In the scheme of political demands, it is possible to draw a thread which would link unworking (désoeuvrement) to its contemporary successor, accelerationism. Both express a turn to radical rupture and refusal, yet the contexts in which each theory developed remain vastly different. In Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams recent book *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*, the authors argue that the so-called ‘folk politics’ of community-driven reform and incremental change, are inadequate responses to our rapidly technologizing, late capitalist world. The failure of these bottom-up initiatives, in their opinion, lies in their blindness towards the revolutionary power of surplus populations of unemployed and underemployed people. To combat the stagnation of folk political strategies, we need to demand full automation of waged labour and universal basic income.

Both ‘folk politics’ and ‘accelerationism’ commit the error, however, of hypostatizing community—whether in the form of nostalgia for an amorphous and harmonious ‘public’, or as the social body of the working class. A more nuanced understanding of unworking, and how it differs from the program laid out by Srnicek and Williams (the literal end of work/wage labour), requires that we understand the aesthetic and literary origins of Blanchot’s concept, and its subsequent adaptation by Nancy and Agamben in the form of a non-programmatic ‘coming’ political community.

Maurice Blanchot’s idea of unworking (désoeuvrement), emerging in his many insightful commentaries on the work (œuvre) of art, gives rise to a political ontology that is at once non-foundational, non-teleological and non-instrumental. Though indebted to certain aspects of Martin Heidegger’s paradigmatic consideration of the artwork in his essay ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’—in which art discloses the truth of Being inasmuch as it sets up worlds—Blanchot’s notion of art has ultimately been credited with “uprooting the Heideggerian universe.” The work of art, for Blanchot, reveals the very non-truth and errancy of Being, its essential unworking or deworlding. The aesthetic-ontological theory of unworking, contra Heidegger, ultimately exposes an “authenticity that is not truth” or the impossibility of shared essence and communal hypostasis. In this sense, I argue, it provides a model for Blanchot’s political theories of ‘literary communism,’ and ‘unavowable’ community.

Having first elucidated Blanchotian unworking in its...
relation to the Heideggerian work, I will then trace several significant manifestations of unworking in the writing of other theorists: ‘decreation’ in Giorgio Agamben, ‘unemployed negativity’ in Georges Bataille, and ‘inoperativity’ in Jean-Luc Nancy. While the simple equation of these terms with Blanchotian unworking could certainly be problematized, my argument will primarily concern what they share; an attention to the ‘non-actualisable reserve’ at the heart of every work, be it artistic or political. I will turn to these other theorists in order to make clear the ‘infinite conversation’ (entretien infini) in which Blanchot was implicated, as well as to illuminate the importance of the idea for both aesthetic and political thought. For, as Lars Iyer writes in his Blanchot’s Communism, “it is [Blanchot’s] account of the happening of the work of art that first allows him to develop his notion of community.”

Adhering to Agamben’s suggestion in his Afterword to The Coming Community —a book that is indebted to similar theoretical projects by Blanchot and Nancy[5]—that unworking might form “the paradigm for the coming politics,” I will sketch what this non-teleological, non-instrumental and non-foundational politics might resemble. The anarcho-communist incitement to “affirm the rupture” that underlies nearly all of Blanchot’s post-war ultra-leftist writing—most vehemently in the political tracts of May 1968—has deep connections in its theoretical underpinning to his conception of unworking in literature. Fighting against false notions of immanence (of man to himself, and of man to man) at work in both liberal democracy and totalitarian fascism, Blanchot seeks a politics that mirrors the impersonality of literary space, that attaches to the inessentiality of being that he finds exposed in writing. This politics would be non-programmatic and without platform, since it would refuse all positing.

The Work and Unworking: Heidegger and Blanchot

In order to approach the complexity of this idea, Blanchot’s unworking must first be considered in the wake of Martin Heidegger’s rigorous investigation of the work (das Werk) in his ‘The Origin of the Work of Art.’ The essay, written in the late 1930s, is an attempt to distill the essence of the artwork in its relation to the truth or ‘unconcealedness’ of beings. Responding to Hegel’s pronouncement of the end of art, in his Lectures on Aesthetics, Heidegger writes that the truth of Hegel’s judgment has not yet been decided. The question of whether or not art is still an essential way in which historical truth happens remains to be answered, for Heidegger. Nevertheless, until a rigorous consideration of the nature of art is undergone, Hegel’s judgment remains in force.[6] Bringing into view the “work-character of the work,” Heidegger first hopes to revisit this question by illuminating what differentiates artworks from mere things.

The Work

For Heidegger, the artwork should not be conceived as a thing on top of which artistic qualities are added through work but, rather, the work-character of the artwork precedes its thingy-character. As Heidegger writes, “the road toward the determination of the thingy reality of the work leads not from thing to work but from work to thing.”[7] In the artwork—which Heidegger entrusts with opening up the Being of beings—the truth of what is has set itself to work. The object-being of the work – conserved through the art industry– does not constitute the ‘work-being’ of the work of art. The work-being of the work is present in, and only in, the opening up that it affects. According to Heidegger, “the work belongs, as work, uniquely within the realm that is opened up by itself.”[8]

The work-character of the artwork is for Heidegger the happening of a disclosure in the opening up of the work. What is disclosed for Heidegger is truth; in the work, there is a happening of truth at work. But it is precisely on this point of truth, as we will see below, that Heidegger and Blanchot’s thought diverges; while art does indeed happen irruptively in both of their discussions of the artwork, what is revealed in each case is radically different. The fact that art happens as truth in Heidegger entails its ability “to decide the existence of a historical humanity.”[9]

Before examining the implications of this, we must further interrogate Heidegger’s notions of work and how it comes to be revelatory of truth.
World and Earth

To exemplify his argument concerning the work of art, Heidegger turns to the Greek temple that “simply stands there in the middle of the rock-cleft valley.”[10] By means of the temple, the gods are present in the temple. In his discussion of the temple-work (Tempel-Werk), Heidegger introduces his important distinction between earth and world. Earth (Erde) is “that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises without violation. In the things that arise, earth is present as the sheltering agent.” World (Welt), on the other hand, is “self-disclosing openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people.”[11] The earth is self-dependent and self-secluding, the world is self-opening and decision-making. Heidegger writes: “wherever those decisions of our history that relate to our very being are made, are taken up and abandoned by us…there the world worlds.”[12] The earth is the essential materiality of the work that remains hidden in the experience of the world. The Greek temple-work opens up a world and sets this world back again on earth; in setting forth the world, the temple work “does not cause the material to disappear, but rather causes it to come forth for the very first time and to come into the Open of the work’s world.”[13] In each happening of art, the work-character of the artwork is what arrests us in an experience of materiality which both Heidegger and Blanchot call, in their own way, earth, and which can be understood in terms of a hidden materiality. In the written word, it might be the rhythm of words that seizes the reader before the meaning is grasped. This experience, for Heidegger, is the happening of truth in the work: art happens as the singular experience of this arrest, brought about by the sudden appearance of an unconcealed materiality (earth).

In the work, there is a struggle between earth and world that Heidegger calls striving: “the work-being of the work consists in the fighting of the battle between world and earth.”[14] Yet, the setting up of a world and the setting forth of earth are two inseparable and essential features of the work-being of the work, and they form in the work a unity (however fraught). The continual struggle between world and earth happens in the unity of the work. The work rests in itself in the “simplicity of intimacy” that is striving. In the essential striving between world and earth, “the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion of their natures.”[15] This is the happening of truth. The work is the bearer of this happening, or the work precedes the thing: “the nature of creation is determined by the nature of the work.”[16] The artist, in this conception, is the one who causes something to emerge as a thing that has been brought forth. The work’s becoming a work is the way in which truth, as the ‘openness of beings,’ happens. This openness or unconcealedness of beings (Being), however, entails a double experience for Heidegger: “The movement of appearing, the shining forth of the beautiful in the work is accompanied by a counter-movement, a plunge into darkness or invisibility; the brightness of the world also bears witness to a reserve ‘beneath’ or ‘before’ the visible world… physis [Being] refuses to yield itself up in its entirety to the happy presence of the life lived in the light of the temple.”[17]

In this regard, Heidegger’s artwork is not an embodiment of the Absolute or a teleological unfolding of truth, but a “happening” that brings forth a non-actualisable reserve. This reserve is the materiality of earth that is not yet measurable, and whose illumination causes it to appear in its very withdrawal. In his conception, “beings cannot come into appearance once and for all; they can only offer themselves to the understanding of the sense of the world that unites a particular people.”[18] The Greek temple, then, represents a happening of truth in the artwork, insomuch as it sets up a world; it is the appearance of the truth of a world not the world. The struggle between earth and world is the originary upsurge (Ursprung) through which a new sense of beings is given. The temple-work, then, institutes the setting to work of truth of a historical people, not guided by an inner historical necessity, but in a relation between epochs that remains free.

Despite its distance from a world-historical meta-narrative, however, Heidegger’s conception does maintain an adherence to a metaphysical idea of truth, inherent in the artwork, that could ground the unified world of a particular people; it presents a communal truth. For Blanchot, by contrast, the work emerges from the very non-truth or errancy of being. Being is “that which escapes all determination and every form of existence.”[19] In contrast to the notion of ‘dwelling’ in the world
that emerges from Heidegger’s thought of truth in the artwork, for Blanchot, art leads to a place of going astray, to a space that is uninhabitable.\[^{20}\]In this sense, it does not lead anywhere, it has no destination; the ‘non-truth’ of Being exposed in art is what Emmanuel Levinas has deemed Blanchot’s “invitation to leave the Heideggerian world.”\[^{21}\]

\[\text{Unworking and the Errancy of Being}\]

Blanchot’s crucial departure from Heidegger, with whom he is in agreement on many points, is his introduction of the essential-inessential quality of the work, its unworking. Put in Heideggerian terms, Blanchot’s unworking is that which “attends to the reserve or the unconcealment insofar as it overwhelms any retrospective claim that a particular people was able, unbeknownst to themselves, to achieve an exemplary relationship to ailetheia. The stability of a disclosure, life lived in the light of a work, truth, can never endure for a particular group; there is always the excessiveness of earth over world.”\[^{22}\] The work of art does not inaugurate a historical people. The experience of a hidden materiality (earth), rather than uniting in truth, ceaselessly ruptures all totality. Moreover, the origin of the artwork is not truth but non-truth, dissimulation. It is an origin experienced each time we read or regard the artwork and, in this way, it can never form the basis of the work but is rather its continuous originating. The artwork is a striving that refuses to settle itself into a beginning (Anfang) and refuses the intimacy of repose in unity. Heidegger’s work, then, undergoes a significant critical reconsideration in Blanchot’s writing. In his thought “the artwork does not open or illuminate the world so much as disclose its fragility and impermanence. The work of art, for Blanchot, attests to a constitutive dewarding of any particular world – to a distance that, in advance, prevents any contextualization of the work of art, any act of truth or inauguration, any setting up of the world of a historical people.”\[^{23}\]

Importantly, this dewarding of the world (unworking of the work) that Blanchot’s thought effects is already always constitutive of the work itself, as its ‘non-actualisable reserve.’ In Blanchot’s account, even the Greeks were never at home in their world. There is no primordial truth to the artwork and the artwork can never lead to a disclosing unity. Art is, and always has been – to return to Hegel’s proposition –infinitely dead, “refusing itself to determination, to dialectics, to the work of death or the work of mourning.”\[^{24}\] Rather than the illuminating day of the Heideggerian temple-work, Blanchot writes of the ‘temple of night,’ and its concealment of the other night without sublation. These quotidian images address the demand for a paradoxical, non-dialectical language in Blanchot’s discussion of unworking. This paradoxical language in Blanchot results from his attempts to think the very space of communicativity or linguistic being. This is the space of literature, wherein the work of art communicates communication itself and wherein to write is to exercise the paradoxical strength of an inexhaustible impotence. What, then, is this original inessentiality that refuses the work?

\[\text{Georges Bataille: Unemployed Negativity}\]

The idea of désoeuvrement is also indebted to a formulation emerging in the work of Blanchot’s contemporary and friend Georges Bataille, in his exposition of ‘general economy’ and his debates with Alexandre Kojève regarding the end of history and negativity in Hegel. In his thinly-veiled ‘Letter to X, Lecturer on Hegel,’ Bataille most explicitly confronts Kojève with what he calls ‘unemployed negativity’: “If action (‘doing’) is – as Hegel says – negativity, the question arises as to whether the negativity of one who has ‘nothing more to do’ disappears or remains in a state of ‘unemployed negativity.’”\[^{25}\] Kojève’s main contribution to the study of Hegel, that so influenced an entire generation of French philosophers after the First World War, was the suggestion—in line with Hegel’s own teleology—that history had come to an end. This did not, of course, suggest that no further events would take place but rather that nothing new would occur, that everything had already been realized. Consequently, for Kojève, man, as negativity, would also disappear. While Bataille did not fundamentally disagree with Kojève’s pronouncement of the end of history, he did take issue with the projected consequences. In contrast to Kojève, Bataille argued that even after the end of history, a negativity without sublation would remain, an ‘unemployed negativity.’ This unemployed negativity that remains, when all else has disappeared, is the radically unproductive...
excess of the system; it concerns all aspects of life that serve no purpose (desire, poetry, play, laughter) and are therefore, in Bataille’s words, ‘sovereign.’ Sovereignty, in Bataille, is a means without end, a pure expenditure. Subverting the totalizing system of Hegelian logic, Bataille’s unemployed negativity is “irreducible to any systems of knowledge, absolute spirit or completion (end of history)” and consists “of sovereign energies without purpose or limit which perpetually break any totality imagined in philosophical or theoretical terms.”

There remains negativity in excess of teleological action and, to reach forward to the accelerationist proposal, beyond waged work.

As should be clear, Blanchot himself engaged considerably with this notion of unemployed negativity in his own writing. Désoeuvrement names—most often from a linguistic or literary viewpoint —the unproductive remnant here identified by Bataille. In an essay devoted to a study of Bataille entitled ‘Affirmation and the Passion of Negative Thought,’ Blanchot discusses the idea that man’s future-oriented action, which, in “negating nature and negating [man] as natural being, makes him free through his bondage to work, and produces him in producing the world,” does not, however, transform into power all “the nothingness that he is.” Blanchot concludes, with Bataille, that man is the being that does not exhaust his negativity in action. The realization of this takes place as the affirmation of radical negation, of negativity that has nothing to negate. Blanchot explains what is at stake in Bataille’s approach: “A strange surplus. What is this excess that makes the conclusion ever and always unfinished...What is this ‘possibility,’ after the realization of every possibility, that would offer itself as the moment capable of reversing or silently withdrawing them all? When Georges Bataille responds to these questions in speaking of the impossible...he must be rigorously understood; it must be understood that possibility is not the sole dimension of our existence, and that it is perhaps given to us to ‘live’ each of the events that is ours by way of a double relation. We live it in one time as something we comprehend, grasp, bear and master...by relating it to some good or to some value...finally by relating it to Unity; we live it another time as something that escapes all employ and all end...as that which escapes our very capacity to undergo it, but whose trial we cannot escape. Yes, as though impossibility, that by which we are no longer able to be able, were waiting for us behind all that we live, think and say.”

The assertion that “possibility is not the sole dimension of our existence,” that there is in fact “another time,” turns our attention once again to the reserve of désoeuvrement. Similarly to Agamben’s notion of potentiality, wherein “what is at issue...is nothing less than a mode of existence that is irreducible to actuality,” Bataille’s unemployed negativity also takes on an ontological status; it concerns a mode of being that is sovereign with respect to instrumentality. The impossibility “waiting for us behind all that we live, think and say” is what resists any attempts at unified totality, whether in the form of the work of art or of community.

**Nancy: Inoperative Community**

It is in responding to impossibility in Bataille and its relation to the notion of community in its various Bataillean instantiations, that Jean-Luc Nancy, several decades later, re-engages with the political significance of this thought in The Inoperative Community (La communauté désoeuvrée). Nancy’s inoperative community is thought as a finite totality of relations among singular beings, which confounds any attempts to form itself around a shared essence. It resists any traditional identitarian conceptions of the notion of ‘community.’ Nancy rejects, on the one hand, notions of a lost fusional communion, an immanent society of harmonious accord and, on the other hand, a neoliberal individualism that he sees as a symptom of our experience of the dissolution of community. Instead, Nancy’s community is a shared being-in-common in which what singular beings share is their limits, their finitude. Community, in this sense, is not something in which people are contained but which traverses them. The Inoperative Community is largely devoted to Bataille, who, Nancy argues, “is without a doubt the one who experienced first, or most acutely, the modern experience of community as neither work to be produced, nor a lost communion, but rather as space itself, and the spacing of the experience of the outside, of the outside-of-self.”
Bataille’s thinking of community goes by way of his consideration of inner experience and communication. Inner experience, much like his negativity without employ, is “an experience which cannot be gathered, either within language or within the individual” and in this way exposes thought to the very limits of experience, or what Blanchot calls the “limit-experience.” Communication, in this regard, becomes not a transmission between stable subjects but a breach of the intact subjectivity of the one who communicates: “in inner experience there is the possibility of an experience of ‘the profound lack of all true stability’ that this flow of communication produces.” Bataille problematizes conventional understandings of the terms ‘inner,’ ‘community’ and ‘communication’ by attending to this negativity in them. For him, communication becomes “the interruption and opening of community,” the acknowledgement of the impossibility of communion that, paradoxically, makes community possible. The inner experience, in this light, is not an internal experience of the isolated subject. Blanchot describes the basis of communication in Bataille as an “exposure to death, no longer my own exposure but someone else’s, whose living and closest presence is already the eternal and unbearable absence, an absence that the travail of deepest mourning does not diminish…a relation without relation, or without relation other than the incommensurable.” Echoing this idea, Nancy writes: “community does not sublate the finitude it exposes. Community itself, in sum, is nothing but this exposition.” In light of this, the ‘being-in-common’ that characterizes community for Nancy does not entail a higher substance or subject uniting individuals but, rather, attends to the singularity of beings—apart from any particular determinations that would be ‘extracted, produced or derived’—in their very common finitude.

Nancy’s aim in The Inoperative Community is primarily political: he is responding to the ‘communist exigency’ proposed by Bataille. But the ‘communism’ to which Nancy, Bataille and Blanchot alike respond is one that “resists reduction to the ideology of communism as a support for state power or the power of the party.” In a section of the book entitled ‘Literary Communism,’ we find the explicit expansion of what Blanchot and Bataille regard as the radicality of literature and communication into the thinking of community and the political. Nancy clarifies his use of the political, describing it as “a community ordering itself to the unworking of its communication, or destined to this unworking: a community consciously undergoing the experience of its sharing…undergoing, in whatever manner, the experience of community as communication: it implies writing. We must not stop writing, or letting the singular outline of our being-in-common expose itself.”

It is in language, then, that each of these writers of community (and Agamben should here be included) locates the exposure to the singularity of being, to community and the impossible kernel that both resists and insists upon it. The impossible – as evidenced in Bataille’s ‘unemployed negativity’ and Blanchot’s désoeuvrement – is the limit that both prevents the solidification of universal knowledge, and propels the desire to attain it; the impossible “functions for community as a ‘real limit’ which both sets up a limit and which is a limit as an opening possibility.”

Nancy’s concern is the relation of the community to work inasmuch as this seems to be what is at stake in contemporary politics of immanence. The liberal rhetoric of ‘communitarianism’ (identified as ‘folk politics’ by Srnicek and Williams) concerns the idea of a ‘loss of community’ and a need for its restoration by means of the work of inclusion and tolerance and the discourse of multiculturalism, equality and human rights. The assumption of a lost communal existence, an originary unity that might be regained, is radically put into question in Nancy’s text. By emphasizing singularity over identity, the being-in-common Nancy designates resists hypostatizing the community. Rather, it attests to the shared negativity, or unworking, of being that would refuse this fusional work. Nancy turns to Blanchotian désoeuvrement to elaborate his notion of community. “Community necessarily takes place in what Blanchot has called ‘unworking,’ referring to that which, before or beyond the work, withdraws from the work, and which, no longer having to do either with production or with completion, encounters interruption, fragmentation and suspension. Community is made of the interruption of singularities, or of the suspension that singular beings are. Community is not the work of singular beings, nor can it claim them as its works, just as communication is not a work or even an operation of singular beings, for community is simply their being – their being suspended upon its limit.
Communication is the unworking of work that is social, economic, technical and institutional.\[^{39}\]

Nancy’s transposition of Blanchotian unworking into a thinking of political community provoked a response from Blanchot in the form of his *The Unavowable Community* (*La communauté inavouable*). Some years later, Agamben too engaged in this critical re-thinking of community with his *The Coming Community*. In each work we are confronted with a thinking of being in its finitude and singularity, before beings are claimed by any particular determinations ("Whatever Being," or being such as it is, in Agamben). What is exposed as the ‘authenticity’ of community is its essential unworking, that ensures it can never be entirely put to work.

The community theorized by Bataille, Blanchot and Nancy was revealed through literary communication, in the particular sense that they understood it. This experience of literary community meant that “something had taken place which, for a few moments and due to the misunderstanding peculiar to singular existences, gave permission to recognize the possibility of community established previously though at the same time posthumous: nothing of it would remain, which saddened the heart while also exalting it, like the very ordeal of effacement writing demands.”\[^{40}\] Community would be experienced as a rupture, as an ever-impossible possibility. The unworking at the heart of communication, exposed in the literary work, forecloses in advance the possibility of grounding a totalizing work. The experience of writing as expressionless and impersonal pure means simultaneously and paradoxically exposes a community bound by uncertainty and absolute contingency.

**The Coming Politics: Affirming the Rupture**

The radical absence of a foundation in this thought of community makes an examination of the politics of *déseoeuvrement* an exceptionally difficult task. Nevertheless, Blanchot insists that such an examination must be undergone: Bataille’s ‘communist exigency’ demands a critical reconsideration of the terms communication, community and communism.

Blanchot’s anarcho-communist political ontology is informed theoretically by his notion of unworking as it is first developed in relation to the work of art. The concept of “world” that emerges in Heidegger’s artwork essay undergoes a rigorous *de-*worlding in Blanchot’s writing. The political danger of the Heideggerian world, as it is presented in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art,’ is its relation through truth to the setting up of a historical people. For Blanchot, rather, the artwork does not open or illuminate the world in the experience of *Ursprung* but leads only to an experience of its innermost unworking. Blanchot’s thought denies any possibility of grounding a community, however contingent, in some essential truth.

In this light, what is laid bare in Blanchot’s essays on literature cannot be understood independently of his political interventions: unworking names the reserve in the work – of both art and community – that is *in advance* hostile to totalizing impulses. In language, the gap between the essential and crude language indicates an incommensurability between the world of instrumental language and its underlying impersonal and expressionless linguistic being. Poetic language, in its proximity to essential language, exposes a constitutive *déseoeuvrement* at the heart of language that is both its condition and interruption. In its pure *impartabilité*, before it imparts anything in particular, language is this inessentiality. Jean-Luc Nancy’s assertion that “community is presuppositionless” aligns community with this space of poetic language that can be experienced only in the singularity of an event (the event of reading or being together). Thus, unworking is not a method of dismantling or abstention but a constitutive element that cannot be overcome by work, similar to Bataille’s ‘unemployed negativity.’ In a political context, unworking is also crucially not a power that could be opposed to other forms of power but, rather, a political gesture of *pure means*, which affirms nothing but pure refusal. As pure means, this refusal is a potent-impotence or violent-non-violence with respect to the world of means and ends and thus ruptures attempts to conceive of it within this logic.

Contrary to communism’s legacy, Blanchot’s communism names an event through which traditional notions of communication and community come undone and what is exposed is
the rupture of incommensurability that concerns our essential-inessential being. Thus, for Blanchot, literary writing is the event of an impersonal and plural speech that traces our communal being without letting it ultimately be designated, it is the writing of the disaster (dés-astre, an astral change). Blanchot's notions of communication, communism and unavowable community name this event that is traversed by its own unworking.

REFERENCES

[1] Following Pierre Joris in the ‘Translator’s Preface’ to Maurice Blanchot’s The Unavowable Community, I will adhere to the translation of désœuvrement as ‘unworking’ in order to maintain its paradoxical ‘active-passivity’. Blanchot writes, according to one translator, in his “The Absence of the Book”: “To write is to produce absence of the work (worklessness) [désœuvrement]. Or: writing is the absence of the work as it produces itself through the work and throughout the work. Writing as worklessness (in the active sense of the word) is the insane game, the indeterminacy that lies between reason and unreason.” Pierre Joris comments: “It is exactly that little parenthesis, “(in the active sense of the word),” that is problematic in the translation of the term désœuvrement with the passive ‘worklessness.’” The same difficulty arises with, I would argue, alternative translations as ‘inoperativity’ or ‘inertia.’ See Maurice Blanchot, The Unavowable Community, (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1988), xxiv.


[3] Ibid., 135


[5] See Blanchot, The Unavowable Community and Jean-Luc Nancy, The Inoperative Community,


[7] Ibid., 38.

[8] Ibid., 40.

[9] Iyer, Blanchot’s Communism, 60.


[12] Ibid., 43.

[13] Ibid., 45.


[15] Ibid., 47.

[16] Ibid., 58.

[17] Iyer, Blanchot’s Communism, 52.

[18] Ibid., 53.


[20] Levinas, Proper Names, 134.

[21] Ibid., 135.
[22] Iyer, Blanchot’s Communism, 67.

[23] Ibid., 70.

[24] Ibid., 78.


[26] Ibid., 17.


[28] Ibid., 46-7.


[30] Georges Bataille experimented with two forms of ‘community’: the occult Acéphale community and the later assemblage of disaffected intellectuals in the Collège de sociologie. Both communities were explicitly without leadership, acephalic or headless. See Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, “Introduction” in The Bataille Reader.

[31] Nancy, Inoperative Community, 19.


[33] Ibid., 51.

[34] Blanchot, Unavowable Community, 25.