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« L'instable équilibre » : The radical impossibility of Maurice Blanchot's *L'Instant de ma mort*

The œuvre of theorist Maurice Blanchot both highlights and occupies the place of uncertainty in literary criticism and production. Blanchot's short récit *L'Instant de ma mort* proposes the (im)possibility of an impersonal speaker, who represents in fact a textual instance rather than an individual conscience (too often conflated with that of Blanchot himself). This récit, written in 2004, ostensibly recounts an instance that occurred fifty years prior: Blanchot narrowly escaped execution at the hands of Nazi soldiers. Such a reductive reading of the text, though, does not provide the space for an exploration of its links to Blanchot's criticism and theory: by his constant displacement of the sujet d'énonciation and his privileging of the instant above that of the speaker or subject, Blanchot exposes the radically confused temporality of the indivisible moment, called into question by the refusal to attribute a secure or static identity to the je of the text.

By examining the passage from the je to the il in *L'Instant*, and by questioning Derrida's analysis of the role of témoignage and of autobiography (proposed in *Demeure*, his 150-page examination of the ten-page récit), I will attempt to trace the active rejection in Blanchot's fiction of any possibility of a definitive analysis. Blanchot's essay « *L'expérience d'Igitur* », in *L'Espace littéraire*, provides a certain “key” to Blanchot's development of a death within the text and outside of the self, while his much-examined (and itself radically uncertain) idea of the Neutre is represented, in *L'Instant* as in his fragmentary later work, by the valorization of an impersonal writing that resists analysis. I propose a reading of *L'Instant de ma mort* that denies a simple autobiographical reduction in favor of a celebration of the “impossibility of possibility” that characterizes Blanchot's approach to fiction, both his own and that which forms the basis of his criticism.