

The Centrality of Emptiness in the Narrative Structure of *The Last Man*

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Abstract

Maurice Blanchot's The Last Man presents an in-depth exploration of the concept of emptiness (void) as a central force that shapes the narrative structure and philosophical depth of the novel. This article examines how emptiness functions not only as a thematic concern but also as an active presence that disrupts conventional narration, challenges the stability of meaning, and forces readers to engage with the text in new ways. Drawing on the philosophies of *Martin Heidegger*, *Emmanuel Levinas*, and *Jacques Derrida*, the analysis situates *The Last Man* within an existentialist and poststructuralist framework. The emptiness in the novel is closely tied to *Heidegger's* concept of Being-toward-death, representing existential disorientation, fragmentation, and the inevitability of death. *Levinas's* philosophy of the Other sheds light on the ethical dimensions of emptiness, highlighting the impossibility of fully knowing another person and the communication failures that separate characters. Furthermore, *Derrida's* notion of différance is reflected in the novel's fragmented narration, where meaning is perpetually deferred and narrative coherence is dismantled. *Blanchot's* use of fragmentation, silence, and the breakdown of communication invites readers to actively construct meaning from the novel's disjointed scenes and incomplete dialogues. Emptiness functions both as a destructive and creative force disrupting traditional narrative structures while opening new spaces for literary and philosophical exploration. Ultimately this article argues that emptiness in *The Last Man* serves as a metaphor for existential uncertainty, ethical isolation, and the limits of language, making the novel a powerful meditation on human finitude and the complexities of meaning in modern literature.

Keywords: Maurice Blanchot, *The Last Man*, emptiness, existentialism, poststructuralism, philosophical literature.

1. Introduction

This article argues that emptiness in *The Last Man* functions as both a destructive and generative force, dismantling narrative conventions while enabling new philosophical and literary interpretations.

Maurice Blanchot's The Last Man presents a deep engagement with the concept of emptiness, not merely as a thematic element but as a central force that shapes the narrative structure of the novel and its philosophical foundations. Emptiness in *Blanchot's* work is much more than a mere metaphor for absence; it acts as a dynamic presence that disrupts conventional narration, fractures meaning, and redefines how readers approach narrative, characters, and time. This treatment of emptiness is deeply connected to existentialist and poststructuralist philosophy, particularly the works of *Martin Heidegger* and *Emmanuel Levinas*. The novel challenges readers to confront the inevitability of death, the impossibility of fully knowing another person, and the collapse of language as a tool for communication.

At the heart of *The Last Man* lies a philosophical exploration of the human condition, steeped in existential uncertainty. The characters in the novel are caught in a liminal space where communication collapses, time loses its coherence, and meaning becomes a deferred and elusive construction. *Blanchot's* fragmented narrative style reflects the inner disintegration of the characters, who struggle to make sense of their fractured realities. By abandoning traditional narrative coherence, *Blanchot* aligns the novel with poststructuralist ideas, particularly *Jacques Derrida's* concept of *différance*, which posits that meaning is always deferred, never fully present.

This article will explore how emptiness operates on multiple levels in *The Last Man*. It will examine the philosophical underpinnings of *Blanchot's* work, drawing on *Heidegger's* concept of Being-toward-death (Sein-zum-Tode) and *Levinas's* philosophy of the Other. Emptiness is not merely an absence in the novel; it is an active force that shapes the experiences of the characters and the very form of the narrative. By fragmenting the narrative and emphasising silence and broken communication, *Blanchot* invites readers to interact with emptiness as both a destructive and creative force. The novel dismantles traditional structures of meaning and opens new spaces for literary and philosophical exploration.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Materials

The primary material used in this study is the novel *The Last Man* by *Maurice Blanchot*. This text serves as the foundation for the thematic and structural analysis of the novel's engagement with the concept of emptiness. Additionally, key philosophical texts by *Martin Heidegger*, *Emmanuel Levinas*, and *Jacques Derrida* are used to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the existential, ethical, and poststructuralist themes of the novel. These works include:

- *Heidegger's* Being and Time (Sein und Zeit): Used to analyse the existentialist concept of *Being-toward-death* and its influence on the representation of mortality and disorientation in *The Last Man*.

- *Levinas's* Totality and Infinity (Totalité et Infini) and Otherwise than Being (Autrement qu'être): These texts shed light on the discussion of ethical emptiness focusing on the relationship between the self and the Other as well as the failure of communication.
- *Derrida's* Of Grammatology (De la grammatologie) and Writing and Difference (L'Écriture et la Différence): These works contribute to the analysis of narrative fragmentation and the concept of différance, where meaning is constantly deferred.

Secondary sources include critical essays and scholarly works on *Blanchot's* literary and philosophical contributions, providing contextual information and comparative analyses. These sources help situate the discussion within broader literary and philosophical traditions, particularly existentialism and poststructuralism.

2.2.Methods

This study employs a qualitative and interpretative methodology, combining a close textual analysis of *The Last Man* with a theoretical framework derived from existentialist and poststructuralist philosophy. The method proceeds through the following steps:

1. Textual Analysis: A thorough reading of *The Last Man* is conducted, with particular attention to its fragmented narrative structure, themes of disintegration, silence, and the breakdown of communication. Passages illustrating these characteristics are identified and analyzed in relation to the overarching concept of emptiness.
2. Philosophical Framework: Key philosophical concepts from *Heidegger*, *Levinas*, and *Derrida* are applied to interpret the existential and ethical dimensions of the novel. *Heidegger's* concept of Being-toward-death is used to examine how *Blanchot* presents emptiness as a force of existential disorientation and mortality. *Levinas's* theories of the Other offer insight into the ethical emptiness that separates the characters, while *Derrida's* différance informs the analysis of how narrative fragmentation disrupts the stability of meaning.
3. Comparative Analysis: The treatment of emptiness in the novel is compared with other literary works by *Blanchot*. This comparative approach situates *The Last Man* within the broader intellectual traditions that inform its themes.
4. Thematic Synthesis: The results of the textual analysis and philosophical interpretations are synthesised to demonstrate how emptiness in *The Last Man* functions as both a destructive and creative force, shaping the structure of the novel, its meaning, and its thematic concerns.

3. Results

The analysis of *Maurice Blanchot's The Last Man* reveals the centrality of emptiness as a thematic and structural force that shapes the novel's narrative and philosophical depth. The results of this study are organised according to the main philosophical frameworks utilised: existentialism (*Heidegger*) ethics (*Levinas*) and poststructuralism (*Derrida*). The conclusions highlight the multifaceted role of emptiness functioning as both a disruptive and generative force, influencing both the content and the form of the text.

3.1.Existential Emptiness: Heidegger's Being-toward-death

The application of *Heidegger's* concept of Being-toward-death to *The Last Man* illustrates how emptiness represents the characters' disorientation in the face of mortality. The novel portrays death not as a distant event but as an omnipresent force that shapes human existence. The characters experience a fragmented sense of self and time, unable to find coherence or stability in their lives. This fragmentation of time and identity reflects the collapse of meaning in the face of emptiness, in line with *Heidegger's* notion that death disrupts the continuity of existence.

3.2. Ethical Emptiness: *Levinas* and the Other

The study of ethical emptiness, illuminated by *Levinas's* philosophy of the Other, shows that emptiness in *The Last Man* operates on an interpersonal level as well. The characters are unable to communicate effectively or form meaningful connections, reflecting an ethical failure. *Levinas's* concept of radical alterity is visible in the emptiness that separates the characters. The failure of communication, manifested by incomplete dialogues and pervasive silences, highlights the unbridgeable distance between the self and the Other, reinforcing the idea that the Other can never be fully understood.

3.3. Narrative Fragmentation and Différance: *Derrida's* Influence

Derrida's concept of différance reveals that *The Last Man* challenges the very notion of stable meaning. The fragmented narrative structure prevents meaning from settling, leaving it constantly deferred in accordance with *Derrida's* argument that meaning is never fully present in a text. This analysis shows that *Blanchot's* deliberate use of incomplete scenes, broken dialogues, and disjointed timelines aims to disrupt any possibility of narrative closure or coherence.

3.4. Emptiness as a Dual Force: Destruction and Creation

One of the most significant conclusions of this study is the dual nature of emptiness in *The Last Man*. While emptiness functions as a destructive force—dismantling traditional narrative structures, fragmenting time, and disintegrating meaning—it also functions as a creative force. By rejecting conventional narration and forcing readers to actively participate in the construction of meaning, *Blanchot* opens new literary and philosophical possibilities. Emptiness creates a space where meaning is always in the process of becoming, echoing *Blanchot's* views on literature as a space of potentiality rather than closure.

3.5. Ethical and Existential Isolation

Finally, the results confirm that *Blanchot's* representation of emptiness goes beyond narrative and philosophical structures to address broader existential and ethical concerns. The isolation of the characters is both existential and ethical as they confront the limits of language, the inevitability of death, and the impossibility of fully connecting with others.

4. Discussion

4.1. Philosophical Foundations: *Heidegger* and *Levinas*

Heidegger's Being-toward-death and Emptiness

One of the central philosophical influences on *The Last Man* is *Heidegger's* concept of Being-toward-death (Sein-zum-Tode) which is a cornerstone of his existentialist analysis in *Being and Time* (Sein und Zeit). For *Heidegger* the awareness of one's own mortality fundamentally shapes human existence. Mortality is not an abstract or distant concept; it is a force that actively defines how individuals relate to the world to time and to themselves. Confrontation with death reveals a fundamental void at the heart of human existence—a void that cannot be escaped or denied.

In *Being and Time*, *Heidegger* describes death as the "most authentic possibility" of human existence. It is inevitable, personal, and non-relational; no one else can die in your place, and it is always present on the horizon, shaping present existence. This awareness forces individuals to confront the nothingness that lies at the end of life, and through this confrontation, they can gain a deeper understanding of their own being. *Heidegger* refers to this process as Being-towards-death, which is not a passive state but an active engagement with the reality of mortality.

Blanchot's The Last Man echoes these ideas by placing death and emptiness at the centre of the characters' experiences. The novel's characters are trapped in a liminal space where the void of death constantly surrounds them. They are aware of their mortality, but this awareness leads neither to resolution nor understanding. Instead, it leads to disorientation and the fragmentation of meaning. The novel's fragmented narrative structure reflects the existential state of the characters, where time seems to collapse, and events unfold in a disordered and non-linear manner. Just as death disrupts the continuity of life, the void disrupts the continuity of the narrative.

Emptiness in *The Last Man* is not merely a thematic concern; it is a force that actively shapes the narrative structure. The novel's disjointed scenes and incomplete dialogues reflect the characters' inability to find coherence or stability in their lives. They are constantly aware of the void that surrounds them but are incapable of understanding or fully escaping it. This existential condition is not unique to *Blanchot's* work but is a recurring theme in existentialist literature. The characters' confrontation with the void of death echoes the struggles faced by protagonists in other existentialist works, such as *Jean-Paul Sartre's Nausea* and *Albert Camus's The Stranger*.

In *Sartre's Nausea*, the protagonist experiences a profound sense of discomfort and alienation in the face of the absurdity of existence. Like the characters in *The Last Man*, *Sartre's* protagonist is unable to find meaning or coherence in the world, leading to a sense of nausea and disorientation. Similarly, in *Camus's The Stranger*, the protagonist's confrontation with death leads to a recognition of the absurdity of life. However, while *Sartre* and *Camus* explore these themes through the lens of individual experience, *Blanchot* takes a more radical approach by directly integrating the void into the structure of the narration. The disintegration of time, language, and meaning in *The Last Man* reflects the existential void at the heart of the characters' lives, creating a narrative that resists coherence and closure.

4.2. Levinas and Ethical Emptiness

In addition to *Heidegger's* existentialist influence, *Emmanuel Levinas's* philosophy of the Other plays a crucial role in shaping the ethical dimensions of emptiness in *The Last Man*. *Levinas*, one of the most important philosophical figures of the 20th century, focuses on the ethical relationship between the self and the Other. For *Levinas*, the Other represents radical alterity, an entity that can never be fully understood or possessed by the self. The Other always escapes comprehension, and this impossibility creates an ethical obligation for the self to recognise and respect the alterity of the Other.

Levinas argues that traditional Western philosophy, from *Plato* to *Descartes*, has been dominated by a desire to reduce the Other to the Same—to assimilate the Other into the familiar categories of the self. In doing so, the Other is stripped of its difference and reduced to something comprehensible and controllable. *Levinas* challenges this tradition by asserting that the Other cannot be reduced to the Same; the Other always remains beyond understanding, and this distance creates an ethical responsibility for the self.

In *The Last Man*, this ethical distance between the self and the Other is reflected in the void that separates the characters. The failure of communication between individuals is not merely a linguistic breakdown but an ethical failure, highlighting the impossibility of fully knowing or connecting with another person. The void that exists between the characters is not just existential but also ethical. It represents the insurmountable distance that *Levinas* describes in his philosophy of the Other. The characters in the novel are unable to fully connect with one another because they are trapped in their own isolation, unable to recognise or engage with the radical alterity of the Other.

Blanchot's representation of ethical emptiness extends beyond the interpersonal relationships of the characters to affect the very structure of the novel. Just as the characters are unable to bridge the ethical void that separates them, the narration itself resists closure or coherence. The novel's fragmented structure, with its disjointed scenes and incomplete dialogues, reflects the ethical impossibility of fully knowing the Other. The reader is confronted with this ethical void as they navigate a narrative that refuses to provide stable or definitive meaning. Ethical emptiness in *The Last Man* is thus both a thematic concern and a formal strategy, reflecting the impossibility of fully understanding or connecting with the Other.

Levinas's influence on *Blanchot's* work is also evident in the novel's depiction of the failure of language. For *Levinas*, language is the primary means by which the self encounters the Other, but it is also a site of ethical failure. Language, according to *Levinas*, is always inadequate to fully capture the alterity of the Other. Words fail to convey the radical difference of the Other, and this failure reveals the ethical limits of communication. In *The Last Man*, the characters' dialogues are often fragmented or left unfinished, reflecting the ethical void that separates them. The failure of language is not just a breakdown of communication but a reflection on the ethical impossibility of fully knowing or understanding the Other.

Blanchot's exploration of ethical emptiness in *The Last Man* can be seen as a direct engagement with *Levinas's* philosophy of the Other. The novel's fragmented narrative structure and its

emphasis on silence and broken communication reflect the ethical distance that exists between the characters. This distance is not merely a marker of absence or negation; it is a space that highlights the ethical impossibility of fully knowing or connecting with another person. Ethical emptiness in *The Last Man* thus becomes a reflection of the broader existential isolation that defines the lives of the characters.

4.3. Narration as Fragmentation: Time and Disintegration

Blanchot's use of narrative fragmentation in *The Last Man* is one of the novel's most striking aspects. Disjointed scenes, incomplete dialogues, and fragmented events reflect the existential void that permeates the text. *Blanchot* deliberately rejects traditional narrative coherence, opting for a form that reflects the chaos and disorientation experienced by the characters. The fragmented narrative structure is not merely a stylistic choice; it is a reflection of the existential and ethical void that defines the lives of the characters.

The fragmentation of the narrative in *The Last Man* can be understood through the lens of poststructuralist philosophy, particularly *Jacques Derrida's* concept of *différance*. *Derrida* argues that meaning is always deferred, never fully present or stable. In any given text, meaning is constantly in flux, and it is always in a state of becoming rather than being. This idea of deferred meaning is central to *Blanchot's* narrative style in *The Last Man*. The fragmented structure of the novel forces the reader to engage in a process of meaning-making that reflects the characters' own struggle to make sense of their fractured realities.

Blanchot's use of narrative fragmentation aligns his work with *Derrida's* concept of *différance*. The novel resists closure and coherence, leaving the reader to piece together fragments of meaning from disjointed scenes and incomplete dialogues. This process of meaning-making is not linear; it requires the reader to actively engage with the text, filling in the gaps left by the fragmented narration. In doing so, the reader becomes a participant in the creation of meaning, just as the characters in the novel struggle to find coherence in their disintegrated lives.

The collapse of time is another key aspect of the novel's fragmented narrative structure. In *The Last Man*, time does not progress in a linear fashion; it is instead fractured and disordered, with events occurring out of sequence or simultaneously. This collapse of temporal continuity reflects the existential void that defines the characters' lives. The characters exist in a liminal space where time has lost its coherence, and they are unable to orient themselves within a stable framework of past, present, and future. The fragmented narrative structure reinforces this sense of disorientation, as the reader is similarly disoriented, forced to navigate a text that resists linear progression.

Blanchot's rejection of traditional narrative structures serves to highlight the void at the heart of the novel. The disjointed scenes, fragmented dialogues, and incomplete events reflect the existential and ethical isolation of the characters. Just as the characters are unable to form coherent connections with one another or with the world, the narration itself resists coherence, reflecting the chaos and uncertainty that define their existence. Emptiness in *The Last Man* is not merely an absence of meaning; it is an active force that shapes the structure of the narration and the experiences of the characters.

The fragmentation of the narrative also reflects the disintegration of language in the novel. The characters' dialogues are often incomplete or interrupted, reflecting the failure of language to convey meaning or bridge the gap between individuals. This failure of communication is a central theme of the novel, illustrating the limits of language in the face of the void. The characters' words fail to convey meaning, becoming empty vessels incapable of capturing the complexity of their experiences. This failure of language reflects the existential void that separates the characters, as they are unable to fully communicate with one another or make sense of their disintegrated realities.

Blanchot's use of narrative fragmentation thus serves multiple functions. It reflects the existential disintegration of the characters, the collapse of time, and the failure of language, all of which are central themes of the novel. The fragmented narrative structure also forces the reader to interact with the text in new ways, actively participating in the process of meaning-making. This process of creating meaning out of absence reflects the broader exploration of emptiness in the novel, both as a destructive and creative force.

4.4. Language, Silence, and the Breakdown of Communication

In *The Last Man*, language plays a crucial role in the exploration of emptiness. *Blanchot* uses language not as a tool to convey meaning but as a reflection of its own failure. The characters' dialogues are fragmented and incomplete, revealing the limits of language in the face of existential emptiness. Rather than facilitating communication, language becomes a site of failure, incapable of bridging the gap between individuals or conveying the complexity of their experiences.

Blanchot's representation of the collapse of language aligns with poststructuralist ideas about the instability of meaning. *Derrida's* concept of *différance* suggests that meaning is always deferred, never fully present or fixed. In *The Last Man*, language becomes a site of *différance*, where meaning constantly escapes, leaving only fragments of communication behind. The characters' dialogues are often interrupted or left unfinished, reflecting the breakdown of meaning that defines their relationships. This failure of communication is not merely a linguistic issue but a reflection of the broader existential and ethical voids that separate the characters.

The failure of language in *The Last Man* is closely linked to the collapse of time and narrative coherence. Just as time in the novel is fractured and disordered, language fails to progress in a linear or coherent fashion. The characters' words are often disconnected from one another, leaving gaps in communication that reflect the gaps in time and meaning. This collapse of language reflects the characters' existential disorientation, as they are unable to fully express themselves or connect with others.

Silence plays an equally important role in *Blanchot's* exploration of emptiness. In *The Last Man*, silence is not merely the absence of sound or speech but a powerful symbol of the void that exists between the characters. The characters' interactions are often marked by long silences, where words fail to bridge the gap between them. These silences are not empty; they are filled with the weight of emptiness, emphasising the characters' isolation and their inability

to communicate meaningfully. Silence in the novel becomes a space where the failure of language is most acutely felt, revealing the profound disconnection that defines the characters' relationships.

Blanchot's use of language and silence as reflections of emptiness illustrates the limits of communication in the face of existential uncertainty. The characters' words fail to convey meaning, and their silences reveal the depth of the void that separates them. This failure of communication is not just a thematic concern but a formal strategy that reinforces the fragmented structure of the novel. The collapse of language and the presence of silence reflect the void at the heart of the text, where meaning is constantly deferred and never fully realised.

The relationship between language and silence in *The Last Man* can be understood through *Levinas's* philosophy of the Other. For *Levinas*, language is the primary means by which the self encounters the Other, but it is also a site of ethical failure. Words are always inadequate to fully capture the alterity of the Other, and this failure reveals the ethical limits of communication. In *The Last Man*, the characters' dialogues are often incomplete or interrupted, reflecting the ethical void that separates them. The failure of language is not merely a breakdown of communication; it is a reflection on the ethical impossibility of fully knowing or understanding the Other.

Blanchot's exploration of the failure of language and the presence of silence can also be seen as a commentary on the limits of literature itself. Just as the characters in the novel are unable to fully communicate with one another, the novel itself resists conveying stable or definitive meaning. The fragmented narrative structure and the presence of silence highlight the limits of literary expression, as the text refuses to provide closure or coherence. In this sense, emptiness in *The Last Man* is not merely a theme within the novel; it is a force that shapes the very form of the narration, reflecting the limits of language, communication, and meaning.

4.5. Emptiness as a Creative and Destructive Force

While emptiness in *The Last Man* is often portrayed as a destructive force that dismantles traditional narrative structures, it also functions as a creative force that opens new possibilities for literary and philosophical exploration. *Blanchot's* use of narrative fragmentation and the breakdown of communication forces the reader to interact with the text in new ways, actively participating in the creation of meaning. Emptiness in this sense is not merely an absence but a space of potentiality, where new forms of meaning can emerge.

Blanchot's rejection of linear narration and traditional forms of storytelling creates a space where the reader must actively engage in the process of meaning-making. The fragmented structure of the novel, with its disjointed scenes and unfinished dialogues, invites the reader to assemble fragments of meaning from the text. This process of creating meaning out of absence reflects the broader exploration of emptiness as both a destructive and creative force. Emptiness, while dismantling traditional forms of meaning, also creates new possibilities for interpretation and engagement.

The creative potential of emptiness in *The Last Man* is closely tied to the role of the reader in the process of meaning-making. *Blanchot's* fragmented narrative structure forces the reader to participate actively in the creation of meaning, filling in the gaps left by the disjointed scenes and unfinished dialogues. This process of meaning-making out of absence reflects the characters' own struggle to make sense of their fractured realities. Emptiness in this sense becomes a space of creative potential, where new forms of meaning can emerge from the gaps left by the fragmented narration.

Blanchot's exploration of emptiness as a creative force can also be understood in relation to his broader philosophical project. In his critical writings *Blanchot* often discusses the idea of literature as a space of absence where meaning is constantly deferred and never fully realised. In *The Space of Literature (L'Espace littéraire)* *Blanchot* argues that literature is defined by its ability to open a space of potentiality where meaning is always in the process of becoming. This idea is central to *The Last Man* where emptiness functions as both a destructive and creative force. Emptiness dismantles traditional narrative structures but also creates a space where new forms of meaning can emerge.

Blanchot's portrayal of emptiness as both a destructive and creative force aligns with poststructuralist ideas about the instability of meaning. *Derrida's* concept of *différance* suggests that meaning is always deferred, never fully present or fixed. In *The Last Man*, emptiness functions as a space of *différance*, where meaning is constantly in flux and never fully realised. The fragmented structure of the novel forces the reader to engage in a process of meaning-making that reflects the characters' own struggle to make sense of their fractured realities. Emptiness in this sense becomes a space of creative potential, where new forms of meaning can emerge from the gaps left by the fragmented narration.

The dual nature of emptiness in *The Last Man*—its ability to dismantle traditional structures while creating new spaces for meaning—reflects *Blanchot's* broader philosophical concerns. For *Blanchot*, emptiness is not merely a destructive force; it is a space of potentiality, where meaning is always in the process of becoming. The fragmented narrative structure of the novel, along with its emphasis on silence and broken communication, reflects this dual nature of emptiness as a force that disrupts meaning while creating a space where new forms of meaning can emerge.

4.6. The Ethics of Isolation: The Other and the Self

Emptiness in *The Last Man* is not only an existential concern but also an ethical one. The isolation and inability of the characters to connect with one another reflect a broader ethical void that separates them. This ethical void can be understood through *Levinas's* philosophy of the Other, which emphasises the ethical responsibility of the self to recognise and respect the radical alterity of the Other.

In *Levinas's* philosophy, the encounter with the Other is an ethical event that disrupts the self's understanding of the world. The Other represents radical alterity, an entity that can never be fully understood or possessed by the self. This ethical distance between the self and the Other

creates an obligation for the self to recognise and respect the alterity of the Other. However, in *The Last Man*, this ethical responsibility is constantly undermined by the emptiness that separates the characters. The characters are unable to fully engage with the Other, trapped in their own isolation and unable to bridge the ethical void that separates them.

The ethical void in *The Last Man* is closely linked to the failure of communication in the novel. The characters' dialogues are often incomplete or interrupted, reflecting their inability to fully engage with one another. This failure of communication is not just a linguistic issue but a reflection of the ethical void that separates the characters. They are unable to fully recognise or respect the alterity of the Other, trapped in their own isolated worlds and unable to connect with those around them.

Blanchot's representation of ethical emptiness in *The Last Man* can be understood as a commentary on the limits of human understanding and communication. Just as the characters in the novel are unable to fully engage with one another, the novel itself resists conveying stable or definitive meaning. The fragmented narrative structure and the failure of communication highlight the limits of ethical understanding, as the text refuses to provide closure or coherence. In this sense, ethical emptiness in *The Last Man* is not merely a theme within the novel; it is a force that shapes the very form of the narration, reflecting the limits of language, communication, and meaning.

Ethical emptiness in *The Last Man* also reflects the broader existential isolation that defines the lives of the characters. The characters are trapped in a liminal space where they are unable to fully engage with the world or with others. This existential isolation is not merely a physical or emotional state; it is an ethical condition that reflects the impossibility of fully knowing or understanding the Other. The void that separates the characters is both existential and ethical, highlighting the limits of human understanding and communication.

Blanchot's exploration of ethical emptiness in *The Last Man* can be seen as a direct engagement with *Levinas's* philosophy of the Other. The novel's fragmented narrative structure and its emphasis on silence and broken communication reflect the ethical distance that exists between the characters. This distance is not merely a marker of absence or negation; it is a space that highlights the ethical impossibility of fully knowing or connecting with another person. Ethical emptiness in *The Last Man* thus becomes a reflection of the broader existential isolation that defines the lives of the characters.

5. Conclusion: Emptiness as a Liminal Space

Maurice Blanchot's The Last Man is a profound exploration of emptiness as both a thematic and structural force. Drawing on the philosophies of *Heidegger*, *Levinas*, and *Derrida*, *Blanchot* uses emptiness to explore existential, ethical, and philosophical questions about mortality, communication, and isolation. Emptiness in *The Last Man* is not merely an absence of meaning; it is an active force that shapes the experiences of the characters and the structure of the narrative. The fragmented narrative, the collapse of language, and the presence of silence

all serve to reinforce the presence of emptiness in both the lives of the characters and the form of the novel itself.

Emptiness in *The Last Man* is both destructive and creative, dismantling traditional narrative structures while opening new possibilities for literary and philosophical exploration. Blanchot's use of fragmentation and the breakdown of communication forces the reader to interact with the text in new ways, actively participating in the creation of meaning. Emptiness in this sense becomes a space of potentiality, where new forms of meaning can emerge from the gaps left by the fragmented narration.

In *The Last Man*, emptiness is not merely a theme within the novel; it is a force that shapes the very form of the narration, reflecting the limits of language, communication, and meaning. The fragmented structure of the novel and its emphasis on silence and broken communication highlight the ethical and existential voids that separate the characters as they struggle to make sense of their fractured realities. Ultimately, Blanchot's exploration of emptiness in *The Last Man* invites the reader to interact with the text in new ways, confronting the limits of human understanding and communication while opening new spaces for literary and philosophical exploration.

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