

# Maurice Blanchot

A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY

CHRISTOPHE BIDENT

*Translated by John McKeane*

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS  
New York 2019

## CONTENTS

<i>Translator's Note</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Part I 1907–1923</i>	
1. Blanchot of Quain: Genealogy, Birth, Childhood (1907–1918)	3
2. Music and Family Memory: Marguerite Blanchot in Chalon (1920s)	10
3. The Fedora of Death: Illness (1922–1923)	13
<i>Part II 1920s–1940</i>	
4. The Walking Stick with the Silver Pommel: The University of Strasbourg (1920s)	21
5. A Flash in the Darkness: Meeting Emmanuel Levinas (1925–1930)	24
6. There Is: Philosophical Apprenticeship (1927–1930)	29
7. Aligning One's Convictions: Paris and Far-Right Circles (1930s)	34
8. "Mahatma Gandhi": A First Text by Blanchot (1931)	41
9. Refusal, I. The Revolution of Spirit: <i>La Revue Française</i> , <i>Réaction</i> , and <i>La Revue du Siècle</i> (1931–1934)	44
10. Journalist, Opponent of Hitler, National-Revolutionary: <i>Le Journal des Débats</i> , <i>Le Rempart</i> , <i>Aux Écoutes</i> , and <i>La Revue du Vingtième Siècle</i> (1931–1935)	51
11. The Escalation of Rhetoric: The Launch of <i>Combat</i> (1936)	62
12. Terrorism as a Method of Public Safety: <i>Combat</i> (July–December 1936)	67
13. Patriotism's Breaking Point: <i>L'Insurgé</i> (1937)	71

- |     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 14. | These Events Happened to Me in 1937:<br>Death Sentences (1937–1938)   | 82  |
| 15. | On the Transformation of Convictions:<br>A Journalist of the Far Right (1930s)                              | 88  |
| 16. | From Revolution to Literature:<br>Literary Criticism (1930s)  | 91  |
| 17. | Murderous Omens of Times to Come—Writing the<br><i>Récits</i> : “The Last Word” and “The Idyll” (1935–1936) | 101 |
| 18. | Night Freely Recircled, Which Plays Us:<br><i>Thomas the Obscure</i> (1932–1940)                            | 111 |

*Part III* 1940–1949

- |     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 19. | The Universe Is to Be Found in Night:<br>Resistance (1940–1944)                                       | 121 |
| 20. | Using Vichy against Vichy: Jeune France (1941–1942)   | 127 |
| 21. | Admiration and Agreement: Meeting Georges<br>Bataille (1940–1943)                                     | 135 |
| 22. | In the Name of the Other: Literary Chronicles<br>at the <i>Journal des Débats</i> (1941–1944)         | 145 |
| 23. | A True Writer Has Appeared: The Publication<br>and Reception of <i>Thomas the Obscure</i> (1941–1942) | 160 |
| 24. | Lift This Fog Which Is Already of the Dawn:<br>The Publication of <i>Aminadab</i> (1942)              | 163 |
| 25. | Writers Who Have Given Too Much to the Present:<br><i>NRF</i> Circles (1941–1942)                     | 170 |
| 26. | From Anguish to Language: The Publication<br>of <i>Faux pas</i> (1943)                                | 178 |
| 27. | The Prisoner of the Eyes That Capture Him:<br>Quain (Summer 1944)                                     | 182 |
| 28. | The Disenchantment of the Community:<br>Editorial Activity after Liberation (1944–1946)               | 187 |
| 29. | The Year of Criticism: <i>L'Arche</i> , <i>Les Temps Modernes</i> ,<br>and <i>Critique</i> (1946)     | 192 |
| 30. | Respecting Scandal: Literary Criticism (1945–1948)  | 195 |
| 31. | The Black Stain: Writing <i>The Most High</i> (1946–1947)   | 208 |
| 32. | The Passion of Silence: Denise Rollin (1940s)   | 219 |
| 33. | The Mediterranean Sojourn: The Writing<br>of the Night (1947)   | 225 |

34. Something Inflexible: *The Madness of the Day*,  
a New Status for Speech (1947–1949) 229
35. The Turn of the Screw: The Second Version  
of *Thomas the Obscure* (1947–1948) 232
36. The Authority of Friendship: The Completion  
of *Death Sentence* (1947–1948) 235
37. Quarrels in the Literary World: Publication  
and Reception (1948–1949) 239

*Part IV* 1949–1959

38. Invisible Partner: Èze, Withdrawal (1949–1957) 245
39. The Essential Solitude: Writing the *Récits* (1949–1953) 248
40. The Radiance of a Blind Power:  
*When the Time Comes* (1949–1951) 254
41. Are You Writing, Are You Writing Even Now?  
*The One Who Was Standing Apart from Me* (1951–1953) 261
42. The Critical Detour: A Few Articles of Literary  
Criticism (1950–1951) 266
43. The Author in Reverse: The Birth of *The Space  
of Literature* (1951–1953) 271
44. Always Already (The Poetic and Political Interruption  
of Thought): Toward *The Book to Come* (1953–1958) 280
45. Of an Amazing Lightness: *The Last Man* (1953–1957) 290
46. Grace, Strength, Gentleness: Meeting Robert Antelme (1958) 297
47. In the Gaze of Fascination: The Return to Paris (1957–1958) 301
48. Refusal, II. In the Name of the Anonymous:  
The 14 *Juillet* Project (1958–1959) 303

*Part V* 1960–1968

49. Note That I Say “Right” and Not “Duty”:  
The Declaration on the Right to Insubordination  
in the Algerian War (1960) 315
50. Invisible Partners: The Project for the *International  
Review* (1960–1965) 324
51. Characters in Thought: How Is Friendship  
Possible? (1958–1971) 336
52. Act in Such a Way That I Can Speak to You:  
*Awaiting Oblivion* (1957–1962) 342

53.	The Thought of the Neuter: Literary and Philosophical Criticism—the <i>Entretien</i> and the Fragment (1959–1969)	349
54.	A First Homage: The Special Issue of <i>Critique</i> (1966)	362
55.	Between Two Forms of the Unavowable: The Beaufret Affair (1967–1968)	370
56.	The Far Side of Fear: Political Disillusionment (May 1968)	375
<i>Part VI</i> 1969–1997		
57.	Life Outside: <i>The Step Not Beyond</i> , a Journal Written in the Neuter (1969–1973)	389
58.	Friendship in Disaster: Distance, Disappearance (1974–1978)	403
59.	The Last Book: <i>The Writing of the Disaster</i> (1974–1980)	406
60.	Forming the Myth: Readings and Nonreadings (1969–1979)	416
61.	Making the Secret Uncomfortable: Blanchot’s Readability and Visibility (1979–1997)	424
62.	With This Break in History Stuck in One’s Throat: <i>The Unavowable Community</i> (1982–1983)	435
63.	Even a Few Steps Take Time: Literature and Witnessing (1983–1997)	445
	Amor: Blanchot since 2003 John McKeane	465
	<i>Acknowledgments</i>	479
	<i>Notes</i>	481
	<i>Bibliography</i>	599
	<i>Index</i>	605