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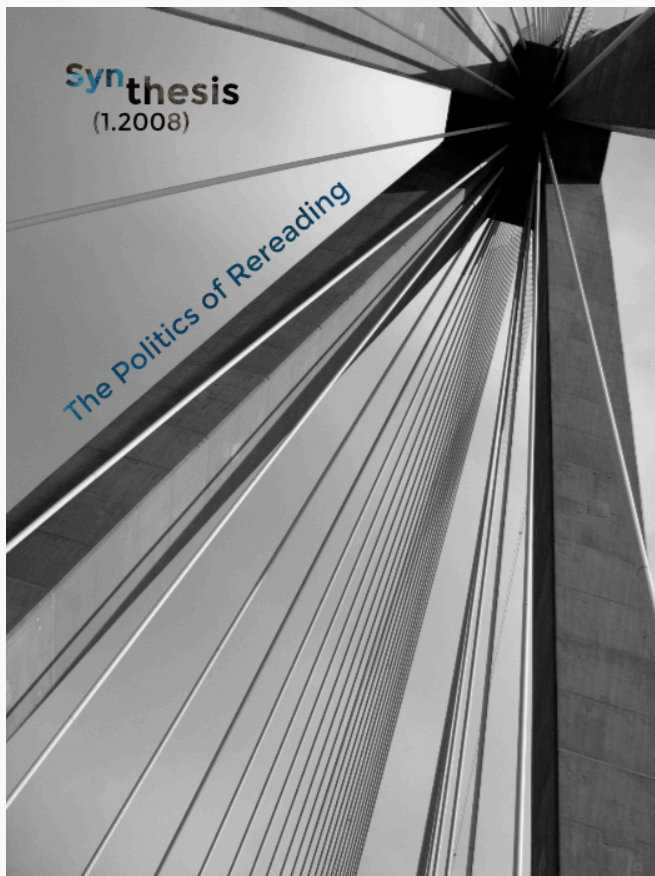
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The Politics of Rereading

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### Modalities of Death and the Thought of Life: The Politics of Metaphoricity in Julia Kristeva and Jacques Derrida

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# Modalities of Death and the Thought of Life: The Politics of Metaphoricity in Julia Kristeva and Jacques Derrida

Maria Margaroni

It makes me happy that men do not want at all to think the thought of death! I should like very much to do something that would make the thought of life even a hundred times more appealing to them. –Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

What has been termed the cognitive turn in metaphorology (namely, the discovery of the cognitive value of metaphor since I. A. Richards' 1936 groundbreaking book on rhetoric) has brought about an explosion of interest in metaphor even in disciplines traditionally hostile to it (i.e. the natural and social sciences). This explosion has been accompanied by a broadening of the meaning of metaphor and an increasing interrogation of the distinction between literal and metaphorical meaning. Since the 1960s this interrogation has taken the form of a move towards a more archaic motility before/beyond the age of classificatory logic responsible, according to Hans-Georg Gadamer, for the opposition between the figurative and the literal (qtd. in Cooper 259). In this essay I intend to engage with two contemporary thinkers whose writings on metaphor I consider exemplary of this move, namely, Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva. In the first part of the essay I want to follow the steps both theorists take away from metaphor as the classical rhetorical trope. My task in this part will be to throw into relief the *difference* that renders both Kristeva and Derrida's articulations of metaphor *difficult*. The difficulty lies, as I shall argue, in appreciating what I shall call the *reversive force* at work in every motion, a force suggested by the prefix dis-/dif- shared by both difference and difficulty. If misreading is the index of carelessness in the face of precisely such a reversive force,<sup>1</sup> then the felicity of our conveyance through footsteps destined to remain ahead of us necessitates a commitment to a care-full reading that (following Maurice Blanchot) will take the risk of imagining the hand writing and the death (i.e. the promise, chance, fear of impossibility) that bears this hand along.<sup>2</sup> Paradoxically, for Blanchot this difficult reading is marked by an ease that we associate with happiness and innocence, for it opens itself joyfully as well as trustingly to the death borne by writing and "holds [it] in its turn" though (as Blanchot emphasizes) only in order to reverse it (precisely "through its ease"): i.e. in order to render the scandal of impossibility the very site for the unfolding of life (Holland 316). It is this happy innocence, this joyful beginning as if for the first time (without guilt or knowledge, without fear of harm, without *praejudicium*) that will determine my understanding of politics in the second part of the essay. My concern in this context will be to investigate the stakes of each theorist's *pas au-delà*: that is, their step beyond in the direction of a more archaic motility. If metaphoricalness lies at the core of what for Kristeva is the key postmodern epistemological question (i.e. "what is mobility, what is innovation?" *Tales of Love* 275), then what are the chances opened for the subject-in-language-and-history by each theoretical formulation of an other metaphor?

## Kristeva, Derrida and the Classical Philosophical Concept of Metaphor

In their treatment of metaphor, both Derrida and Kristeva make clear that their attempt to raise the question of metaphor anew should not be interpreted as a naïve privileging of the concept, as it has traditionally been defined in rhetoric and philosophy. Indeed, they consciously situate their metaphorologies *post* Heidegger's firm relegation of metaphor to the realm of metaphysics. Drawing on Heidegger's discussion, they argue that the dependence of the philosophical concept of metaphor on the distinction between the intelligible and the sensible renders it the master-category of metaphysics, its very possibility as a movement of idealization *meta ta physika* (i.e. outside/beyond natural phenomena).

At the same time, they draw attention to the indebtedness of the classical philosophical understanding of metaphor (since Aristotle's first systematic treatment of it) to the concept of resemblance or analogy. As Derrida suggests, it is not an accident that Aristotle's discussion of metaphor forms part of his treatise on mimesis that opens the *Poetics*. Situated thus, metaphor, like poetry, is perceived as an effect of doubling—the doubling by re-naming of truth, nature, the proper or the name *as proper*—and

of resemblance—the act of erasing the difference of the double in recognizing it as analogous (i.e. other and yet the same). This is, in fact, according to Derrida, what inscribes metaphor within Aristotle's ontological chain, a chain that binds naming with Being and Being with the endless recovery of the same. In his account, the provisory loss to which metaphor exposes Being (in naming it *otherwise*) is always controlled and finally recuperated by Aristotle's insistence on subordinating all the different names of Being to an originary presence that serves as their central reference, namely, to Being as *hen/One*. Similarly, for Kristeva, it is the philosophical perception of Being-as-One that circumscribes metaphor and that forces Aristotle to "elaborate a univocal philosophical language untainted by any poeticalness" (*Tales of Love* 270). Hence, the ambiguous role assigned to metaphor in western philosophy. As Derrida has demonstrated, metaphor has functioned as a necessary and, at the same time, a dangerous supplement to philosophy, on the one hand, serving as the gesture *par excellence* by means of which philosophy reinstalls the unity of Being and the value of the proper, on the other hand, opening up the space/gap within which both Being and proper are always at risk of falling to be—irretrievably—lost.<sup>3</sup>

In their concern with demonstrating the dependence of metaphor on Being, both theorists point to the tendency within western philosophy to discuss metaphor in the context of a theory of *lexis*, thus, limiting the movement implied by it to a transference between what Aristotle calls names. Derrida alerts us to the dangers of translating Aristotle's *onoma* as noun in this context. In his view, the word refers less to "the noun in the strict sense, than [to]... the nominalizable," that is, to those units within language which are intelligible by themselves, "outside any syntactic relation."<sup>4</sup> This is why, in Derrida's view, "the theory of metaphor remains a theory of meaning," rendering any understanding of metaphor beyond the purely semantic level difficult, if not impossible ("White Mythology" 233).

Significantly, for both Kristeva and Derrida what is lost in the traditional philosophical determination of metaphor (due to its dependence on onomatism, resemblance, the notion of Being-as-One and the value of properness/property) is precisely its movement which is reduced to a series of "regulated substitutions" (Derrida, "White Mythology" 245). This is why, according to Kristeva, we need to hold on to those moments in Aristotle's discussion of metaphor when he "salvages" *some* metaphoricalness, as she puts it (*Tales of Love* 271). These are the moments when Aristotle acknowledges that "[t]he metaphor signifies things in action." In her view, attention needs to be paid to the *dynamic* function of the predicative copula, its ability "to designate the *acting being*" (*Tales of Love* 271). "Let us not forget [this] advantage," Kristeva writes (*Tales of Love* 271), for it is "such a dynamic" that will "enlighten us concerning the significance" of what she calls...

### **"...the other metaphor, the real one, the poetic one"**

What is, then, this other metaphor which, as Kristeva cautions us, "should not bring to mind the classic rhetorical trope (*figurative* vs. *plain*)" (*Tales of Love* 37)? In *Tales of Love*, her most extensive treatment of metaphor to the present, Kristeva discusses a *metaphorical motility* that is "previous to any objectivation" of meaning—however "improper" this may be (30). This is why she comes to question Paul Ricoeur's concern, in his discussion of metaphor, with "the unknown that the concept is about to take hold of." In her view, "by focusing on the new reference to be named," Ricoeur "encloses metaphorical dynamics within a speculative philosophy" which is, as we have seen, "subserving to Being as One" (*Tales of Love* 273). Rather than a process of substitution or a transport of meanings, metaphor should be conceptualized instead as the *acting out of meaning*, beyond any reference, what is more, beyond any promise of closure—unless the latter is defined, of course, as "the infinity of connotation and the void of nonmeaning" (*Tales of Love* 330).

Kristeva's commitment in *Tales of Love* to picking up and pursuing a relatively neglected thread in Aristotle's discussion of metaphor cannot but be commended here. Unlike Derrida, she is not concerned with the function of metaphor (*qua* concept) "in the text of philosophy" ("White Mythology" 207; my emphasis). Neither is she interested (as Ricoeur is) in reclaiming the cognitive value of metaphor by foregrounding its shaping of how we understand and re-imagine reality. Kristeva's aim, by contrast, is to raise the question of metaphor from the site of an *aporia* that, according to George A. Kennedy, remains central in Aristotle, namely, his wish to (re-)think rhetoric "as an aspect of politics" (Aristotle, *On Rhetoric* 312). Hence her insistence on taking seriously

Aristotle's largely undeveloped connections between metaphor and *energeia* (understood as actualization, the act of giving life to the lifeless). It needs to be emphasized, however, that Kristeva approaches Aristotle as a reader of Hannah Arendt, who is herself one of the most lucid (and political) readers of Aristotle. This is why in her treatment of metaphor she foregrounds its nature as *praxis* (i.e. action) rather than *poiesis* (which is synonymous with production in Arendt).<sup>5</sup> If she takes Ricoeur to task for reducing metaphor to a *telos* (i.e. the new meaning to be produced) this is because Aristotelian *energeia* (as Arendt points out) designates "all activities that do not pursue an end (are *ateleis*) and leave no work behind (no *para'utas erga*), but exhaust their full meaning in the performance itself" (Arendt 206). Metaphor, then, in Kristeva becomes the discursive site of the acting being, the Arendtian "Who," bearer of what she calls the "fact of natality," that is, the human capacity to "take an initiative, to begin, to set something into motion" (Arendt 177). This is why Kristeva locates metaphoricalness "at the core of an essential debate" (*Tales of Love* 275)—the very same debate, in fact, that Kennedy reads into what constitutes for him the failure of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: "The modern reader," he writes, "needs to reflect more than Aristotle explicitly does on the role of rhetoric in society (necessary and legitimate but also potentially dangerous), on the public expression of values, and on the relationship between discourse and social and political change" (Aristotle, *On Rhetoric* 312). This is a cue that Derrida as a reader of Aristotle does not seem eager to take for he is quick to subordinate Aristotle's gesture that brings together metaphor and *energeia* to his concern with *mimesis* and "the philosophical value of *aletheia*" ("White Mythology" 244). In Derrida's view, all that remains of this gesture is the open question of an "energetic absence" for, as he explains, metaphor gives us to "see in action that which nonetheless is not to be seen in action, but only in its resembling double, its *mimema*" ("White Mythology" 239). In contrast to Derrida who leaves the question of Aristotelian *energeia* suspended, Kristeva directly addresses it and (thanks to Arendt) gives it a more political turn by raising it alongside the question of innovation <sup>6</sup> and by bringing it, as we shall see, in close proximity to love or (in Arendtean terms) to "sheer human togetherness" (Arendt 180). "The being who acts," she writes, "could exist only for a subject in symbolic contact, that is to say in motion, in transference with another. ...There is no act...outside of love" (*Tales of Love* 274).

Interestingly, metaphorical motility, as Kristeva understands it, draws on Aristotle's *epiphora*, a term designating not merely a movement to/trans/upon, but also a *movement against*.<sup>7</sup> Hence, Kristeva's concern with discussing this other metaphor not merely in terms of the *acting being* (as we have seen) but also in light of what she calls a *negativity* (Moi 95). "Metaphoricalness," she writes, "appears to me as the utterance not only of a being as One and acting, but rather, or even on the contrary, as the indication of uncertainty concerning the reference. *Being like* is not only *being* and *nonbeing*, it is also a longing for *unbeing*" (*Tales of Love* 273). Metaphor, then, for Kristeva is the "drifting of heterogeneity" (*Tales of Love* 37). As such, it results in a radical questioning, the questioning of univocal meaning which 'falls' into the surplus of equivocality and that of the enunciating subject who opens out to his/her own instability (*Tales of Love* 275). As she puts it, the "subject and object of the utterance act muddle their borders (*Tales of Love* 268)"; "a modification of...being is carried out" (274): "Being? - Unbeing" (*Tales of Love* 273). Such is the *difficult passage* motivated by metaphor in Julia Kristeva.

If Kristeva's understanding of metaphoricity can be traced back to Aristotle's *epiphora*, Derrida's is closer to Pierre Fontanier's discussion of *catachresis*. As the latter defines it, *catachresis* "is every Trope of forced and necessary usage, every Trope from which there results a purely *extensive sense*" (qtd. in Derrida, "White Mythology" 255). What is at stake in Derrida's treatment of metaphor is precisely its "usage" or, rather, its "us-value" that, as he emphasizes, has determined the attitude of western philosophy to it ("The Retrait of Metaphor" 9). In his view, the subsumption of metaphoricity "under the concept or the scheme of *usure*" ("The Retrait of Metaphor" 13) (taken as usage, profit, wear and tear) has circumscribed it within what he calls a "restricted economy," namely, an economy which seeks to conserve all stakes by turning any loss (e.g. the loss of meaning or being) into profit (i.e. their triumphant resurrection as Truth or the *hen/One*) ("From Restricted to General Economy" 251). The task Derrida sets himself in his writings on metaphor is to throw light upon that force within this economy that converts loss into expenditure, i.e. into useless loss, an unrecoverable negativity. In fact, this is what Fontanier's concept of *catachresis* (in its connotations of a *forced* usage) permits him to do. What is more, in its opening out of every trope to 'a purely extensive sense,' *catachresis* points to the *usury* at work in every 'usage' of metaphor, that is, the production of a surplus value which

transforms the restricted economy of western philosophy into what Derrida calls a "general economy," in other words, an economy without reserve ("Restricted" 251-77).

According to Derrida, this movement of excess and pure expenditure suggested by *catachresis* can "only very improperly be called metaphoric" (Gasché 294), for it occupies an intermediary space (an *intervallum*) in the opposition between the figurative and the proper and is, thus, irreducible to either of them. Derrida prefers to discuss this "unnameable" in terms of a general metaphoricity or, as he puts it, a "*quasi-metaphoricity*" ("Retrait" 23). Quasi-metaphoricity (as Derrida understands it) is an archaic motility that needs to be conceptualized outside the philosophical distinction between the literal and the metaphorical, though it is what opens the relation between the two and, thus, what renders their opposition possible. Being constitutive of the concepts within which western philosophy has attempted to think it, quasi-metaphoricity seems, as Rodolphe Gasché suggests, to share the structure and function of transcendentals. Unlike what Gasché calls "finite or immanent transcendentals" (316), however, quasi-metaphoricity withdraws (i.e. *retrait*/retreats) the moment it sets (*retrait*/re-traces) itself as an origin. As Derrida argues, "[s]upposing that we might reach it (touch it, see it, comprehend it?) this tropic and prephilosophical resource could not have the archaeological simplicity of a proper origin, the virginity of a history of beginnings" ("White Mythology" 229). This is why in "The *Retrait* of Metaphor" Derrida articulates it in terms of the Heideggerean notion of the trait. Like the trait, then, which, according to Heidegger, is "by essence a *retrait*," quasi-metaphoricity is a self-effacing movement. Though it is disclosive of Being and the effects of the proper, it "does not reveal itself as such" (Gasché 311). What is more, it can be "written only in the plural" (Derrida, "White Mythology" 268). Derrida writes: "If there were only one possible metaphor... there would be no more true metaphor but only, through the one true metaphor, the assured legibility of the proper" ("White Mythology" 268). This, as we have seen, relates to the *catachrestic* nature of Derrida's metaphoricity, its openness to a "purely extensive sense." Permit me to quote the French text here: "*plus de métalangage, plus de métalinguistique, donc plus de méta-rhétorique, plus de métaphysique. Toujours une métaphore de plus au moment où la métaphore se retire en évasant ses limites*" (qtd. in Hobson 209). *Plus de*: more metaphor, and yet *no more* metaphor, for the proliferation of metaphoricity erases the boundaries between the literal and the metaphorical. *Plus de*: more and yet no more. This is the double gesture setting off the *movement* of the Derridean metaphor—the *difficulty* here arising from a negativity that does not cease to perform its own death-sentence.

In what follows I want to suggest that it is, indeed, death that is at stake in the two theorists' journey beyond a metaphorical economy which privileges, as we have seen, the preservation or eventual recovery of Truth and Being-as-One. In fact, I want to argue that the theorists' insistence on (re)inscribing the movement of the classical philosophical concept of metaphor within a *necessity* that reverses, disrupts, exhausts or delays it is precisely what renders their journey political. It is interesting that in both theorists this necessity takes the form of death—be it Derrida's useless, unrecoverable loss or Kristeva's longing for unbeing. This is, however, where the difficulty of their joined venture sets them apart inasmuch as for the psychoanalyst death is *my* work in the face of the *other*—ultimately, then, a work of *love*. By contrast, for the philosopher death is always (the work of) the *other* and, as a result, remains the object of *my desire*.

## **Le pas au-delà: Difference and Difficulty**

### I: Derrida's *arrêt-de-mort*

Masters of the first rank are revealed by the fact that in great as well as small matters they know how to end perfectly, whether it is a matter of ending a melody or a thought, or the fifth act of a tragedy or of an action of state. The best of the second rank always become restless as the end approaches and do not manage to slope into the sea in such proud and calm harmony as, for example, the mountains at Portofino - where the bay of Genoa ends its melody. (Nietzsche 227)

It might be worth tracing in Derrida's philosophical analysis of metaphor two gestures that seem contradictory yet are inextricable in the entirety of his work. On the one hand, Derrida is keen on demonstrating that "the outside is inside" (*Of Grammatology* 44). Indeed, Derrida insists that metaphor "does not surprise being from the outside" (Gasché 306). As Gasché explains, "a certain

metaphoricity is constitutive of the very unity of being," it is what opens it out to analogy and thus, what renders it sayable, comprehensible, nominalizable (302). On the other hand, Derrida seeks to do justice to what, in his view, should remain unsayable, incomprehensible, unnameable. His work on Plato's *Khora* or the gift is indicative of this concern. In the context of this work, Derrida attempts to articulate a negativity "*si négative qu'elle ne pourrait même se nommer ainsi*" (qtd. in Hobson 211). Influenced by the work of Emmanuel Levinas, he seeks to establish a relation with alterity that will not reduce it to the system of hierarchical binary oppositions on which western philosophy depends. His inscription, then, of quasi-metaphoricity as the movement without (literally a *pas au-delà*) the opposition between figurative and proper meaning needs to be seen in the light of his desire to do justice to the other of the couple; indeed, what he would prefer to call the *virgin* of the couple, for the radical other in Derrida is *nobody's other*.<sup>8</sup> Hence his insistence on the self-effacing gesture that keeps quasi-metaphoricity *outside* the structure it opens, beyond the western privileging of couples and coupling, indeed, beyond touch. As he emphasizes, the trait of quasi-metaphoricity "is nothing approximate (*approchant*) as such" ("Retrait" 28).

The problem that Derrida's quasi-metaphoricity raises is one lying at the heart of contemporary philosophical debates. This is how Paul Bowman articulates it in his review of a conference on Derrida's *Politics of Friendship*:

[T]he moment of systemic constitution is necessarily one of external intervention, producing an inside which must thereafter efface its outside in order to maintain its identity. The constituted system or structure derives internal systematicity only through exclusion. But, if there is an exterior to the structure, then the entirety of the structure is placed in jeopardy as it is already subverted, constitutively split, traversed by an alterity it must efface in order to survive. (160)

The difficulty, then, of Derrida's quasi-metaphoricity in the context of the metaphorical economy that has sustained western metaphysics lies precisely in its function as the constitutive outside of this economy. In other words, its difficulty lies in the double movement that inscribes it both *within* the metaphor vs. concept opposition as its pre-originary origin (its *mother*) and at the same time *without* it as its most radical *other*. This is why quasi-metaphoricity threatens this opposition with an *unrecoverable loss* (i.e. death), for it lays hold of the metaphor from within its very roots, undermining the stability and purity of its extremities by opening them up to "a logic of contamination" (Gasché 310).

As Bowman tells us, however,<sup>9</sup> the difficulty entailed in the operation of the constitutive outside has historically been resolved by the death or departure of the originary force—the very gesture, interestingly, that in its self-effacing movement, Derrida's quasi-metaphoricity performs. It is important that we understand this gesture as both an act of suicide perpetrated to protect the originary force in its radical alterity, keeping it outside the structure it opens, and as a murder, an act of aggression dictated by the latter's *economy* of (self-) preservation. Hence Derrida's insistence at the end of "White Mythology" that, if metaphor "always carries its death within itself," this is "also the death of philosophy." As he explains, the genitive in this context should be understood as double (271), for this is not only a death that haunts philosophy from a certain outside but, at the same time, a death orchestrated by philosophy and, as a result, an integral part of it. Thus, what I am concerned with spelling out here is that the same movement guaranteeing the function of quasi-metaphoricity as an unrecoverable negativity, is also paradoxically what works to protect the integrity of the metaphorical economy that this negativity seeks to destroy.

It is already apparent that a fundamental ambiguity characterizes the death-sentence inscribed in Derrida's quasi-metaphoricity, an ambiguity which, as we shall see, is deeply embedded in its politics, that is, the spaces it promises to open for critique, change and renewal. This ambiguity is caused by the fact that death, just like the movement that carries it, seems to proliferate, turning back upon itself to the point of engulfing itself and its own carrier-movement: *plus de mort*? It would appear so, for the logic of contamination quasi-metaphoricity introduces into the oppositional structure of concept vs. metaphor leaves the poles of the opposition remarkably intact. In "The *Retrait* of Metaphor" Derrida makes clear that "the two neighbours" that quasi-metaphoricity relates cut each other "somewhere at infinity."<sup>10</sup> What is more, "they re-cut without touching each other, without affecting

each other, without wounding each other" (29). Where, then—if anywhere—is the promise of Derrida's other metaphor to be found?

In what follows I want to claim that in Derrida there is a "fate worse than death" (Critchley 54). This is what Blanchot calls "the ease of dying" (Holland 301-16). It is to this fate that, in his introduction of an elementary motility, Derrida condemns western philosophy and the metaphorical economy upheld by it. To appreciate the force of this Derridean move it is enough to recall that philosophy has traditionally defined itself as an apprenticeship to death.<sup>11</sup> In his discussion of Jan Patočka in *The Gift of Death* Derrida reads Plato's *Phaedo* in order to unpack the implications of this understanding of philosophy: "The *Phaedo* explicitly names philosophy: it is the attentive anticipation of death, the care brought to bear upon dying, the meditation on the best way to receive, give or give oneself death, the experience of a vigil over the possibility of death, and over the possibility of death as impossibility" (12-13). As he explains, this *epimeleia thanatou* (exemplified by both the life and paradigmatic death of Socrates) cannot be divorced from a process of "subjectivizing interiorization, the movement of the soul's gathering of itself, a fleeing of the body towards its interior where it withdraws into itself in order to recall itself to itself, in order to be next to itself, in order to keep itself in this gesture of remembering" ("The Gift of Death" 13; emphasis in the original). Death, then, this life-suspending *aporia*, this *limitrophic*<sup>12</sup> movement that consumes the borders it transgresses, has functioned in western philosophy in ways that re-iterate the paradigm of usury we have traced in Derrida's analysis of metaphor. Thus, any loss it carries with it quickly returns as profit: i.e. the re-assembling of the self, the restoration of the proper. In *Spectres of Marx* Derrida discusses this funereal brokerage as integral to the "philosophical 'spirit':" "its very process consists of visibly heading the march at the moment of its 'disappearance' and its 'putting in the ground,' it consists of leading its own funeral procession and of raising itself in the course of this march, of hoping at least to right itself again so as to stand up ('resurrection,' 'exaltation')" (36; emphasis in the original).<sup>13</sup> As the double moment of philosophy's exhaustion/affirmation, this "wake, this joyous death watch of philosophy" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 36) has become symptomatic of its allergy in the face of an/other imminent demise, "an unanticipatable event which doesn't finish arriving" (Malabou and Derrida 24). In *Counterpath* Derrida reminds us that the major disciplinarian of death, Socrates, claims precisely "to see in advance, to foresee and to not allow himself to be surprised by the delay [yes, the *différance*] of his death" (Malabou and Derrida 201).

In this light, it is significant that, in his conclusion to "White Mythology," Derrida hints at a death which is no longer a genre of the discipline of philosophy. This is "the death of a philosophy which does not see [or foresee] itself die and is no longer to be refound within philosophy" (271). Quasi-metaphoricity is Derrida's name for this other death that awaits philosophy while being unanticipated by it. It is no wonder that this unanticipated and unanticipatable death unfolds as its own *différance* for, as Blanchot writes, "if death loses its sting...there is, each time one advances with the help of possible death, the necessity not to advance any further" (*The Writing of the Disaster* 68). It is this reluctance to advance erupting at the heart of a movement that has always taken its march for destiny that inscribes Derrida's *pas au-delà* and gives it the force of what Blanchot calls *dying* (*le mourir* which he distinguishes from *la mort*). Interestingly, there is a certain "awkwardness in dying," according to Blanchot (*Writing* 37). Compared to the elegance and measured mastery of the philosopher's death (Socrates' death remains, of course, the point of reference here), dying, Blanchot writes, is the activity of "someone... who has not learned how or who has missed his classes" (*Writing* 37). It is, then, the un-Socratic experience par excellence, the counter-activity to the pedagogy of the Master who posits death as the end of philosophy —understood as both its goal and closure, the accomplishment and, at the same time, the exhaustion of philosophy: "I wish [Socrates] had remained taciturn also at the last moment of his life"; Nietzsche confesses. He continues:

Whether it was death or the poison or piety or malice - something loosened his tongue at that moment and he said: 'O Crito, I owe Asclepius a rooster.' This ridiculous and terrible "last word" means for those who have ears: 'O Crito, *life is a disease*.'...- Alas, my friends, we must overcome even the Greeks! (272)

If the force of Derrida's quasi-metaphoricity is ambiguous, this is because it unfolds in the between of, on the one hand, this Nietzschean injunction to overcome the Greeks and the post-Nietzschean knowledge, on the other hand, that this may not be such an easy task, for any discursive, conceptual or

subjective movement outwards is eventually channelled back within the self, Truth and Being-as-One. This is why, as Giuseppe Stellardi rightly argues, "with Derrida, philosophy [our legacy from the Greeks] is not even trying to kill itself. On the contrary, it survives indefinitely by elaborating its own mourning" (116). The task Derrida sets himself in his rethinking of metaphor is to convert the philosophical mourning for an always-already-to-be-recuperated-loss into the other-inspir(it)ed vigilance that Blanchot associates with dying. This is by no means the vigilance of the Master whose keen eye reduces the imminence of death to a (his own) work. It is, by contrast, the watchfulness of the philosopher-turned-passive (indeed, a "patient," Blanchot, *Writing* 20) in the face of what threatens like an enemy ("the death without expression, the death without any name, the death outside the concept," *Writing* 68) and beckons like the most seductive future: "Dying," Simon Critchley writes, "opens the possibility of a future without me, an infinite future, a future which is not my future" (75).

Quasi-metaphoricity then introduces a radical disjunction between the I (as other-bound and future-oriented) and its present/presence; between death as the philosopher's accomplishment *cum* destiny and the alterity of an experience at the edge of life; between life, finally, and what Derrida calls (again drawing on Blanchot) "survival," or "living on." Blanchot writes: "*Survivre*, living *on*: not *living* or (not living) *maintaining oneself*, lifeless, in a state of pure supplement, a movement of supplementing life, but rather stopping [*arrêter*] the dying, a stopping [*arrêt*] that does not stop [*arrête*] it, that on the contrary makes it go on, makes it *last* [*durer*]" (qtd. in Derrida, "Living On" 107). In my reading, this is precisely where the value of quasi-metaphoricity lies. For in suspending the self-affirming death of philosophy (thus sparing philosophy, letting it survive), it frustrates philosophy's self-appointed heroic closure and introduces into its narrative a disseminating force that unlocks the destinies of Truth, properness, language and Being. In doing so, it opens philosophy to a time (a new philosophical epoch) that resists interiorization and to a mode of thinking that cannot yet be anticipated because it is not deriveable from the I-anchoring tropologies that have inflected the western philosopher's journey. It is no wonder Derrida speaks of a "metaphoric *catastrophe*,"<sup>14</sup> that is, of a reverse turn (*strophe*), a displacing drift that bears with it the disquieting and neutralizing<sup>15</sup> effects of Blanchot's disaster: "The disaster," Blanchot writes, "ruins everything, all the while leaving everything intact. It does not touch anyone in particular; 'I' am not threatened by it, but spared, left aside. It is in this way that I am threatened" (*Writing* 1). Indeed, in "The Instant of My Death," a short prose piece by Blanchot, it is only when the young narrator is spared ("prevented from dying by death itself" 3) that he is awakened to the long history of privilege he has enjoyed as a member of the French aristocracy. The "torment of injustice" (7) that follows keeps the narrator suspended at the threshold between "the simple facticity of being" (Critchley 32) and the gaping mouth of the infinite; death as the fate shared by all (even the commonest farmer's son; Blanchot, "The Instant of My Death" 7) and death as a risk worth taking, "something to be achieved" (Critchley 68).

In many ways, quasi-metaphoricity constitutes precisely the risk which Derrida takes with full awareness of the madness of the attempt. His journey backwards (which is also, as I have suggested, a journey outwards) resembles the leap Blanchot describes in his discussion of Jean Paulhan, a leap "which alone would allow the forbidden passage from one to the other [from concept to metaphor, from unitary Being to its excessive supplement, from life to death] to be made" (Holland 309). Interestingly, Blanchot tells us that, the moment it is taken, this leap feels easy (almost too easy). But this is precisely what renders it difficult, if not impossible. Blanchot writes: "For...as soon as thought is invited to open itself up to its own discontinuity in order to complete itself as thought, it is almost the ease of this movement, the temptation to give in to it immediately...which risks intervening and withdrawing this possibility" (Holland 310). Thus, the leap of thought to its outside is arrested the moment it is made precisely because of the knowledge (an "illicit discovery," according to Blanchot) that it *can* be made. It is, then, this illicit knowledge it carries with it (i.e. the knowledge of the closeness of the outside and the possibility of the impossible) that causes Derrida's quasi-metaphoricity to erupt, no longer as death (*mort*), but as an *arrêt-de-mort*, that is, as the suspension of the death haunting the western metaphorical economy in the very pronouncement of its death-sentence. Hence, as I have suggested, the ambiguity of its politics, since quasi-metaphoricity seems to condemn us to an easy death that can only be experienced "inattentively" and, as such, "might let us live" because, inattentive as we are, we forget that the very distraction we are experiencing is "the symptom of death itself" (Holland 311).



Shall we venture to suggest that our fate in Derrida resembles that of Blanchot's suicide who, though in such close proximity to death, all he can feel is "the rope tightening around his neck, binding him even tighter to the existence he wanted to leave" (Critchley 32)? Indeed, if Derrida has contributed to the melancholic disposition that, according to recent accounts,<sup>16</sup> is holding contemporary philosophy in its grip, this is because the knowledge he shares with us is "too acute for comfort, too hostile to hope and the well-being of thought" (Stellardi 117)—the knowledge, as I have already suggested, that there is no simple overcoming of the Greeks, no outside to western metaphysics. This is why the useless, unrecoverable loss we have placed at the heart of quasi-metaphoricity can only haunt the Greek metaphysical economy from a partly erased past (a past beyond the memory of the Greeks) or suggest itself in it as a chance, a possibility forever pending, always yet to erupt somewhere at infinity. This is also why for Derrida life in this economy is an interminable death-agony (this, I would suggest, is a most appropriate metaphor for *différance*).<sup>17</sup> And yet, Blanchot tells us, "easy death" is, at the same time, the only "manner in which transgression—this step beyond and belonging to the outside—is proposed" to us. It is the only "evidence" of a force "through which we are always questioned, for want of knowing that at every moment...we are forming an answer to it" (Holland 315). This is why "there is no rest," he adds (Holland 309). Indeed, in *Spectres of Marx* Derrida associates the concept of "living on" with an experience of ethical haunting (4, 10, 22, 23). Addressing the vigilant Master of philosophy's death, he asks: "Re-naisance or revenance?" (36), thus inviting us to re-think not only the practice of *philosophiein* but also its politics which, as he argues, is inextricable from a politics of memory and inheritance (xix). As an exemplary instance of Derrida's hauntological politics, quasi-metaphoricity counters philosophy's *epimeleia thanatou* through an uncanny deferral of its end (i.e. resurrection). At the same time, it forces philosophy to account for an unforeseeable return (*qua* homecoming and profit/revenue) that disturbs its coincidence with itself, exposing it to the disquieting presence of its (spectral) other.

But this is perhaps the crux of the difficulty we have traced in Derrida's quasi-metaphoricity. For, though the gift of death remains beyond our reach, *dis-ease* (a difficult ease, as the prefix suggests) is offered to us in order to prevent us from being content with the movement we normally call life, thus keeping us open (or, if you like, vulnerable) to what can only be experienced on the level of desire: "Oh all to end" (Holland 298-300)!

## II: Kristeva's Amort

Life—that means for us constantly transforming all that we are into light and flame—  
is also everything that wounds us; (Nietzsche 36)

It is interesting that in his "Preamble" to *Death, Philosophy, Literature* Critchley defines philosophy as a form of atheism involving an experience of what I have preferred to call *dis-ease* (rather than unease), which he understands in the context of modern nihilism (2-3). It seems that philosophy continues to resist "the *intoxication* of convalescence" with which Nietzsche opens *The Gay Science* (32). As Nietzsche describes it, this is an experience of "high spirits, unrest, contradiction, and April weather" in the context of which one feels "*newborn*, having shed one's skin..." (32, 37). Indeed, in his discussion of Blanchot, Critchley insists on dissuading us from "reading [him] apocalyptically." "Such a reading," he argues, "would escape the interminable facticity of dying, through some virile, revolutionary death fantasy." It would posit "a successful end to desire—and it should have been established by now that 'success' and 'end' are words that contradict what Blanchot means by desire" (47-48). At the risk of reproducing what Critchley calls "the therapeutic fantasy of the cure" (48), I want to take my cue from Nietzsche and reclaim intoxication (the happy innocence of the newborn) for thought. It is the intoxication felt when one is attacked by "the unexpected" (32) that I want to place at the heart of Kristeva's other metaphor. For, in contrast to the philosopher, the psychoanalyst, the "philosophical *physician*" for whom Nietzsche was still waiting in the fall of 1886 (35), is a believer—not merely in the possibility of the impossible (i.e. death), but also in the *chance* that there may be *something* after it. "What is psychoanalysis if not an infinite quest for rebirths"? Kristeva asks (*Tales of Love* 1).

This is why she refuses to inscribe the reversive force of the metaphorical motility that interests her within the paradigm of (Lacanian) desire and adopts instead that of Christian love (*agape* rather than *eros*). As she explains, desire "emphasizes the lack." Hence its pertinence for our understanding of what can only be experienced in its suspension in Derrida—be it quasi-metaphoricity itself or the unrecoverable loss it bears with it. "By contrast," she continues, "love...gives greater importance to the movement toward the other and to mutual attraction" (*Tales of Love* 155). Love, then, as Kristeva understands it, marks the exposure of the self. It obeys a logic of motion rather than *telos*, and thus it should not be conceptualized in terms of fusion (the fusion of two terms that remain intact), but as a dialectical operation hollowing out the body of the one in ways that enable it to receive an (the) other. In this light, it is no wonder that, at the beginning of her theoretical treatment of metaphor, Kristeva emphasizes her intention "to understand [the] broadened metaphoricalness" that interests her "within the amatory economy of the subject of the utterance" (*Tales of Love* 268). In her view, "the *Ego Affectus Est*" is the correlative of metaphor. It is not a coincidence, she argues, that "nascent rationalism brushes [both] aside in the same stroke...[t]o make possible the advent of judgement and the *ego cogito*" (*Tales of Love* 275). Reading Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Kristeva sets out to demonstrate what is at stake in the convergence between metaphoricity and love. As she insists, this musical Don Giovanni whose quest is strikingly de-sensualized and sublimated, should not be confused with those who reduce the art of seduction, that is, the art of diverting from the proper and the expected path, to "an athletic performance of their genital system" (*Tales of Love* 193, 204). He is the figure of the baroque man *par excellence*: a master of signifiers, a flouter of the (proper) name, a wearer of faces as if they were masks, a champion of pure form, an artist of displacements and condensations. What renders the polyphonic figure of Don Giovanni disturbing for "nascent rationalism" is, according to Kristeva, precisely what posits him as a paradigm for the archaic motility she seeks to reclaim: namely, his lack of interiority, his contempt for any kind of properness or property, his commitment to an understanding of love that involves no object and does not necessitate possession. Because his nature is excess, "he multiplies his universe, changes it into a polytope" (*Tales of Love* 193), Kristeva's Don Juan expends himself generously, "losing, endlessly, for nothing, hence for humanity, gloriously" (*Tales of Love* 204). Kristeva quotes Don Juan's famous speech in Act I, Scene 2: "I cannot refuse my heart to what I see as lovable; and as soon as a beautiful face asks me for it, if I had ten thousand hearts I would give them all" (*Tales of Love* 195). If metaphoricity is a species of love, then (or vice versa), this is because they both invite us to rethink the ego *qua* gift, a self-less submission to an other's request, pure destitution of the I, response-ability. It is in these terms, Kristeva insists, that Don Juan's final exit hanging "on to the stone arms of the Commandant, doomed to fire and death" (*Tales of Love* 199) needs to be read. For he embraces death as he would a woman, not out of weariness with life, as Socrates does. His submission is ec-static, a relinquishment of the self, which is also a reaching out beyond it, driven by the conviction that the "seducer's music" will outlast the man and borne across by a "sublime joy," the joy of a life led as "an open work," as "a series of constructions, innovations, liberations" (*Tales of Love* 199).<sup>18</sup>

It is important to understand Kristeva's insistence on inscribing her principle of metaphoricity within the amatory economy of the speaking subject in light of her concern with Aristotle's *energeia*, which in *Ethics* he too associates with love. Indeed, Don Giovanni's love resembles the activity-activated love Aristotle discusses in *Ethics*, namely, that of benefactors toward beneficiaries, the craftsman toward the product of his hands, or poets toward their poetry (298-300). As Kristeva puts it, Don Juan's is the love of a man who "is able to" (194; emphasis in the original). It is because this "active" love, the love of an acting being, actualizes "what is only potentially" that it becomes an ethical ground for the Aristotelian *polis* (*Ethics* 299-300). In a similar vein, for Kristeva love is "a builder of spoken [and thus shared] spaces" (*Tales of Love* 382).

What is more, love, as Kristeva conceptualizes it, is "accomplished by means of a death" (*Tales of Love* 141). In fact, according to her, this is where the value of Christian love lies: "the *agape* is the agape of the Cross," she emphasizes (*Tales of Love* 140). What attracts the psychoanalyst to the death entailed in the Christian notion of *agape* is that it is "temporary." Thus, as she tells us, it "does not aim at eternity but at resurrection" (*Tales of Love* 141). At the same time, it is scandalous, insane, inadmissible because it is an *impossible* death. It is impossible in the sense that it is the death of what is by definition immortal (god) but also in that it is experienced in the here-and-now of the mortal subject who (through his/her identification with Christ) comes to internalize death.

Kristeva considers this internalization of death a fundamental necessity for the speaking subject whose autonomy is achieved through the traumatic experience of "a series of splittings: birth, weaning, separation, frustration, castration" (*Black Sun* 132). This is why s/he needs to learn how to *receive* (i.e. be hospitable to) death (in its many psychic guises). Indeed, s/he needs to learn how to remobilize the force of death in ways that prevent it from erupting as a rupture, a disabling crisis. It is important, however, to draw a distinction between the psychic openness to death that is an indispensable part of the analytic process and the philosopher's funereal pedagogy. For, unlike the philosopher who turns death into a self-retrieval strategy, the analyst posits it as the metaphorical site where the patient's suffering can be shared (through/in words) and for-given (given for, offered to the loving analyst as a counter-gift). Kristeva's central paradigm for the analyst's love (a love that defies death by reviving the patient's metaphorical capacity, his/her ability to retrieve bonds and make new connections) is Mary at the foot of the Cross holding her son's dead body. "Since resurrection there is, and, as Mother of God, she must know this," Kristeva writes, "Mary's outburst of pain," stems from "the desire to experience within her own body the death of a human being" (*Tales of Love* 250-51). It is this desire to host an other's suffering, incorporate a death not one's own, transpose ineffable pain into signs (be it tears, cries or words) that renders the figure of the analyst distinctly maternal in Kristeva. If, then, the psychoanalytic experience is ultimately joyful, this is because it is founded on the "irrational but unshakeable maternal certainty" that "death does not exist" and that the psychic crisis it brings about is not an end, *the* end that would render life an interminable death-agony. Though it leaves an open wound "at the root of the human psyche," it is, instead, a stage in "an endless poiesis" (*Tales of Love* 23, 90) or, in other words, the "essential element," and "indispensable character" of what can only be the metaphoric catastrophe of Being; namely, Being as "a work in progress" (*Tales of Love* 380). This is what Kristeva emphasizes in her discussion of symbolic castration in *New Maladies of the Soul*: "If we...make too much of the negation and rejection that underlie symbolic castration," she argues, "we run the daunting risk of rooting it in mourning alone" (88). Thus, beyond negation, castration needs to be rethought in terms of a *question*. As she explains, a question implies allowing the other to speak, in other words, opening up a space for the other.

It is my contention that the death experienced in the destabilization of metaphorical shifting is precisely a question in this sense. Hence Kristeva's attempt to understand the uncertainty to which her other metaphor exposes being ("Being? - Unbeing") within the context of "the questioning of the subject in amatory experience" (*Tales of Love* 274). "In the rapture of love, the limits of one's own identity vanish," she writes (*Tales of Love* 2). As the discursive correlative of love, Kristeva's metaphoricity brings about a "vertigo of identity" as much as a "vertigo of words" (*Tales of Love* 3). It is an affliction (yes, a *dis-ease*) that comes over the classical western system of meaning production and the subject rooted in it (*Tales of Love* 6). At the same time, metaphoricity pours forth as an uncontrollable feeling of *intoxication* (rapture, ecstasy, *jouissance*) for, in carrying both meaning and being across their borders, it renders the unexpected (namely, discursive and subjective renewal) possible. If, however, the death-sentence constitutive of Kristeva's archaic motility is (indeed, can only be) pronounced within the space of love, then, its equivalent (if we were to attempt a translation) is less Blanchot's *arrêt-de-mort* than the *herethics of amort*, as Kristeva defines it at the end of her essay "Stabat Mater": *à mort* (to-death), *amour* (love), *a-mort* (undead) (*Tales of Love* 263). In other words, as Kristeva puts it in a different context, "love is the death sentence that causes me to be" (*Tales of Love* 36).

It is this chance of life, as I suggested earlier, this promise of a birth (indeed, a re-birth) that constitutes the determining difference between Derrida and Kristeva's articulations of an elementary principle of metaphoricity. Derrida's quasi-transcendental seduces us on a journey beyond our own memory. What is at stake here is a *past*, a non-originary origin which is forgotten before/as it is inscribed. Western philosophy for Derrida—like the ancient Greeks—remains a child, forever erasing the primal scene of its conception and, thus, forever forgetting its mortality: "Death is at hand," Stellardi notes in his discussion of Derridean metaphor, "with no resurrection in sight: the death of an epoch whose end is not yet visible, but which nevertheless obscurely announces, by sometimes unrecognizable signs, the possibility of its own disappearance. This possibility is very close, intimate, nonexorcizable; but constantly exorcized, for instance by philosophy" (77).

To conclude, it appears that, though Kristeva shares Derrida's desire to step beyond the oppositional understanding of metaphor, her *pas au-delà* does not set up an *ex-tension*, a third leg, as it were, attached to the binary structure. Her focus, as we have seen, is not on the between, the *intervallum* irreducible to the two extremities it relates, but on the *go-between* that opens up the self to its own excess. Neither, however, does it constitute an *ex-tense*, a movement that never arrives in the subject's here-and-now. Unlike Derrida's *quasi-metaphoricity*, the elementary motility that Kristeva traces, though equally foundational and equally *other*, does not cease to surface *within* the simple facticity of being "like a fragile crest where death and regeneration vie for dominance" (*Tales of Love* 5). This is what renders it *difficult* in the context of a philosophical tradition which privileges the murder/sacrifice or, at best, the performative suicide of what it perceives as its constitutive outside. In her introduction of an other metaphor, then, Kristeva ventures to set in motion a force which "comes from outside, spiritually refounds and yet insists on staying," to borrow Bowman's description of Ruth, the biblical character (160). Interestingly, as soon as he completes this description, Bowman cannot keep back an utterance of disbelief, one aggravated, it seems, by the fact that Ruth (like Kristeva) is "female:" "Hm" (160).

It seems that the (male) philosopher needs to continue in doubt. The woman philosophical physician, however, whose aim is not the truth of the subject but his/her innovative capacities (*Tales of Love* 15), can only share the convalescent's belief in "the wind that thaws ice and snow" as well as his intoxicating gratitude for "the triumph over the winter that is coming, must come, and perhaps has already come" (Nietzsche 32).

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<sup>1</sup> The obvious examples here are Domna C. Stanton's critique of Kristeva's privileging of (the maternal) metaphor and Paul Ricoeur's taking Derrida to task for not moving beyond a tradition that has reduced our understanding of metaphor to a transfer between the poles of the key metaphysical pair (i.e. sensible/intelligible, visible/invisible). See Stanton and Ricoeur. The reader may be taken aback by my invocation of what can only return as a ghost from a forgotten past (namely, misreading), but I am using the term consciously to suggest that, though the experience and experiment of the undecidable are inextricable from every reading, the reader's responsibility (the care with which s/he approaches a text) as well as the risk of violation/violence entailed in this approach are urgent questions that we still need to grapple with. In his much publicized exchange with John Searle, Derrida writes: "I perceive even today in this violence of mine the very clear...concern to distinguish and submit to analysis the brutality with which...Searle had read me, or rather avoided reading me and trying to understand. And why, perhaps, he was not *able* to read me, why this inability was exemplary and symptomatic." See *Limited INC* 113, 116.

<sup>2</sup> See Blanchot's *Death Sentence* and his "The Ease of Dying" in Holland 316.

<sup>3</sup> In this paragraph I am drawing on a previous (and much shorter) discussion of Derridean metaphor included in the *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*. See Margaroni 243-45.

<sup>4</sup> In their reclamation of the function of syntax in metaphorical utterances, both thinkers contribute to and further recent debates about the nature of metaphor. Kristeva explains clearly that the target of her critique is a reductive metaphysical interpretation of metaphor that sees in it "a simple shift from *literal* to *figurative*, *primary* to *secondary*, *animate* to *inanimate*, etc." She goes on to acknowledge the work done by "I. A. Richards, Max Black, and on a different level, by Emile Benveniste, Roman Jakobson and contemporary semanticists who, in their wake, locate the metaphor in *sentence* and *discourse*" (*Tales of Love* 273).

<sup>5</sup> See the chapter on Action in Arendt.

<sup>6</sup> The question, according to Kristeva, is not simply "what is innovation?" but also "how does one express it?" (*Tales of Love* 275).

<sup>7</sup> According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins*, the prefix 'epi-' carries the meaning of "on, upon, over, close up in time or space, in addition (to)." It relates to the Latin prefix 'ob-' which means both 'towards' and 'against.' See Hoad 152.

<sup>8</sup> Though it would be "so virginal" (to paraphrase his description of the Platonic *khora*) that it would not "even have the figure of a virgin any longer" («Khora» 126).

<sup>9</sup> Bowman is here discussing Bonnie Honig's intervention at the conference "Politics, Friendship, and 'Democracy to Come': Jacques Derrida's Politics of Friendship" (Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 29-30 November, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Derrida is discussing the Heideggerian *trait* as the "value of neighbourliness" between *Denken and Dichten*, thought and poetry. See his "Retrait" 26.

<sup>11</sup> The much cited reference here is, of course, Montaigne's "*Philosopher, c'est apprendre à mourir*" (qtd. in Smith in Maclachlan 146). In his recent attempt to re-inscribe and renew this understanding of philosophy, Simon Critchley writes: "To philosophize in the time of nihilism is to learn how to die *this* death, *my* death, knowing that there is nothing else after this death..." (25). Hence his conviction that philosophy "under modern conditions" is synonymous with atheism (3). See my discussion in the final section of this essay.

<sup>12</sup> This is a composite word bringing together the concept of the limit and the concept of consumption (*τρέφω, τρέφομαι, τροφή* in Greek: to consume, to feed on, food). See Derrida's use of this term in *Aporias*.

<sup>13</sup> Derrida here is drawing on Blanchot whom he quotes:

For the last century and a half...it is philosophy itself that has been affirming or realizing its own end, whether it understands that end as the accomplishment of absolute knowledge, its theoretical suppression linked to its practical realization, the nihilist movement in which all values are engulfed, or finally by the culmination of metaphysics, precursor sign of another possibility that does not yet have a name. This funereal moment which the philosophical spirit celebrates in an exaltation that is, moreover, often joyful, leading its slow funeral procession during which it expects, in one way or another, to obtain its resurrection. (*Specters of Marx* 36; emphasis in the original).

<sup>14</sup> See Malabou's excellent analysis of Derrida's counter-Odyssey through a reinvestment of such concepts as "catastrophe" and "drift."

<sup>15</sup> As the translator of Blanchot's *The Writing of the Disaster* remarks, the neutral in his work functions as a synonym for what disrupts and cancels out binaries: "Neither, nor: the 'neutral' (*le neutre*), which means 'outside' the whole which, together, the one term and the other (being and not being) comprise" (x).

<sup>16</sup> In her recent keynote address at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Symposium organized by the International Association for Philosophy and Literature, Rosi Braidotti launched an attack against the "melancholic" philosophy of our times in the name of a more "affirmative" philosophy. In her account, Derrida as well as Critchley are obvious representatives of this melancholic strain of thought. (Melbourne, 4 July 2008)

<sup>17</sup> In "Living On: *Border Lines*" Derrida explicitly connects *différance* with Blanchot's *arrêt de mort* (136). In his discussion of the latter, Derrida writes: "*Arrêter*, in the sense of deciding, arrests the *arrêt*, in the sense of suspension. They are ahead of or lag behind one another. One marks delay; the other haste. There are not merely two senses or two syntaxes of *arrêt* but, beyond a playful variability, the *antagony* [*antagonie*; cf. *agonie*, 'death throes' and *antagonisme*] from one *arrêt* to the other" (115). If, as I suggest, life in the economy we have inherited from the Greeks is an interminable death-agony, this is precisely because this life is in a permanent antagonism with itself, always haunted by a force outside it.

<sup>18</sup> It is interesting for the reading I have attempted in this essay that, in the closing section of her analysis of *Don Giovanni*, Kristeva writes: "Don Juan...prefigures the '*Gaya Scienza*' that Nietzsche went to look for through the mists of time" (*Tales of Love* 204).

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