” multiplication. In his literary works, therefore, he ceases to have limits of reference, which is usually taken for real and unreal, all happening in the reciprocity of a set of mirrors. Borges will have, therefore, assimilated that the literature “carries something dangerous.” And the risk does not stem from it “leading us to imagine that there is somewhere between us” a great author, absorbed in imaginative mystifications,” but, quite differently, in “making us feel the approach of a strange, neutral, impersonal power.” Blanchot quotes Borges as he would have written about Shakespeare: “He was like all men except that he resembled all men.” That is: Borges sees in all the authors a single author. The only meaning that the narrative has is what makes us understand that we are not faced with “events that really take place, not before people who perform them personally, but before a precise and indeterminate set of possible versions” (1984, p. 103-106 and 158-159).

In the essay dedicated to Mallarmé, he begins by asking himself what the meaning of the word Book is in this poet, and soon the idea of impersonation imposes itself: “The book that is the Book is a book among others.” The recurrence of the speaker's disappearance reappears with another intensity when Blanchot reproduces this well-known affirmation of

the poet of *L'après-midi d'un faune*: “the work implies the eloquent disappearance of the poet, who yields initiative to words, by the shock of their mobilized inequality.” Everything as if the book could only be when it stopped referring to the one who would have written it. Words only designate the extent of their relationships, and to that extent, the space in which they project is spreading. There is a movement of maximum dispersion and diversity around it. The comprehension of the thickness and the various dimensions of the space produced by the language will have been fundamental for Mallarmé, who affirmed to have experienced disquieting symptoms and despairing abysses caused by the simple act of writing. In it, Blanchot elucidates to us, “a sentence is not limited to linearly unfolding: it opens; through this opening, other movements of phrases, other rhythms of words that are related to each other according to firm determinations of structure, are spread out, separated, and narrowed again at different levels of depth.” The creative origin of the adventure of the poetic movement can thus be defined as that of a space that approaches *another space*, an analytic practice that tries to understand, through its speaking mobility, not the real known of the present time, but to accede the *other thing*. From the theoretical problems that Mallarmé has put to himself, Blanchot can, therefore, deepen his fundamental theses by associating writing with the construction of change. One is that the presence of poetry and all literature “is a presence to come: it comes beyond the future and does not stop coming when it is there.” And another is that “the work is the waiting of the work; only in this expectation does the impersonal attention that has the paths and place of the space of language meet “(1984, p. 234-255). Because in it is the attraction for the exterior that dominates, writing materializes the most radical **experience of alterity**, that of the exit from itself.

However, philosophical discourse is also marked by concepts that aim, unsuccessfully, to achieve what Blanchot calls the “safe realm” or “permanence space” where truth can be resurrected. In fact, one tries tirelessly to build a world, “so that the secret dissolution, the universal corruption that governs it” can be suspended or even forgotten before the coherence of the conceptual apparatus, the notions, objects, and relations established between them by our analysis. But here another search becomes

the opening of a crisis, and a new outward movement that wipes out the meaning, the idea, the universal. In the philosophical word, it is also the speaking exterior. For this reason, the possibility is, for Blanchot, much more than reality. The first found the second and this is how it, too, comes to the notion of power and the work of the construction of difference. The possibility, he clarifies to us, “is to be more the power to be.” And, in a more rigorous and perhaps more instigating way, he affirms the essential dimensions of our individual existence: “it is only with the power of being that we are what we are; here we soon see that man does not only have possibilities, but he is his possibility “. Again, we are faced with the challenge of confronting all powers established from a self-reflective dimension. Relationships “in the world and with the world” come to be understood as relations of power, being “contained in possibility.” When one takes the word, and even being in the “most apparent traits of language,” he always enters into a power relation: “I belong, whether I know it or not, to a set of powers of which I am serving, fighting against the power that is affirmed against me.” Also to Blanchot, “the whole word is violence, violence that is both more fearful and secret” (2001, p. 73, 85-6).

We ask ourselves without cease, and no more yesterday than today, about the time and the forms of life that he installs. Still, according to Maurice Blanchot's testimony, the ability to keep up with this relational game with the course of the world and with ourselves is dependent on realizing that the way of *being of writing* is defined by *questioning* and that, once triggered, never ends. The word becomes the place of dispersion and the escape of meaning because there is a fantastic force that produces a permanent relay between the whole and the being. Now this force or power materializes in the very act of questioning. In *The Infinite Conversation*, the pages are succeeded to elucidate us as a cognitive structure is always diverting “the questioning of being a question and of obtaining a definitive answer” that appeases the spirit. There is invariably in our questions contact with something deeper that “escapes the whole question and exceeds all the power to question; the questioning is the very attraction of this deviation” (Blanchot, 2001, p. 41-61). It is this that overloads the written word of a relationship of infinity and strangeness, producing an essentially

dissymmetric and discontinuous field, which makes speech sterilization unfeasible. The work of the question hinders the thought of tending toward unity and of realizing the whole.

To question is to seek, and to seek is to seek radically, to go to the bottom, to sound, to work at the bottom and, finally, to uproot. This uprooting that holds onto the root is the work of the question. The work of time. (...). Freud more or less says that all the questions randomly posed by children turn on and serve as a relay for the one they do not pose, which is the question of the origin. We question ourselves about everything in the same way, in order to sustain and advance the passion of the question: but all questions are directed toward one question alone - the central question, or the question of the whole. (...) A question is a movement, the question of everything a type of relationship characterized by openness and free movement (...). The question waits for the answer, but the answer does not appease the question and, although it ends, does not end with the waiting that is the question of the question (...). The whole question, today, is already the question of everything. This whole question, which leaves nothing out and confronts us constantly with everything, in a strenuous abstract passion, is present, for us, in all things (...). To question is to play up the question. The point is this invitation to jump, which does not stop at a result. It takes a free space to jump, and a firm ground is needed, it takes a power that, from the safe immobility, turns the jump movement. The leap, from and without any firmness, is the freedom to question. (Blanchot, 2001, p. 41-53).

There are also several texts in which **Deleuze**, himself or in partnership with Guattari, reflects on the limiting experience provided by writing, an explicit connection with the Blanchotian notions of the relation of the text to the outside, of the unfinished and anonymous language. In the book, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* is the theme of the space delimited by a will to write, which is exerted only to express infinity of itself, to master the meticulous analysis of the duo Deleuze-Guattari. Kafka is taken here as the case of the purest passion for writing, confusing itself with the very life of the author of *The Metamorphosis*. They discover in it a real machine of writing in which all the different components of literary expression

communicate among themselves in the task of displacement of the question and for that reason of deterritorialization of the **thought**. The two philosophers go so far as to say that such a complete literary work would never have been constructed through movements that are always grim, but never cease to operate and relate structurally to each other. In Kafka the passion for writing does not cease, although the respective thresholds of intensity change: they are “letters stopped because a return blocks them”; “Novels that stop because they cannot develop in novels, divided in two senses that cover the exit”; “Novels that Kafka himself stops because they are endless and simply unlimited, infinite.” In his creative process, there is a drag or a *line of escape*, in Deleuze's well-known terminology, which allows him to question the political, economic, bureaucratic, or jurisdictional order at the same time. This *strenuous passion* for understanding the functioning of institutions has also enabled Kafka to anticipate and “extract incognito sounds that belong to the near future - Fascism, Stalinism, Americanism, *the devilish forces that are knocking on the door*” in the 1930s. Deleuze & Guattari find in this dynamic, in which the expression precedes the content and drags it, the fundamental thesis of this book. Living and writing only oppose what they call “major literature”; in Kafka, on the contrary, these two dimensions merge and constitute the objective conditions for the exercise of a “minor literature,” that is, a writing practice that offers the language “revolutionary conditions” through the “connection of the individual with the immediate political” and the “collective agency of enunciation.” They note that even dying, Kafka was “transported by an invincible flow of life” that came to him from letters, novels, romances as well “from their mutual incompleteness for different, communicating and interchangeable reasons.” It's all a matter of everything, as you just read in Blanchot. For this reason, the *primacy of writing* in Kafka can only have a meaning that is not confined in any way to what we commonly understand in literature. And the meaning is this: *enunciation* is constituted as a contingent desire, historically, politically and socially situated in its time, but projected “beyond the laws, states, and regimes.” Then we have in Kafka's writing a “micropolitics, a politics of desire that calls into question all instances.” The reasons that have led him to abandon this or that text are,

after all, a vast map of transformations and intensities, almost molecular, which give us account not of failure, but of a multivariate analysis determined to anticipate - exceed the thresholds established by any order. That is to say, there is in the experience of Kafka's writing the possibility of unveiling an "absolute deterritorialization" as opposed to the "relative territorializations that man produces about himself" when he travels, for example. The statement is no more than the possibility of organizing cognitive combat dominated by the possibility of relaunching the analysis, producing a "living escape line" before the transcendence with which the law always announces itself. Urgent and endless task of confrontation with all forms of desire and power, you see. Deleuze & Guattari conclude: "there has never been such a comic and cheerful author from the point of view of desire; has never been a more political and social author from the point of view of the statement." In Kafka, "all is laughter, beginning with *The Process*; everything is political, starting with the *Letters to Felice*" (2003, p. 41 and 69-79).

They have already problematized in *What is philosophy*, and still from Blanchot, the notion of event, linking it to concepts central to their work such as the cloud, flow, bifurcation or threshold transposition. A practice of the endless, that does not end nor begin. In his view of writing, it would also be connected with an experience that is distinguished from that of the ordinary state of things we go through, ourselves and our body because it produces a kind of event that is both "incorporeal and *pure reservation*." In such terms, writing would be that "event in which we sink or rise, which resumes without ever having begun or ending, immanent internality" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1992, p. 138). The debt to Blanchot is reinforced at a time when Deleuze sought to incorporate in his philosophical language the theme of the *relation with the outside*. It is for him to imagine a line, a joint that is not in thought or in things per se but is found everywhere where the thought faces something that is more distant than the outside world and, at the same time, closer than the inner world. A process of "perpetual reinvestment" of the adjacent and the distant. For Deleuze, thought structures itself in this dynamic and is called to face "anything like madness, and life, anything like death." The *outer line* would then be our "double,"

precisely what crosses us “with all otherness of the double” (Deleuze, 2003: 151).

In an often referenced article, which has the evocative title *Nomadic Thought*, Deleuze refers to the features of Nietzsche's texts - particularly his aphorisms - as if from his reading he seemed to be faced with a new kind of object, again insisting on the relation with the outside. When we look randomly at any book by the author of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* it happens that “we no longer go through an interiority,” or that of the soul, consciousness or concept, principles that have always been part of philosophy. It ceases here to be mediated and dissolved by interiority - Nietzsche “finds thought, writing on an immediate relation with the outside.” Deleuze clarifies his idea in the following terms:

What is this: a beautiful painting or a beautiful drawing? There is a frame. An aphorism has a frame, too. But whatever is in the frame, at what point does it become beautiful? At the moment one knows and feels that the movement, that the line which is framed comes from elsewhere, that it does not begin within the limits of the frame. It began above, or next to the frame, and the line traverses the frame. As in Godard's film, you paint the painting with the wall. Far from being the limitation of the pictorial surface, the frame is almost the opposite, putting it into immediate relation with the outside. However, hooking up thought to the outside is, strictly speaking, something philosophers have never done, even when they were talking about politics, even when they were talking about taking a walk or fresh air. It is not enough to talk about fresh air, to talk about the exterior if you want to hook thought up directly and immediately to the outside. (...) Well then, what I am saying is that texts like these are traversed by a movement which comes from the outside, which does not begin in the page of the book, nor in the preceding pages, which does not fit in the frame of the book, and which is totally different from the imaginary movement of representations or the abstract movement of concepts as they are wont to take place through words and in the reader's head. Something leaps from the book, making contact with a pure outside. It is this, I believe, which for Nietzsche's work is the right to misinterpret. An aphorism is a play of forces, a state of forces which are always exterior to one another. An aphorism doesn't mean anything, it signifies nothing, and no more has a

signifier than a signified. Those would be ways of restoring a text's interiority. An aphorism is a state of forces, the last of which, meaning at once the most recent, the most actual, and the provisional-ultimate, is the most external. Nietzsche posits it quite clearly: if you want to know what I mean, find the force that gives what I say meaning, and a new meaning if need be. Hook the text up to this force. In this way, there are no problems of interpretation for Nietzsche, there are only problems of machining: to machine Nietzsche's text, to find out which actual external force will get something through, like a current of energy. (Deleuze, 2006a, p. 323-324)

In summary, in the perspective I take here, the problem that involves the act of writing is how to produce statements that abandon the principles at any time expressed by the law - and by the institutions that introduce it into the social body through the most varied routines of disciplinary and unitary representation of the cultural heritage, for which knowledge is used as a body of prescriptions and a circle in which truths unfold - pulling the language out of its habitual furrows and causing it to communicate with what will be its own exterior. The statements of some social theory which I have put my hands on to better suggest the inventive force of the scriptural exercise do not cease to speak of *unfinishedness*, of diversion, of organic disappearance, of foreign becoming, or of the intensity of a current of energy that comes and pulls toward the outside. They converge in the metaphor of nomadism, in the rigorous sense of perpetual displacement wrought by the very **experience of writing** - the hypothesis of an adventure, of a game that comes to the administrative machine that accompanies all sedentary groups and the state apparatus. The writing consubstantiates, in these terms, a migratory power for thought and, in this relationship with the outside, the possibility of traveling in the same place. Immobile-travel that is intense, imperceptible, unexpected, subterranean, anonymous, but capable of engendering extratextual practices and renewed possibilities of existence.

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