

Black Holes in the Space of Literature: Gravitational Spacetime Singularities Applied to Maurice Blanchot's Fictionality Face-to-Face with the Mystery of the Other

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Abstract

This article investigates and substantiates how Maurice Blanchot's novels and *récits* collapse under their own gravity or in Blanchot's words under "the gravity of one single word,"¹ to form spacetime singularities/Neuters in the space of literature, where conception of the classical Einsteinian nonquantum spacetime continuum breaks down and where Hawking-Penrose theorems of spacetime singularities supersede; even though this supersedure entails General Theory of Relativity as its substratum. While spatiotemporal issues in Blanchot's fictionality have to do with classical spacetime continuum and curvature, with establishing their legitimation through responsible and ethical relation with other persons as the only certain foothold to get at the authentic essence of time under the tutorship of Emmanuel Levinas, they are on the other hand subsisting on quantum theories engaged with the mystery of the Other whose wishful authenticity seems infinite, uncertain, and ungraspable *ad infinitum*. This is where this twofold Otherness having been dragging and spaghettifying itself from the beginning of time towards its end; that is, from the Big Bang to the Big Crunch, does emerge "to find the temporal transcendence of the present toward the mystery of the future"² as Levinas asserts, so as to actualize our "horizontal escape" towards an infinite ecstasy face-to-face with "the Other that is time."³

Keywords: Big bang; Big crunch; Black holes; Ecstasy; Emmanuel Levinas; Event horizon; Infinity; Maurice Blanchot; Space of literature; Spacetime curvature; Spacetime singularities; The Other.

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¹ Maurice Blanchot, *Death Sentence*, trans. Lydia Davis (Barrytown: Station Hill, 1978), p. 73.

² Cheryl L. Hughes, *Heidegger and Levinas: The Problem of Ethics* (PhD, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1993), p. 117.

³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), p. 14.

Introduction

With me the laws gravitate outside the laws. I progress beyond the totality which I nevertheless tightly embrace. I go on the margins of the universe, boldly walking elsewhere than where I can be, and a little outside of my steps.⁴

While Albert Einstein in 1915 first professed that space and time were not absolute and separate entities but were rather closely interwoven, Herman Minkowski had already declared before Einstein that “space and time disappear as separate concepts.”⁵ Einstein auspiciously and correctly came across to the idea of spacetime unification and curvature as the outright accomplices to and causality behind the gravity force. Consequently, the Theory of General Relativity predicted black holes and other spacetime singularities in the universe. Nevertheless, due to its non-quantum nature it failed, according to Stephen Hawking, to predict the beginning and the end of time in such unique instances as the Big Bang and the Big Crunch singularities, where according to Hawking “the laws of science and our ability to predict the future would break down.”⁶ Not only had the issue of space-time been accorded pivotal significance in the scientific and philosophical arenas, it had already been tantalizing writers and thinkers since the first sparks were ignited in the speculative minds of ancient Greek philosophers.

Maurice Blanchot is a French philosopher and a pioneer literary figure positioned between philosophy and literature. Blanchot challenges the fabric of spacetime much the same as Einstein did in his Theory of General Relativity, but from a rather different perspective that mostly incorporates the Spacetime Singularities Theorems of Hawking and Roger Penrose. Blanchot’s novels and récits simulate the cosmic spacetime singularities as such, yet their fidelity to Einsteinian spacetime continuum is unbreakable. Nonetheless, Blanchot’s space of literature introduces a void analogous to an “other time”⁷ that is rather of the genus of the Hawking-Penrose formulations, based on which spacetime experiences an infinitely exponential and mysterious entropy with an immense gravitation and curvature, that makes it on the one hand singular and uncertain leaning on very small scales such as quantum theory posits, and helps it on the other hand to show itself as certain and dependent on very large scales, such as classical physics insists on.

Hence, reconciliation between these large and small scales, classical physics and quantum theory, seems ineluctable for Blanchot. Traversing the space of literature using Emmanuel Levinas’ ideas of *time* and the *other* and Hawking-Penrose theorems on spacetime singularities, Blanchot’s spatiotemporal idiosyncrasy perches on the two extremities of the Other: one *other* relies on our definite relation with other people in the four-dimensional spacetime continuum with a single history, and the other *other* parades at such spacetime singularities in the universe as the Big Bang, Black Holes, and the Big Crunch, instances with multiple histories. Richard Feynman, discussing multiple histories, postulated that “the universe must have every possible history, each with its own probability,”⁸ which strongly endorses the mysterious, uncertain, non-continuum, diachronic, infinite, and ungraspable essence of the spacetime that Blanchot’s works are entangled with. For Blanchot ethical relation with the Other - ethical not merely in the sense of ethics and morality, but in the sense

⁴ Maurice Blanchot, *Thomas the Obscure*, trans. Robert Lamberton (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1973), p. 107.

⁵ Lisa M. Dolling, Arthur F. Gianelli, and Glenn N. Statile, *The Tests of Time: Readings in the Development of Physical Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. xxvii.

⁶ Alan Woods and Ted Grant, *Reason in Revolt: Marxist Philosophy and Modern Science* (London: Wellread Publications, 2015), p. 42.

⁷ Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 11.

⁸ Nancy K. Frankenberry, *The Faith of Scientists in Their Own Words* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 399.

of delving into the mysteries and relations in everyday life and also engaging with the mysteries accounting for “95% of the mass of the universe that is missing”⁹ - is the key reconciling element between the large and the small scales. More importantly, it is this relationality with the mystery of the Other that gives credit to space and time. The spacetime continuum and spacetime singularities are both legitimized only when relationality with the Other as an interweaving thread is included in their fabric. So, authentic spacetime is an amalgam of the two extremities of the Other reconciled with relation with/mystery of the Other. As Levinas says there is “no vertical dimension without a horizontal dimension.”¹⁰

Beyond the Event Horizon: Cosmic Censorship Hypothesis vis-à-vis Myth of Orpheus and Euridice

He (Orpheus) loses Eurydice because he desires her beyond the measured limits of the song, and he loses himself, but this desire, and Eurydice lost, and Orpheus dispersed are necessary to the song, just as the ordeal of eternal inertia is necessary to the work.¹¹

Cosmologically speaking, black holes refer to the phenomena being formed when giant and supermassive stars collapse under their own gravity due to the exhaustion of their fuel and energy. The boundary or threshold of the black holes demarcating them from our rule-bound world of the four-dimensional spacetime continuum is termed the *event horizon*. Beyond the *event horizon*, all the rules and laws conforming to the Theory of General Relativity stop working, and fabric of spacetime curves infinitely. Stephen Hawking believes that “singularities occur in the big bang, in black holes, and in the big crunch that also might appear as naked singularities. Related to this question is what is called the *cosmic censorship hypothesis* stating that these naked singularities do not occur.”¹² The *cosmic censorship hypothesis* first formulated by Roger Penrose proposes that spacetime singularities that come into existence in any black hole cannot be naked and are not at all observable by any observer standing outside the *event horizon*. Penrose says “we can now formulate our principle of strong cosmic censorship as the assertion that naked singularities or points at infinity do not occur in generic space-times, where it is assumed that Einstein's equations hold with some reasonable equations of state for the matter.”¹³ What Penrose tries to convey is that if a singularity is observable from the outside and if it remains naked, it is no longer singular and is devoid of its intrinsic irreversible, infinite, and mysterious nature. This is why when one crosses the *event horizon* and is trapped in a black hole, there is no way out and the trapped one is doomed to annihilation and death in an enigmatic manner.

Discounting astrophysics, and philosophically speaking, “this approach to death” and to the un-naked instant of annihilation according to Levinas “indicates that we are in relation with something that is absolutely other, something bearing alterity, not as a provisional determination . . . but as something whose very existence is made of alterity.”¹⁴ This is where Henry Bergson's notion of time as *durée* fails, due to his emphasis on the memory through which successiveness and inseparability of time phases are verified and where there is a tendency toward the past. For Penrose, “the absolute event horizon” demarcates “the boundary

⁹ Mark P. Silverman, *A Universe of Atoms, An Atom in the Universe* (New York: Springer, 2008), p. 4.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Bloechl, *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God: Essays on the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), p. 293.

¹¹ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 173.

¹² Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose, *Nature of Space and Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 36.

¹³ R. M. Wald, *Black Holes and Relativistic Stars* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 110.

¹⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 229.

of the past;”¹⁵ that is, the chronological past breaks down in the black holes and one is experiencing “a time whose diachrony is thus lived as a ‘privation’ of immobile eternity, and expressed by the metaphor of flux, as if time were a being, comparable to a flowing liquid.”¹⁶ The same idea about the inseparability of temporal elements in the case of *Dasein* is also tractable in the Heideggerian notion of *Ereignis* which is to be experienced through an ecstatic milieu together with the Other, but with this difference, that Martin Heidegger’s conceptualization of the Other is to meet its possibility sooner or later in the future through *being-towards-death*:

Dasein has in itself the possibility of meeting with its death as the most extreme possibility of itself. This most extreme possibility of Being has the character of a standing-before in certainty, and this certainty for its part is characterized by an utter indeterminacy.¹⁷

We will get back to Heidegger’s meaning by ‘certainty’, which is in sharp contrast to the Levinasian concept of *diachrony* and the *uncertainty principle* in a quantum perspective later in the article.

Maurice Blanchot’s artistic portrayal of the cosmic spacetime singularities in his novel *Death Sentence*, especially black holes, attests precisely to the mystery of the Other through touching a hand. Also, there are revealed traces of Blanchot’s nonconformity to the Heideggerian ecstatic temporalization, and his withdrawal into the Levinasian concept of *diachrony* or “impossibility of possibility” as Jean Wahl refers to it, contrasted with Heidegger’s “possibility of impossibility;”¹⁸

When I touch a hand, as I am doing now, when my hand lies under this hand, this hand is not as icy as mine is; but this little bit of cold is profound; it is not a slight radiation from the surface, but penetrates, envelopes, one must follow it and with it enter an unlimited thickness, an empty and unreal depth where there is no possible return to contact with the outside. That is what makes it so bitter: it seems to have the cruelty of something that gnaws at you, that catches hold of you and entices you, and it actually does catch hold of you, but that is also its secret, and one who has enough sympathy to abandon himself to this coldness finds in it the kindness, the tenderness, and the freedom of a real life.¹⁹

As we see, by touching a hand, “soon the threshold was crossed”²⁰ as Thomas articulates in the *Aminadab*. Blanchot crosses the *event horizon* of desire “beyond the measured limits,” and “loses himself,”²¹ as well by entering “an unlimited thickness, an empty and unreal depth where there is no possible return to contact with the outside.” Also, in *The Step Not Beyond*, Blanchot professes that “nobody goes beyond the threshold, except by madness, and madness is the outside that is only the threshold.”²² This threshold or *event horizon* from a Levinasian point of view is termed as *horizontal escape* in his *Existence and Existents* where he writes: “If time is not the illusion of a movement, pawing the ground, then the

¹⁵ Wald, *Black Holes and Relativistic Stars*, p. 107.

¹⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, trans. Michael B. Smith (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), p. 124.

¹⁷ Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 11.

¹⁸ Travis Tenney Anderson, *Heidegger and Levinas and the Crisis of Phenomenology: Thinking the Propriety and a-Propriety of Time* (PhD, Loyola University, 1992), p. 73.

¹⁹ Blanchot, *Death Sentence*, p. 70.

²⁰ Maurice Blanchot, *Aminadab*, trans. Jeff Fort (Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), p. 87.

²¹ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 173.

²² Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, trans. Lycette Nelson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 122.

absolute alterity of another instant cannot be found in the subject, who is definitely *himself*. This alterity comes to me only from the other.”²³

The *horizontal escape* is precisely consistent with another key idea in Levinasian terminology; that is, “the Other that is time.”²⁴ Not only is the fabric of spacetime broken down in Levinas’ standpoint, but also relation with the Other is annexed to this fabric as an indispensable element of his diachronic temporality. In the excerpt above, Blanchot also mentions that “it is not a slight radiation from the surface,” overlapping with the classical conception in general relativity that black holes emanated no radiation. Nonetheless, Hawking proved the existence of radiation from black holes, and stated “that gravitational collapse was not as much of a dead end as it had appeared to be. The particles in a black hole need not have an end of their histories at a singularity. Instead, they could escape from the black hole and continue their histories outside.”²⁵ So, spacetime singularities in black holes are not doomed to a dead end, but they entail a continuation of histories outside in a diachronous mode through relation with the Other and the mystery beyond.

In the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, Orpheus crosses the *event horizon* of desire and descends to the world of Hades to bring Eurydice back to the world and daylight. He is warned of not averting his look back to Eurydice while she is accompanied by him to the outside; however, he turned to look at her and Eurydice withdrew to the underworld. Blanchot in the *Space of Literature* writes “when Orpheus descends toward Eurydice, art is the power by which night opens. Because of art’s strength, night welcomes him; it becomes welcoming intimacy, the harmony and accord of the first night. But it is toward Eurydice that Orpheus has descended. For him Eurydice is the furthest that art can reach.”²⁶ Therefore, consistent with Hawking’s radiation, Eurydice withdraws to her origin, of which its ‘secret’ and ‘freedom of a real life’ that is ‘unlimited’, entice Orpheus as well:

Almost always, it is the origin which is anterior to any beginning, the image or echo of beginning, that immense fund of impotence, the infinitely futile wherewithal to start over and over again. Literature’s space, in other words the void which literature introduces in place of the place it takes is analogous to the ‘other time’ in the time measured by achievements: sterile, inert time, ‘the time of distress’.²⁷

Blanchot believes that a work of art in the guise of Eurydice and its relation with the mystery of the Other or the origin might not be brought into *the light of the day* and may not be naked. Due to the relations with the mysterious origin, spatiotemporal elements are collapsed in the space/ neuter of literature and spacetime singularities turn out to reign. *When the Time Comes* reads as follows:

I must add (to be fair) that I was not certain of this very dark incident, and my uncertainty made it even darker, since it couldn’t be brought into the daylight except through a preoccupied *I think*.²⁸

This is Orpheus’ ordeal in search of Eurydice when he falls into the black hole/*neuter* of space/ universe of literature that then gives birth to literary spacetime singularities. In *Thomas the Obscure*, Thomas the Orpheus figure slips and metamorphoses from one space to another in demand of Anne the Eurydice figurer (writing), but he returns her gaze and withdraws to an abeyance of non-place and obscurity:

²³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1978), p. 93.

²⁴ Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, p. 14.

²⁵ Stephen Hawking, *Black Holes and Baby Universes* (London: Bantam Books, 1993), p. 130.

²⁶ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 171.

²⁷ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 11.

²⁸ Maurice Blanchot, *When the Time Comes*, trans. Lydia Davis (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1985), p. 46.

There was in fact no more hope. This moment of supreme distraction, this trap into which those who have nearly vanquished death fall, ultimate return of Eurydice, in looking one last time toward the visible, Anne had just fallen into it as well.²⁹

In a close analogy with the *cosmic censorship hypothesis*, the artist's (Orpheus) intentional gaze on Eurydice (oeuvre) seems ineluctable in order for art to traverse the infinite course of incompleteness and impossibility. Blanchot avers that a work of art makes a spacetime singularity in the present which hovers and oscillates between the immemorial past and a future that never meets its finitude:

I discover my being in the vertiginous abyss where it is not, an absence, an absence where it sets itself like a god. I am not and I endure. An inexorable future stretches forth infinitely for this suppressed being. Hope turns in fear against time which drags it forward.³⁰

Accordingly, due to the *uncertainty principle* in the quantum theory, there is no certainty established for spacetime in the black holes. There, one has to experience an ungraspable and unknowable mystery of the *Other* that continues its singularity infinitely in a diachronous mode. This is "the mystery" that according to Blanchot in *Awaiting Oblivion* "is nothing, even as a mysterious nothing. It cannot be the object of attention, being equal and at perfect equality with itself, is the absence of any center."³¹

Elsewhere in the same novel he reasons:

The mystery – what a crude word – would be the point where the thing that is seen and the thing that is said meet in the simplicity of presence. A mystery that could be grasped only if it separates itself, by a slight oscillation, from the mysterious point.³²

On the whole, Orpheus reifying the artist gets shattered to pieces upon encroaching upon Eurydice's mysterious instant of singularity as art beyond the *event horizon* "that hides her" by "a veil that covers her."³³ Art is for Blanchot an instant of singularity whose spatiotemporal elements are meaningfully dependent on the relation with/mystery of the Other. To Blanchot, Eurydice "is the profoundly obscure point toward which art and desire, death and night, seem to tend. She is the instant when the essence of night approaches as the other night."³⁴ The mystery of this 'obscure point' or 'instant' and 'the other night' according to Levinas, "corresponds to something that is unknowable and ungraspable in its very essence, something completely other than things we know conceptually. Knowledge will never grasp the mysterious although, approached properly, humbly, and with open hands and hearts, experience will allow us to participate in it."³⁵

Information Loss and Black Hole Radiation: Gifts of Forgetfulness and Ignorance

I believe that the reason why Einstein didn't continue to make big advances in quantum theory was that a crucial ingredient was missing from quantum theory. This missing ingredient was Stephen's discovery, fifty years later, of black hole radiation. It is this information loss, connected with black hole radiation, which provides the new twist.³⁶

It was therefore very important to determine whether information really was lost in black holes or whether, in principle, it could be recovered. Many scientists felt that information

²⁹ Blanchot, *Thomas the Obscure*, p. 85.

³⁰ Blanchot, *Thomas the Obscure*, p. 104.

³¹ Maurice Blanchot, *Awaiting Oblivion*, trans. John Gregg (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 21.

³² Blanchot, *Awaiting Oblivion*, p. 58.

³³ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 171.

³⁴ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 171.

³⁵ Brian Treanor, *Aspects of Alterity: Levinas, Marcel, and the Contemporary Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 117.

³⁶ Hawking and Penrose, *Nature of Space and Time*, p. 144.

should not be lost, but no one could suggest a mechanism by which it could be preserved. The arguments went on for years. Finally, I found what I think is the answer. It depends on the idea of Richard Feynman that instead of one single history there are many different possible histories, each with its own probability. In this case, there are two kinds of history. In one, there is a black hole, into which particles can fall; in the other, there is no black hole. The point is that from the outside, one can't be certain whether there is a black hole or not. So, there is always a chance that there isn't a black hole. This possibility is enough to preserve the information, but the information is not returned in a very useful form. It is like burning an encyclopedia. Information is not lost if you keep all the smoke and ashes, but it is difficult to read.³⁷

Gravitational collapse in a fundamental way in astrophysics and cosmology involves the differential discrepancy between the theories of spacetime continuum and spacetime singularities. When a massive star at the end of its life cycle collapses under its own gravity according to gravitation theory and relativist astrophysics, we then encounter the foundation of black hole physics.³⁸ According to General Relativity, continual gravitational collapse gives rise to a spacetime singularity in the black holes in which information is lost; that is, it is totally annihilated and irretrievable. Nonetheless, Hawking's radiation demonstrated that not only is the information not entirely lost in the black holes or in Blanchotian parlance, "the void which literature introduces in place of the place it takes,"³⁹ but also that it is recoverable with another history and probability that for Blanchot "couldn't be brought into the daylight,"⁴⁰ or as Hawking noted "is difficult to read."⁴¹ It is preserved and restorable in:

other time in the time measured by achievements: sterile, inert time, the time of distress. But the very freshness of every dawn is safeguarded in this distress and nowhere else, which is why literature demands that we return there (though this justification is never granted), risking the clear light of day in the name of sunshine, but more than just that: jeopardizing even this capacity of ours to take risks in the name of something, for some purpose.⁴²

Information loss, collapse of knowledge, and even irreversibility of light (considered as a constant milestone in physics) which is totally dispersed and inflected in the black holes, are of the same fundamental significance in the space/ neuter of literature which Blanchot delineates. It is clear that Blanchot's positing that "desire went through the instant and through ignorance, not through knowledge"⁴³ and idea of spacetime in the space of literature conforms to quantum theory.

In *When the Time Comes*, by asserting "I felt rather good. When someone asked me a question, this was what I answered, I or the careless and forgetful echo of time,"⁴⁴ Blanchot describes his treatment of time in a way that is not compatible to Bergsonian and Heideggerian *lived time*. In his novels and récits Blanchot constantly depicts the fall of his characters into the *neuter* or void (of literature) which has an abyssal and vertiginous nature, unfolding "an empty and unreal depth where there is no possible return to contact with the

³⁷ Stephen Hawking, *Black Holes: The BBC Reith Lectures* (London: Penguin Random House, 2016), p. 36.

³⁸ Pankaj S. Joshi, *Gravitational Collapse and Spacetime Singularities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 126.

³⁹ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Blanchot, *When the Time Comes*, p. 46.

⁴¹ Hawking, *Black Holes: The BBC Reith Lectures*, p. 26.

⁴² Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 11.

⁴³ Blanchot, *When the Time Comes*, p. 28.

⁴⁴ Blanchot, *When the Time Comes*, p. 45.

outside.”⁴⁵ The effect is “as if the outside no longer existed for them.”⁴⁶ For Blanchot, ‘writing’ is “in the direction of forgetting”⁴⁷ that is workable in its abyssal and vertiginous *neuter* or black hole (authors’ interpretation) in which regular spacetime is forgotten and ignored. This is a space in which the encyclopedia of orderly and rule-bound information or knowledge is burnt, as Hawking suggests, but is not lost totally. It is to be restored and readable in other histories in an instant of eternal and infinite remembrance and happiness:

Is there still an instant? The instant that is between remembering and forgetting. A brief instant. Which does not cease. As for us, neither remembered nor forgotten. Remembering through forgetting. Why this happiness in forgetting. Happiness itself forgotten. It is death, she said, the forgetting to die that is death. The future finally present.⁴⁸

Blanchot is speaking of the potentiality and benefit of forgetting or being forgotten through an ‘instant’ that is ‘between remembering and forgetting.’ Here is indeed a reference to a possibility ‘enough to preserve the information’ or ‘happiness’ in the words of Hawking and Blanchot, respectively.

In other part of *Awaiting Oblivion*, the preservation of happiness and eternity is circumscribed by Blanchot as follows:

“Do you think that what is lost in forgetting is preserved in forgetting from forgetting?” – “No, forgetting is indifferent to forgetting.” “So, we will be wonderously, profoundly, eternally forgotten?” – “Forgotten without wonder, without profundity, without eternity.”⁴⁹

Blanchot wishes ‘a moment of happy calm’ for writing or literature “in which everything was forgotten.”⁵⁰ He is also avid for a “gift of ignorance”⁵¹ that

[d]oes not bring him, except when he avoids it, any dizziness, confusion, or feeling of power or powerlessness but rather waiting in its peacefulness, he should respond: it comes from having captured, starting from simplicity mysteriousness unfolded, the play between presence that is seen, even if it is not seen, and presence that gives rise to speech. It is a separation that isn’t one, a split nonetheless, but one that does not let itself be perceived and that is not really denounced, since it is supposed to introduce an interval between visible/invisible and the sayable/ unsayable.⁵²

In *Awaiting Oblivion*, Blanchot believes that this “ignorance relates us to each other...by way of the detour of excessive ignorance. Something that you are ignorant of?” Ignorance sugar-coated with mystery of the Other is a gift that “enriched me with my own ignorance, I mean he added something to me that I don’t know.”⁵³ Ignorance in the space of literature, or in cosmological terminology information loss in black holes, does represent a gift for Blanchot that guarantees our relatedness to the Other and its mystery. This relation promises new histories and extraordinary experiences which are restored in another authentic and real spacetime:

The perspective in which I fade away for my eyes restores me as a complete image for the unreal eye to which I deny all images. A complete image with reference to a world devoid of image which imagines me in the absence of any imaginable figure. The being of a nonbeing of which I am the infinitely small negation which it instigates as its profound harmony. In the night shall I become the universe? I feel that in every part of me, invisible and nonexistent, I am supremely, totally visible.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ Blanchot, *Death Sentence*, p. 70.

⁴⁶ Blanchot, *Aminadab*, p. 46.

⁴⁷ Blanchot, *Awaiting Oblivion*, p. 46.

⁴⁸ Blanchot, *Awaiting Oblivion*, p. 43.

⁴⁹ Blanchot, *Awaiting Oblivion*, p. 31.

⁵⁰ Blanchot, *Last Man*, p. 18.

⁵¹ Blanchot, *Awaiting Oblivion*, p. 76.

⁵² Blanchot, *Awaiting Oblivion*, p. 75.

⁵³ Blanchot, *Awaiting Oblivion*, p. 74.

⁵⁴ Blanchot, *Thomas the Obscure*, p. 106.

Ring Singularity: Point of Ecstasy

In addition, however, there is now an inner blackhole horizon. Passing through this, one comes to the ring singularity on the other side of which there is another cosmological horizon, another infinity.⁵⁵

If Hawking's radiation and his proposed mechanism for information loss in the black holes through Richard Feynman's multiple histories are seriously taken into consideration, and if we pay close attention to the diversity of the beliefs and claims in respect of time-traveling including Paul J. Nahin's assertion that "a rotating black hole has a ring singularity through which a time traveler can theoretically pass and still avoid the deadly infinite to enter other universes and/or to time-travel in this one,"⁵⁶ then, Thomas in *Thomas the Obscure* is right to seek for spacetime singularities. He states:

I progress beyond the totality which I nevertheless tightly embrace. I go on the margins of the universe, boldly walking elsewhere than where I can be, and a little outside of my steps.⁵⁷

Blanchot is pursuing the restoration of language, knowledge, and information in another universe with another history. This is a place of refuge "to avoid the terrible pressure of the empty universe and vanished time" as echoed in the *Last Man*.⁵⁸ So, if we take the idea of parallel universes for granted as Blanchot does, here it is Blanchot's attestation to that:

We remain together. We live turned toward ourselves as though toward a mountain lifting vertiginously from universe to universe. Never any stop to it, no limit, a drunkenness ever drunker and calmer. "We": the word glorifies itself eternally, rises endlessly, passes between us like a shadow, lies under our eyelids like a gaze that has always seen everything.⁵⁹

Hawking's mention of "another cosmological horizon" and "another infinity"⁶⁰ in which, for Blanchot, "we remain together,"⁶¹ are all consistent with Levinas' concept of Infinity and mystery of the Other. Levinas believes that "infinity is characteristic of a transcendent being as transcendent; the infinite is the absolutely Other" whose 'mystery', as John D. Caputo paraphrases it, "corresponds to something that is unknowable and ungraspable in its very essence, something completely other than things we know conceptually. Knowledge will never grasp the mysterious although, approached properly, humbly, and with open hands and hearts, experience will allow us to participate in it."⁶² In virtue of ring singularity, Blanchot describes another infinity and the mysterious Other as if being viewed and experienced through a needle point which stands for the sky in his view:

But if it weren't a point, if it weren't as infinitesimal as the sharpest needle point, how could I bear it? Do you mean the sky sinks into us like the point of a needle?" "That's it, yes, that's right." This point would therefore be what pierces the most distant of my memories. The greatest calm reigns. It's a unique moment.⁶³

'The point' that Blanchot is portraying goes parallel with the idea of the parallel universes "where the distance appears to cease. This point – in the delineated void between seeing and saying – escapes whoever sees it and whoever says it." This point of 'mystery' to Blanchot "would be the point where the thing that is seen and the thing that is said meet in the simplicity

⁵⁵ Stephen Hawking, *Hawking on The Big Bang and Black Holes* (Singapore: World Scientific, 1993), p. 134.

⁵⁶ Paul J. Nahin, *Time Machines: Time Traveling Physics, Metaphysics, and Science Fiction* (New York: Springer, 2001), p. 372.

⁵⁷ Blanchot, *Thomas the Obscure*, p. 107.

⁵⁸ Blanchot, *Last Man*, p. 34.

⁵⁹ Blanchot, *Last Man*, p. 56.

⁶⁰ Hawking, *Hawking on The Big Bang and Black Holes*, p. 134.

⁶¹ Blanchot, *Last Man*, p. 56.

⁶² Treanor, *Aspects of Alterity*, p.117.

⁶³ Blanchot, *Last Man*, p. 57.

of presence. A mystery that could be grasped only if it separates itself, by a slight oscillation, from the mysterious point.”⁶⁴ In *Aminadab*, Thomas elucidates this point or other universe as “somewhere far away, in the distance of distances,”⁶⁵ that is of the “possibility of giving an empty point the luster and the living value of a real meaning,” along with a “cheerfulness” that “is also the echo of a supreme event reverberating through the infinite lightness of time, where it cannot settle.”⁶⁶ In *Death Sentence*, we read:

Besides, it is certain that she was extremely attached to me, and she was becoming more so every day: but what does the word attachment refer to? And the word passion—what does it mean? And the word ecstasy? Who has experienced the most intense feeling? Only I have, and I know that it is the most glacial of all, because it has triumphed over an immense defeat, and is even now triumphing over it, and at each instant, and always, so that time no longer exists for it.⁶⁷

Blanchot thinks of a point of ecstasy that is possible only through relation with the Other that makes the ‘we’ for him. In *Instant of My Death*, we read “dead, immortal. Perhaps ecstasy,” that is referred to as “the happiness of not being immortal or eternal.”⁶⁸ It is a “mysterious gift”⁶⁹ in *Last Man*, that in *Thomas the Obscure* “gave the ultimate gift, the death of Anne; she separated herself from her terribly strong feeling of being Anne, from the terrifying anguished feeling of being Anne threatened with dying, and changed it into the yet more anguished feeling of being no longer Anne.”⁷⁰ So, for Blanchot, ecstasy signifies an “instant beyond boundary after boundary,”⁷¹ in which “a body was bestowed on Anne, a body a thousand times more beautiful than her own, a thousand times more body; she was visible, she radiated from the most unchangeable matter: at the center of nullified thought she was the superior rock, the crumbly earth, without nitrogen, that from which it would not even have been possible to create Adam.”⁷² Blanchot describes characteristics of a body that has nothing to do with corporeality, a body whose time of ecstasy is not threatened by dying.

Conclusion

To all curious minds
It is worth taking space and time to be curious
For it brings us the beauty of understanding
And there is so much beauty in understanding more
Of the inner workings of spacetime
Hold on to that beauty!
Keep it from getting forever lost
In the black hole of stress
Which eats our space and time away
Leaving us small and beauty unreachable
Beyond the horizon.⁷³

Spacetime singularities as conceptualized by Hawking’s and Penrose’s theorems characterize extraordinary cosmic instances including the Big Bang, Black Holes, and the Big Crunch. This

⁶⁴ Blanchot, *Awaiting Oblivion*, p. 76.

⁶⁵ Blanchot, *Aminadab*, p. 189.

⁶⁶ Blanchot, *When the Time Comes*, p. 73.

⁶⁷ Blanchot, *Death Sentence*, p. 72.

⁶⁸ Blanchot, *Instant of My Death*, p. 5.

⁶⁹ Blanchot, *Last Man*, p. 60.

⁷⁰ Blanchot, *Thomas the Obscure*, p. 82.

⁷¹ Blanchot, *When the Time Comes*, p. 60.

⁷² Blanchot, *Thomas the Obscure*, p. 63.

⁷³ Wouter Schmitz, *Understanding Relativity: A Conceptual Journey into Spacetime, Black Holes and Gravitational Waves* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022.), p. 6.

triad of astrophysical ideas indicative of the phenomenological moments of spacetime are called singular because, based on singularity theorems, “any gravitational collapse beyond a certain threshold results in a singularity in spacetime.”⁷⁴ According to Wouter Schmitz, “Penrose interpreted the singularity to be the end of time for the mass trapped in it. Hence, time also gets squeezed into a singularity. This implies that energy is also infinitely uncertain.”⁷⁵ This singularity as the ‘end of time’ for Penrose, “is ultimately the fascinating realm of time’s absence”⁷⁶ for Maurice Blanchot, in the space of literature. Spacetime singularities in which space and time lose their synchronic and linear significations, as Blanchot postulates, “surrender” us “to the joyful space of a festival, the eternal glitter of an image” and to “a resemblance in which [things] have neither the time to corrupt themselves nor the origin to find themselves and where, eternally their own likeness, they do not affirm themselves but rather, beyond the dark flux and reflux of repetition.”⁷⁷ In the perspective of quantum theory and abreast of Levinas’s theorization of mystery of the Other that is *per se* a manifestation and endorsement of quantum concepts, article has investigated what science and art are altogether, in which state to put forward is to trespass the threshold of the worldly event horizon of Being-in-the-World where we “should descend so far from [ourselves], into a place one could, I think, call the abyss,”⁷⁸ as Blanchot understands it in the *When the Time Comes*. This is a place that, according to the Cosmic Censorship Hypothesis surpasses any generic law or equation, which Blanchot’s terminology echoed in *The Step Not Beyond*: “where time would fall, fragile fall, according to this outside of time in time towards which writing would attract us, were we allowed, having disappeared from ourselves.”⁷⁹ It is also described as an instant in *When the Time Comes* which “sinks to a lower and lower level, where it seems to wander rather in the manner of an image, even though it is absolutely present. Of time, belonging to a different age, a lost and baffled fragment of history.”⁸⁰

Donald G. Marshall, in his analysis of Blanchot’s *The Space of Literature*, states that no one can dwell in the space of literature and world of writing and anyone trying this will be lost and annihilated in the ecstasy of madness.⁸¹ Although this annihilation or information loss from the lens of General Relativity is certain in such a state, Hawking’s idea of radiation promises restoration of information or real meaning in Blanchot’s interpretation, through an ecstasy of madness with its ungraspable and infinite mysteriousness that establishes a singularity or instant of spacetime authenticity with the Other.

Each day, or at least certain days, but also each period of time and each movement of the day shows me, through the radiant space, the flight of a free image soaring from a point that I can’t see toward another point that I can’t see, and for me both no doubt merge, it is a fixed ascension, full of splendor, but also a dark effort, a cold fantasy, always the same and always futile, out of which likeness comes to affirm likeness, without this amazing activity being able to do anything more than give me the strength to follow the image instant by instant, an image myself, projected into the fire of appearances, as if, in expressing ourselves through each other, both of us were pursuing the possibility of giving an empty point the luster and the living value of a real meaning. And certainly, the point remains empty, in the same way that even though this can keep beginning again, the beginning always remains silent and unknown, but— and this is the strange thing — I don’t worry about it and I go on seizing the instant again with an

⁷⁴ Schmitz, *Understanding Relativity*, p. 239.

⁷⁵ Schmitz, *Understanding Relativity*, p. 237.

⁷⁶ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 30.

⁷⁷ Blanchot, *When the Time Comes*, p. 71.

⁷⁸ Blanchot, *When the Time Comes*, p. 71.

⁷⁹ Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 1.

⁸⁰ Blanchot, *When the Time Comes*, p. 70.

⁸¹ Donald G. Marshall, *The Necessity of Writing: Death and Imagination in Maurice Blanchot's L'Espace Littéraire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986), p. 230.

incredible avidity, the same instant through which I seem to catch sight of this glimmer: someone is there who is not speaking, who is not looking at me, yet who is capable of an entrancing life and cheerfulness, though that cheerfulness is also the echo of a supreme event reverberating through the infinite lightness of time, where it cannot settle.⁸²

It was shown in this article that Maurice Blanchot's space of literature is very closely parallel and analogous with the milieu dominant in black hole theories. Usual conceptions of space and time collapse in black holes, and their conceptualization and signification of everything and spacetime in particular are depended on a "mysterious order whose fortuitous wonder, whose surprise, the surprise of eternal chance, we affirm through the caprice that is in us."⁸³ For Blanchot, it is due to the work of this mystery that space and time come to be understood and experienced. Actualization of this mysterious order and the surprise of eternal chance is also relegated by Blanchot to "one true mystery, which consisted of the absence of mystery."⁸⁴ 'Absence of mystery' is giving more credit to relation with others and their mysteries as the only gateway to our relation with a transcendental and mysterious Other. Relation with this two-fold other perfects the fabric of the spacetime continuum and of spacetime singularity simultaneously.

⁸² Blanchot, *When the Time Comes*, p. 72.

⁸³ Blanchot, *Last Man*, p. 64.

⁸⁴ Blanchot, *Thomas the Obscure*, p. 101.