

Editorial

There is an element of obscurity in the title of this special issue of *Colloquy*: “Blanchot, the Obscure.” That element is due to the comma between the proper name and the adjective. Thus, “the Obscure” cannot be a straightforward epithet of the person or the work of the French author and critic Maurice Blanchot. Rather, the comma is meant to indicate a type of relationality that pertains between Blanchot and the obscure – moreover, an *undecidable* relationality. Thus, in this relation neither the name “Blanchot” nor the adjective “obscure” are to be approached with a pre-established security about their origin and destination. The comma indicates the fragile moment of hesitation before this conjunction of name and attribute.

The work of Blanchot has often attracted the description “obscure.” The kind of relation described above is meant to counteract at least three common and equally erroneous approaches to that nexus. The first is to identify a secretive constitution of Blanchot’s work, construed as a purported youthful political alliance that the mature Blanchot sought to hide at all cost – notably at the expense of value. If, as recent scholarly work has demonstrated, the premise about youthful reactionarism is wrong, then the critique of value is not an obfuscation but rather part of a general and engaged political agenda. Second, the seeming obscurity of Blanchot’s own writings is due to the movement of his thought, which delights in contradictions. Yet as soon as this paradoxical trajectory is welcomed, then Blanchot’s writings attain unparalleled clarity and directness. The third mistake would be to posit obscurity as an ontological quality at the heart of Blanchot’s contradictory logic. Even if Blanchot insists on that which remains unknowable, weak and hence obscure, this does not mean that obscurity can be given a determinate content. Rather, obscurity is that area in thinking which will always remain outside a secure system but in such a way as to make possible – and impossible – the unravelling of thinking. This obscurest shadow of the obscure installs, like the comma, a moment of hesitation and indecision which is not only inevitable but also guarantees the future of thinking and writing. It is then an obscurity that follows Blanchot no less than an obscurity that Blanchot himself follows.

All the articles collected in this volume respond to that obscurity. However, the title “Blanchot, the Obscure” also corresponds to the title of a con-

ference that brought to Melbourne in 19-20 August 2004 an international array of scholars, students of Blanchot's work. Under that title, his readers were invited to respond to Blanchot's obscurity by allowing themselves to be followed by it, no less than follow it themselves in turn. The present volume of *Colloquy* sprung out of that conference. All the conference presentations have been written as full-length articles, which have been reviewed and revised. Also, all those friends who could make not the trip to the antipodes to participate at the conference were also invited to participate in this special issue.

The editors would like to reiterate their gratitude to all those who made it possible for the conference to take place last year: in particular, we would like to acknowledge the support of Brian Nelson, Kate Rigby and Chris Worth; the hard work of Gail Ward; Edouard Mornaud and the warm hospitality of Alliance Française; Elizabeth Presa for organizing the parallel exhibition *White Light: Witnessing Witness*; and, last but not least, Andrew Benjamin, whose advice has been indispensable. Also, as always, we would like to thank the many referees, who remain anonymous but whose reviewing has been indispensable.

At the end of the conference, more than a year ago, a commitment was expressed to persevere with furthering the horizons of Blanchot studies, and to do so through collaborations that transgress national as well as disciplinary borders. The present volume is a product of that commitment. But it would be remiss not to mention as well the forthcoming volume *After Blanchot: Literature, Criticism, Philosophy* (University of Delaware Press, 2005), edited by Brian Nelson, Leslie Hill and Dimitris Vardoulakis, which was also conceived at the same conference. However the commitment is not exhausted with these two publications. A commitment is always carried to the future – just like a promise whose infinite deferral marks the responsibility to work towards accomplishing it.

The following *Colloquy* issue will be a general one, but the one after, Issue 12 (November 2006), will also be a proceedings of the conference organized last April, titled "Be true to the earth," edited by Peter Coleman and Kate Rigby. Also, the proceedings of the forthcoming conference "Imagining the Future: Utopia, Dystopia and Science Fiction" will be published as Issue 14 (November 2007) of *Colloquy*, and they will be edited by Andrew Milner, Matthew Ryan and Robert Savage. The promise has many faces and many areas where it can assume its responsibility.

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