

Victor-Marie, Comte Hugo

*Solvuntur objecta.*¹ — I put in my notebook that the Dreyfus affair had its own virus, that there was in this affair, in the very fabric of this affair, a certain specific virus. I just experienced it a lot more than I expected. Much more also and especially than I would have liked. However, I would not want this virus to worry the friendship that for ten and twelve years I had linked with our collaborator Mr. Daniel Halévy. Friendship can be stormy. It can be crossed. It can be unhappy. It can be painful. It can be fought. - It can be broken. Strictly; and it can even be broken for a cause equally honorable on both sides, equally honorable for both parties. It should even be broken only for a cause equally honorable to both parties. It can even be postponed, extended (when you hit quarantine you look at it twenty times before breaking off), suspended as if for a time and for example under conditions.

¹ “Objections disappear.”

Provided naturally that it is under honorable and loyal condition. It can go asleep. It can neither be worried, nor troubled, nor suspect, nor sick within.

Neither worried nor troubled.

And we must not look twice, we must not think, even inside, before reaching out and shaking a hand.

We must extend and shake a hand, shake an outstretched hand, be as prompt, as ready, as invincible, as irrecusable, irrefutable, that one cannot defend oneself, as one cannot think about it, so immediate, so new, even internally, so springing up, so be it, make such an instant gesture, and not just so spontaneous, a gesture so new, so joyful, the joy of a reunion, also without (any) ulterior motive, and appreciably as sacred as it was in the Christian centuries to make the sign of the cross with the same right hand.

Also not on purpose. Not at all put into deliberation.

Friendship can be sacrificed. It can be lost, it cannot be exposed.

I am certain and I can give the assurance that I did not insult Daniel Halévy in my notebook. Outrage is essentially an operation where there is only one person who knows exactly who outrages someone, who is outraged and if there is outrage: it is the one who outrages. Outrage is an essentially voluntary, intentional operation. When I outrage someone, I obviously go about it in a completely different way. I have only outraged someone three or four times in my long career. I have never outraged with any gaiety of heart. I feel, I know too well all that is ungodly in every outrage, even just, even inevitable, even ordered, even due. I have never outraged anyone other than very dangerous public enemies. These few reprobations have never been revoked or contested by anyone.

Everything else is the offense. Here we do not know where we are going. An offense can escape. An offense can be misunderstood. We can offend without wanting to, and even without knowing it. One can offend not only without doing it on purpose, but even without realizing it. *The dearer the*

*offender, the greater the offense.*² If I have done Halévy this offense which I have not seen, I beg his pardon. If I offended Halévy in my last notebook, I hereby make reparation.

I ask him forgiveness for it without a second thought. I have too much respect and taste for war to believe that it is necessary and that one can wage war indiscriminately, to resolve myself to make a fratricidal offense, an impious war. Halévy and I, or finally Halévy and Péguy, we are friends. That's already everything. Besides, we are more and less than friends. If there are more than friends. I mean we are neighbors from the same Ile-de-France. Neighbors in the country, fashionable neighbors of Brittany, which makes three or four leagues. When I go to see him, when he comes to see me, whatever the weather, which is all fine weather, we must cross, in the rain, in the sun, three and four leagues of this admirable country, it is necessary in the dust and in the mud we walked on the plain like tramps, on this admirable plain, we must climb and descend the same sides, the sides cut off by these two admirable valleys of the Yvette and the Bièvre³. Cut in the plateau. Cut in curves, in single lines. It is not more beautiful than going to Paris, but it is another beauty. It creates a friendship of its own. Thus is born a proper friendship. A rural friendship is of a different beauty than an urban friendship. I do not even speak, Halévy, of the services you have rendered me, of so many services of friendship. It is not precisely ingratitude that I have to defend myself. If I hear correctly. That would be too rude, and for you, (and for me.) Too unworthy of you and me. How many times have we not walked together on this plain, in exercise and fatigue, in brief releases from cerebral servitudes, one leading the other and leading him back, how many times have we? we did not sail in company on this immense sea, exchanging rare words, like sailors, but words of what confidence. Words from the high seas. This terrible time, this terrible confidence, which you told me not a few months ago. Should I betray her, *tradere*, deliver her to the public. You were driving me home. It was you that day that took me back. We went up this long hill, this long road to Jouy, so

² Daniel Halévy, in a letter to Péguy on July 21, 1910.

³ The Yvette and the Bièvre are rivers near Paris that lead into the Seine.

marvelously, so harmoniously rolling and unrolled, rolled up, unrolled, which from the bottom of Jouy and the canals and the Bièvre mill rises imperceptibly and noticeably, also, sinuously, like a wide ribbon, well laid flat on a rising ground, skirting, bordering the immense property of the Mallet, this broad, this noble road well made in serpent which leads gradually until on the plain where one enters as it does without s' perceive it by the arrangement, by the care of an admirable connection. And one is there as without having entered it, without having gone there, without having gone up there. It's long, and we're already there. Side by side we climbed this road. It was awful weather. You were wrapped in a large brown coat. A sort of homespun thing. I also believe. We were silent. Happy are those, happy two friends who love each other enough, who want to please each other enough, who know each other well enough, *who agree well enough*, who are related enough, who think and feel fairly alike, together enough inside each separately, enough the same each side by side, who experience, who taste the pleasure of being silent together, of being silent side by side, of walking long, long, going, walking silently along the silent roads. Happy two friends who love each other enough to (know) to be silent together. In a country that knows how to be silent. We were silent. We were going up. We have been silent for a long time. *What astonishes me*, you say without any comment, (so much we were in this common silence, in this *shared* silence, instantly ready for each other, open and silent, ready as if in reserve), *what astonishes me*, you say without introduction, (But you do not want me to report this. You are wrong. But it is yours, since after all it is yours. I must bow. Yet it had entered, it entered instantly as an essential part of my thought, of the meditation, and in truth it never leaves me. I even think about it, to tell the truth, it comes back to me more often than I would like. It was for me a flash, a sudden revelation, that is to say one of those revelations of a capital piece in the thought that one suddenly sees who was already there, who was eternally already there, but which oneself all alone had not been able to see, distinguish, formulate. You respond to me that an essential part of a machine is often an invisible part. You are right. But the essence of the *confession*, where it becomes obvious that I lean, is to preferably show the invisible parts, and to say especially what should be kept silent. On the other hand, it is certain that there is no reality without

confessions, and that once one has tasted the reality of *confessions*, any other reality, any other try seems quite literary. And even false, feigned. Because it is so incomplete. How to do it. Will I keep this terrible confidence to myself? Shall I keep it quiet until the end of the earthly days? It haunts me so much. Since then it never leaves me. We were silent then and until the end. You took me, you took me back from your home to this causeway from where you can see the Saclay pond⁴. That day you were driving me home. We couldn't leave each other. One pushed the other. The other was pushing one. *I am going to push you as far as Saclay*. The confidences that we have on this level, my dear Halévy, are not those we have in Luxembourg and on the Boulevard Saint-Germain. I am not saying that they are better or deeper, nor that they have more beauty. Nothing is deeper than the deep. I say they have another beauty. I'm not saying they are rarer either. More secret. Nothing is more secret than a street in Paris. I say they have another rarity. They were never confidences of bitterness, even this great one that I do not say, because our characters, which differ on so many points, have this in common that neither you nor I know bitterness. They were generally confidences of sadness and trials. Because it is the common fate. You got a lot more than a man's part. You have had some that we know and that we do not know. I have had some, I have some that you do not even suspect. How many times have we not climbed the embankment of the road together. How many times have we gone up and down these hills together. And we rejoiced together to look at these valleys and these roads, these hollows and this plain. The most beautiful country in the world. How many times, from all sides, have we not together discovered this perfect village of Saclay, the model of the French village, (on the plain), and its monumental millstone entrances lined up in the stubble. Now it is this very confidence that I would have betrayed, not only the confidence of the friend, but the confidence of the traveler and the host, the confidence of the road and the table, of the walk and then of the armchair in front of the fire, the confidence of the very home, yours, — mine, — ancient hospitality and modern brotherhood. I wouldn't be just an ungrateful person. I would not only have committed this disgusting sin of ingratitude. I would be a

⁴ A pond near Versailles.

criminal. I would have done a bad deed, I would have done a deliberately bad deed, which would amaze me. Finally I would be a fool.

Because I would be a very bad merchant. Because I would have sacrificed very lightly, very recklessly, at a very low price, for nothing, for a joke, one of those goods that cannot be replaced, because they are both irreversible and irreversible, because they are goods of memory and of history, because they are of the order of memory and history, because there must be habit and usage, because it comes in, because it is necessary, because it would lack the slow work, the irreversible, the incompressible, the incompressible, the elaboration of the proper history, the elaboration, the old, the ancient elaboration of history, that we can not hurry. Not only do we not remake, that we do not improvise, we do not pretend, but we do not hurry. What we do not give and we are not given change. The slow maturation. Memory and history, time, the only one that does not accept being given change. Do you think that we would never find again, that we could begin again these long, these slow maturations, ripened in the sun and the rain of the plain. Friendships of this kind are only formed and made between men of the same age, of the same generation, of the same promotion. And it takes a lifetime, ten, fifteen years of life and practice. Are we going, for four words, to lose all that, that we would not do again, that we would not find again. Who would miss us, that we would regret forever. Are we going to lose ten, twelve years of the community of a memory that was dear to us. Shall we set out the twenty or thirty years which perhaps remained to us, which might have been granted to us, which were so harmoniously, so jointly prepared. Where we might still have produced a few full works, you as you want them, austere and à la Salluste, me as I want mine. Or as I can. Because that's how it should be, this is how it is good. *Opus cuique suum.*⁵ What we would lose, we would never do it again, we would never find it again. Ten, twelve years of memory and the preparation so laboriously, so long, so dearly acquired for twenty or perhaps thirty years that remain to us. A life is not done twice, a life is not played twice. A life cannot be remade. Young people are young, my friend, and we are forty-

⁵ "to each their own work."

year-old men. A man who would live twice, who would start over, who would live, who would gamble his life twice would not be a man, he would not be a wretched, sinful and precarious creature; he would not be a Christian; he would be an imaginary being, a Faust. A man who would have the right, who would have this exorbitant power to start over, he would not be a man, he would be a god, my friend. We are real beings. We are poor beings, very poor beings.

There are many people who are more beautiful and purer than us. There are some, they say, who are happier. There are some, it is said, who are happy. There are innumerable who are holier. There are some who are more heroic ones. But we are real beings, real men, assailed by worries, beaten by the winds, beaten by trials, devoured by worries, transported with thongs in this bitch of modern society. Are we going to lose at least the benefit of so many trials. A generation, a promotion only binds itself between oneself, between itself, inside, within, within itself.

And the essence of history and memory is that everything which is history and memory does not start over.

It cannot be replaced for the twenty or thirty years that will perhaps be dispensed to us.

We must not hide it from us, Halévy, we belong to two different classes and you will grant me that in the modern world, *where money is everything*, it is indeed the most serious, the biggest difference, the biggest distance that can be introduced. Whatever you have, whatever you do, whatever you put on and in the garment and in all the *habit*, and in the beard and in the tone, and in the mind and in the heart, whatever you defend some, you belong, and here I warn you that I do not offend you, you are, you belong to one of the highest, the oldest, the oldest, the greatest, and since we also explain ourselves well, since it is understood that we no longer flatter ourselves, one of the noblest families of the old bourgeois liberal republican Orleanist

tradition. From the old French bourgeois tradition, French liberal. You are a doctrinaire, I understand that by race you are a doctrinaire. And me. I know you. Come on, you know that. Everybody knows it.

I know you well. The tenacious ancestors, peasants, winegrowers, the old men of Vennecy⁶ and Saint-Jean-de-Braye⁷, and of Chécý ⁸ and Bou and Mardié,⁹ the patient ancestors who on the trees and bushes of the forest of Orleans and on the sands of the Loire conquered so many acres of good vines were not long, the old, they were not long; they did not have long to win back from the bourgeois world, from bourgeois society, their unworthy grandson, drinker of water, in bottles. The ancestors with the relevant foot, the gnarled men like the vines, rolled up like the tendrils of the vine, thin like the branches and which known the branches have turned to ashes. And the women at the beaters, the big, well-inflated bundles of laundry rolling in the wheelbarrows, the women who washed the laundry in the river. My grandmother who kept the cows, who could not read and write, or, as they say in elementary school, who could not read or write, to whom I owe everything, to whom I owe, from whom I hold everything I am; Halévy your grandmother did not keep the cows; and she could read and write; I do not add *count*. My grandmother also knew how to count. She counted as one counts in the market, she counted *by head, by heart*. But I don't know how she did her count, the good woman, that's the case to say, she never succeeded in counting except in the last decimal places. You know that I defended myself for a long time. The man is cowardly. It is here, it is in this that I was a traitor. And in this only. The École Normale, (the Sorbonne), the friction of the professors had for a long time made me hope, or finally let me hope that I too would acquire, that I would obtain this academic elegance, the only authentic one. The only beautiful one coming. You know

⁶ A village near Orléans where Péguy spent some summers growing up.

⁷ A village near Orléans where Péguy's father was born.

⁸ A village near Orléans where Péguy's grandfather was born.

⁹ Bou and Mardié are two other villages near Orléans and Péguy's childhood.

the bottom of my thoughts. My most secret hopes have not escaped you. The dreams of my dreams are not hidden from you. Well, yes, I will say it, I will go all the way. In this confession. Because you know it as well. Well yes, I too hoped that one day I would have this supreme distinction, this finesse, this supreme elegance of a (Marcel) Mauss,¹⁰ (not the wine merchant), the diction, the severe, the impeccable, the relentless diction, the finesse of a *Boite-à-Fiches*. By this expression, this heavy trivial nickname, this rudeness you recognize that I no longer defend myself. Forty is a terrible age. I was also defending myself from being a people, from looking like a people, it must be said, for a good reason. You have to say everything, even what is good. There aren't that many. Well, I was defending myself against it because, being a people naturally, I do not exaggerate anything so much as to do it *with the popular* and those who do it *with the popular*. Those who do it to *people*. And even to *democracy*. I hate this kind of pose. So I was afraid to pose in this kind of pose. But you have to surrender. *Forty years have passed*.¹¹ Now you have to surrender. I must surrender. This elegance of Mauss. We can't hide anything from you. The dream of my sleepless nights, the image of my feverish nights. This elegance of Mauss, one does not need to think about it any more. This Mauss kind of elegance must be renounced. This fine linen, this fine profile, this noble gaze, assured, in no way rogue, this flowery language, these pleasant lips, this democratic but fine jacket, democratic but sober, democratic but severe, this curly beard, ardent blonde, *flavescente ardescent*,¹² *flavescente fiery red*, well-cut quadrangular descending, diminished descending, secretly gleaming, this mustache not precisely, not vulgarly, not coarsely conquering, but triumphant royal, almost of the same color, these long sociologist pants, these republican cuffs, this end vertical fold of the pants, if also, so fairly remunerative, this fine speaking High German, this complexion of lilies and roses, we must renounce it. This chaste but voluptuous waistcoat. Forty is a terrible age. Because it no longer deceives us. Forty years is a relentless age. It no longer

¹⁰ A famous faculty member of the College de France.

¹¹ This comes from the first verse of a Victor Hugo poem will get to shortly.

¹² A neologism of Péguy's from the latin *ardescere*.

lets us be fooled. It no longer tells us about it. And it no longer wants, it no longer suffers from being told about it. It's not hiding anything. We are not hiding anything from it. It is no longer hiding anything from us. Everything is exposed; everything is revealed. Everything betrays itself. Forty years old is an unforgivable age, which, in the language of the people, Halévy, means that it does not forgive anything. Because this is the age when we become what we are. Now what am I, Halévy, it suffices to see me, it suffices to look at me for a moment in order to find out. A child could do it. No matter how much I do; it was all very well to defend myself. In me, around me, above me, without asking my opinion, everything conspires, above me, everything contributes to making me a peasant not from the Danube,¹³ which would still be literature, but simply from the valley of the Loire, a woodcutter from a forest which is not even the immortal forest of Gastine,¹⁴ since it was the perishable forest of Orleans, a winegrower of the coasts and sands of the Loire. Already I don't know what to say, or even how to behave, even in those few friendly salons, where I sometimes went. I have never known how to sit in an armchair, not for fear of any pleasures, but because I do not know. I'm very stiff there. What I need is a chair, or a good stool. Rather I need a chair; for my kidneys; the stool for when I was young. Old people are smart. The old are stubborn. The old will win. My clothes and my body, (this first garment, this already garment), (and that surprises me, because I have the same suppliers as everyone else, rather I have the same suppliers as everyone else), (I do not speak for the body, I speak for the other, for the second garment, I do not speak for the former organic garment, I speak for the industrial garment, the former organic, industrial fabric, formerly organic, no longer in living cellular tissue currently organic, so to speak, histological), my clothing, and also my undergarment, my clothing the body, my shoes, the soles of my shoes, the earth which is under the soles of my shoes, the two feet that are in my shoes, the legs that are at the end of my feet, over here, the man who is at the end of both legs, all my outfit, all my attitude, the arching beginning of my shoulders, this beginning arch, the

¹³ This alludes to a fable of La Fontaine, *Fables*, XI, VII

¹⁴ A large forest in the west of France between Rennes and Le Mans.

inclination of the head on the nape of the neck, the days of fatigue, and already the other days , (because every day is already days of fatigue; but what is good, and consoling, what is marvelous, is how we kill all the same days of fatigue. Like one puts it on the ground. Fortunately. Man is a beast,¹⁵ a mechanism of incredible flexibility, elasticity. And one has the impression that it can last for years and years, thirty, forty years, that it can last forever. I even believe that nothing is made so new, so fresh than some days of fatigue. And besides I believe that I do not say it, that I do not think it for myself. But because it's true. We get the impression that if we weren't tired, at least from a certain fatigue, if we were totally new, totally fresh, we wouldn't even go up to work, not even up to new work, up to fresh work. Which is the first job, the first zone, the beginning of labor. We would stay *short* of work, where it's even newer, and even fresher. You have to be a little cheeky to work, even in new and fresh. We are tired when we get up, we place ourselves tired at our worktable. And then a turnover is established. You never work so well, the job, the register never returns, never plays so well as when you started out a little tired. There is something like a training of fatigue at work, (of the day), like a reseeding, for the work of the day, of all this residue of all the previous work, of all the past life. (What, for memory, is fatigue, especially for organic memory). We feel quite as in maneuvers, where we always wake up tired. We have stiff legs when we wake up, by *waking up* too early in the morning before daylight in the straw, (when we have been able to touch straw); in the morning fogs, in the fine fogs of September, in the fogs of the Loire and Loiret, Somme, Lunain and Ornain, and Barley, and Cousin, and Armançon , and of the Petit and the Grand Morin,¹⁶ the first poses are dragged lamentably, stiffly. The feet hurt you, cook you, burn you, all the skin is excoriated. But once stripped, once cleansed, all this will not prevent singing in the midday sun. Because there is a kind of market equilibrium. And we do not know how: the feet are no longer excoriated. So go the daily steps of writing at the desk. A certain work balance is established. The fatigue does not return until the evening, at

¹⁵ The French word "bête" can refer to an animal or be a pejorative term often translated as 'stupid.'

¹⁶ These are all different locations where Péguy did his military drills as an Army Reservist.

the stopover, just when leaving.) The inclination of the neck on the shoulders in the middle between the two shoulders, the planting of the head on the shoulders through , through the ministry of the neck, the whole (general) inclination of the body forward denounces, betrays what I am, because I am becoming it, since I am becoming it: a (not) lost peasant. The general beginning inclination towards nourishing earth, towards mother earth, towards tomb earth. The general inclination forward. This is how we end up hitting the ground. I already feel the curvature, the general curvature, lateral, transverse, horizontal to the shoulders, vertical to the kidneys. It must also be said that it is the curvature, the curvature, the curvature, the inclination of the writer on his work table. I can already feel my shoulders curl. I see. I fly that I will not end up like those gentlemen of the city, who stand straight to the end, upright to the end, and even a little straighter when they are old than when they are young. I will end up like the general; you know well, the famous general; but yes, the general who passes; finally the general commanding the fifty-fifth army corps; *there the general passes; all broken, all wobbly, all hunchbacked, all mischievous.* I will be a broken old man, a bent old man, a gnarled old man. I'll be an old devil. I will perhaps be an old defeat (of the events of this wretched existence). I'll be a broken old man, a twisted old man, an old chunky one, an old turtle, all u-rhymes except two (or three) one of which is that I definitely won't be a plush old man. How I will distinguish myself from a few farmers in Beauce. And a few, less numerous, from the Loire Valley. Who have more coats of arms at the Comptoir d'Escompte than their ancestors ever had four feet deep under the fifth slab on the left, starting from the partition wall which joins the end of the kitchen and adjoins the beautiful bedroom, the bedroom, master bedroom. I will be an old crumpled up, an old chenu. We will say: *that father Péguy is leaving.* Yes, yes, good people, I will go. *Dream of young years, what has become of you?* Those sweet lips, these courteous gestures. This sweetness, this very French courtesy. Barely German. I'll be a stunted old man, my skin will be wrinkled, my skin will be bark, I'll be a tired old man, a shortcut for old *pésan*. Exactly *paisan*, pressing *paî*, crushing *paî* with a single emission of very open, wide open voices, not a wet diphthong. Not by dragging on *pai*, by dragging *pai*, but by feeding it *on the contrary*. Too many old people behind me have stooped, stooped all their lives to *collage* the vine.

With this soft red brown wicker that is sold at the market, picked, cut from the banks of the Loire, false rivers, long sandy islands, quicksand, fixed sands, running ponds, water returns . Dead rivers. Dead water. This flexible wicker, with the flexible end, the poisonous end, the viminal end, the color end more and more fiery, more and more sap and flexible to the end; still like everything wet inside, in its very sap, in its sap that it keeps, from the water of the river. Hardworking people. I have too many behind me. I think that's why I have this vice of working. May I write as they joined the vine. And harvest sometimes as they harvested *in good years*. May I write only as they were chatting. Too many old people, (and old women), have lived on the vine, on the delicate vine, bending over like a child, bending over all life, (which sometimes gives aches even to those who are used to it, *who have the habit, (he is not used to it)*, bending, bending, bending, *in two* as my grandmother said (*we are all in two*) to prune, weed, hoe, pamper, weed, cuddle, to watch, (to watch it grow, to watch it grow, to watch it ripen, to encourage; to grow with the gaze), (to really make the gaze grow), harvesting ungrateful and grateful vines. They said more simply: *I will work the vine*. Everything that was done in the vineyard was called working. Except, however, harvesting, because it is the reward and the gain, which was called *making the harvest*. And although we got aches and pains there, it supposedly wasn't working. It was the biggest non-working holiday of the religious and civil year.

For example, I can see that I will never learn fencing. I will never know, I will never have this point, aristocratic and bourgeois, this point, this unpunctated point. This beating, these beatings, these incessant, tireless transplantings in an ideal circle, (imaginary), which is not so big as a ring. These requests and these responses so hasty, so beating, so instantaneous. So slender, so fine. This conversation. I know the bayonet very well, on the contrary, because it's triangular, quadrangular (it's a brand new, sparkling steel point), because it's at the end of a gun. That's a weapon. All the good memories of this year when *we made some of them*. That was fencing. What commandments. What twists and turns. What relaxation(s). We breathed it,

air. What passes for arms. We still have the memory of it in the memory of the muscles of the thighs.¹⁷ And I would have fought so well with fifteenth-century weapons. These weapons were tools, indeed, barely concealed, barely disguised, barely adapted. I will never know how to *make* weapons. I would have fought so well with these ancient weapons. They were the tools of workers and even peasants, barely *dressed*, the *garments of war*, spades, shovels and pickaxes, pikes and picks, axes and fangs, (at the end of a stick it was the halberd), axes, hatchets, hammers, (maces of arms), (it was the man-at-arms who was the anvil, and it was the man-at-arms who was the blacksmith). (And it was sometimes the man-at-arms who was the hammer (in *Eviradnus*¹⁸. It was indeed a question of entering into iron as the peasant enters into the earth, and into wood, the woodcutter, as the workman enters into wood and into iron. Or it was a matter of crushing iron as the workman knocks down, as the workman hammers, as the workman crushes iron. *We forge ourselves*, as the other says, and it wasn't just for the sake of the rhyme:

*We forge ourselves,
We cut our throats,*

¹⁷ Robert Burac notes a connection here between this and Victor Boudon's memory in *Mon lieutenant Charles Péguy* (Albin Michel, 1964), about how Péguy takes great pleasure in practicing bayonette charges in the purest style of 1870. Cf. III:1539-1540.

¹⁸ Eviradnus is an early medieval figure in Victor Hugo's poem collection LA LÉGENDE DES SIÈCLES. "Eviradnus was growing old apace,

The weight of years had left its hoary trace,

But still of knights the most renowned was he,

Model of bravery and purity.

His blood he spared not; ready day or night"

By Saint George!
By the king!

The *cuirass* and the helmet were of iron and *cuir*¹⁹. On both sides, worker, peasant, man-at-arms, the very skin was leather. The weapons were handle scythes. A workman was worth a man-at-arms. A man of work was worth a man-at-arms. A man was worth a man. A peasant who took his scythe, an artisan who took his hammer was not sensibly inferior to the man-at-arms who took his mace. The mass of work was worth, weighed the mass of arms. A man weighed a man. Today a worker does not work with a Lebel rifle or a 95 canon.²⁰

Thus by this curvature, by this general curvature already the earth leans my forehead towards the earth. When I'm already leaving, hands behind my back, my umbrella under my arm, my back arched, I feel the curvature rising, following the earth, thinking of the earth. I will walk with a stick, like the Theban old men, (those other peasants). You don't have to defend me. So you don't have to forbid me either. As I do not defend myself, as well as they do not defend me. There are two good reasons, at least, why I don't defend myself against it, why people don't defend me against it. Without counting the third first, it is that to be a people, there is still only that which permits not democratic. The first suffices, that it would be perfectly useless. Such defenses are not only impious, they are not only false, they are not only ungrateful, they are not only defenses of ingratitude, such defenses have never served any purpose. And they're not just useless, they're not just vain. They are foolish.

They are doubly foolish. Foolish because they are useless. And that's already a lot. Foolish because they are condemned. It's more than enough,

¹⁹ The French word for leather.

²⁰ This canon had been replaced in 1897.

that's all. Foolish too, secondly, and this will be the second reason, although the first is enough, and beyond that, silly also because they are silly. Because they are clumsy. In such defenses one can clearly see what one loses, one does not at all see what one would gain. One never becomes anything but a failed bourgeois, a feigned bourgeois, a false bourgeois, a fake bourgeois. And one loses being an authentic peasant. We would never gain qualities that are lacking, virtues that we do not have. And we lose the best that we have, let's put it that I mean the little good we have.

I am not telling you about the other warnings that I received, the warnings that I received from all sides; deaf warnings, deeply interior; inclinations, curvatures, interior slopes; interior aches; and of these singular, of these profound interior warnings which come to us from without; of these severe and just admonitions. Someone recently took me back to my class, brought me quickly back to my peasant class. He was right. The bourgeois world, which holds together, which exists, is good, my dear Halévy, the bourgeois system which holds together, bourgeois language, the bourgeois *world*. And the workers' *world* also, (apart), which stands together, which exists, the workers' system, the workers' language; and also the peasant *world*, (apart), which stands, which exists, the peasant system, the peasant language. The poor world, the poor system, the poor language. Which stands, which exists. There are fillers only when you want to mix one with the other, one inside the other, the two worlds, the rich world and the poor world, the two systems, the two languages. Sentimentally, arbitrarily, gratuitously. Mixing. All this one inside the other. So there are those contaminations that our typographers so skillfully, so opportunely call mastics. The old genre distinction was good in society. False rich, false poor, equally lacking, equally unhappy, equally non-existent, equally contemptible. Equally dangerous perhaps, which make everyone unhappy, equally each other, who involuntarily deceive everyone, equally each other, who make, who involuntarily make false understandings, false agreements, false penetrations, false intelligences, everything you need to go wrong, putties finally.

Limping peace, Crippled peace.

I would be a great fool not to let myself go, not to let myself become again a peasant, to win back being a peasant. More than any other I would be a great fool. More than ever at this very moment I would be a great fool. This very year I was given in full what I had been asking for, in vain, for ten years and more, what had been given to me once, for the first time. It has been given to me to begin, to put all that a man can put of his being into representing the fourteen or fifteen mysteries, the unique mystery of the death and vocation and holiness and martyrdom of the greatest saint I believe there has ever been.²¹ I was generally granted that it was a difficult undertaking, and in a certain sense, in this modern age, like a challenge. To complete this enterprise, to meet this challenge, in the sense that it is indeed a challenge, in the sense and insofar as, in fact, in this modern time, it is a challenge (four and five temporal centuries from our authentic chroniclers), not to mention the spiritual help which I so obviously need, it is necessary that I also think of my temporality. Now my temporality in the representation of this great story was not only that this story, the greatest story, it was not only that this great eternal story had the greatest temporal inscription, but my temporal fulcrum if I can say to myself, was that this temporal history, is that this temporal inscription is a story, an inscription from us. It is my only asset, (temporal), in this terrible game. I would be a great fool to throw it away, or neglect it, or diminish it, or let it diminish in my hands. To let it down. In this terrible game, in this terrible commitment, I don't have a chance to neglect, not a chance, (temporal), to lose. In the measure, in the sense, in the sense and in the measure that there is temporality under all that, in the sense and in the measure that the eternal itself is inserted, rooted in all this temporality. This sordid avarice, this very peasant harshness which wakes me up, which revives me, makes me a commitment itself, a command, demands, makes me a recommendation, a demand that nothing be lost of this weakness, of this immense temporal advantage. Really I would be a great fool to miss it. My own infirmity makes

²¹ An allusion to his great poem about Joan of Arc, published earlier in 1910.

it my duty not to miss anything. I would be more than a fool, more and less, I would be a certain culprit if I missed it. Not to let me do it again, not to let me become a peasant back home. Everything eternal is bound, is required to take a birth, a carnal inscription, everything spiritual, everything eternal is bound to take an insertion, a rooting, more than an inflorescence: a temporal placentation. I mean all eternally human. But this great eternal story, this story of eternal holiness came into the world in our country, this great eternal story is one of our stories. The temporal is the earth and time, matter, soil, the soil of the eternal. But this great saint was a daughter of ours; a girl from France; a country girl; a peasant girl. Admit that having undertaken this difficult enterprise, having begun it, having received permission to begin it, now I would be a great fool, myself not to let myself become (this) peasant again. I would deprive myself, I would take away my principal, my only asset, temporal. Some fool. Think, my dear Halévy, isn't it frightening to think that his father and his mother, his uncle Durand Lassois, his three brothers, his big sister, his friends, Mengette, Hauviette, *madame Gervaise* were people like us in we knew so many when we were little, as we would have been ourselves, as we were going to be ourselves, (or if we could quietly become so again), were exactly, were identically people like all those in whom we lived when we were little. And that all this great story came out of there.

All that, sir, was to tell you. You recognize their usual formula there. *All that, my dear Halévy, it was to tell you* that this misunderstanding which has arisen between us stems first and foremost from the fact that I was not suspicious of you, here is what I mean. However much I feel and feel that I am becoming a peasant again, or rather because of and by this very fact that I feel myself becoming a peasant again, I never have any business, any misunderstanding with the gentlemen themselves. With the bourgeoising bourgeois. Because then, knowing it, I am suspicious. I am even doubly suspicious. I distrust them and I distrust myself. I distrust them knowing that they are bourgeois and I distrust myself knowing that I am a peasant. I am wary of both sides, for them and for me, for the starting point and for the point of arrival. I respect very well, when necessary; when I want, *when I know I must*, when I am warned, when I am suspicious; social compartments,

social categories. I respect very well. I know very well; respect. I am not suspected of forgetting social rankings, nor forgetting about them, nor misunderstanding their importance. In the modern world. I spoke about it, I dealt with it several times in the notebooks, I have just spoken about it, not without a certain bitterness. I am almost too professional, a profession to talk about it, to deal with it in the notebooks. It has become a little too much my job. Let's say it's an essential piece, a hinge, a knee, an articulation of my social philosophy. I know very well when to keep my distance, keep my distance, keep *my* distance from the poor. I have learned. Or to put it better, to say it correctly, I didn't learn, I didn't have to learn. It was my instinct, I just had to go back to my deep instinct. Me too, my instinct, my unfortunate instinct, is to be wary. I don't want to mingle with the rich either. Especially when they are liberal, when they belong to the liberal bourgeoisie. We would get along even better, I say only for the sake of it, with the reactionaries themselves. It never comes back, you never get anything good out of it. Nor for the rich, you are the proof. Nor for the poor, you prove it to me. It is the peasant's instinct to respect the gentleman. As the peasant had reason.

This is exactly the point, the knot of the debate, the punctual knot, we must not hide it from ourselves. I made an exception for you. Was I wrong, was I right, we won't know until we're gone. *No man, said the ancients, can be counted happy (have been happy, beatus **fuisse**,) until he is dead.*²² No man also perhaps can be considered wise, *to have been wise, sapiens **fuisse**.* These few remarks, these four words that you judged, that in good faith you found offensive, you only judged them, you only found them offensive because you understood them in the bourgeois sense, on the bourgeois level, in bourgeois language. And I didn't think I could put them to you, I only thought I was allowed to tell them to you because I was telling you them in the people's sense, on the people's level, in the people's sense, in the language. You are right. If they are parlor words, said at the corner of the fireplace, skillfully placed, pushed, pointed, they are offensive. They're not, they're not just

²² A common Greek phrase found in Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, and which Montaigne, in his *Essays*, attributes to Solon (*Essays I, XIX*).

offending, they're wicked, and they're just wanton wicked. So it's good. I beg your pardon. Without a second thought. I bring you a bourgeois guarantee. I owe you, I make you bourgeois reparations. But I told you, I threw these four words at you like people; people at the starting point; people too, I thought, at the point of arrival; from people to people; you had to answer me in the same tone; I expected everything, but in the same tone; I put these four words to you as words from the studio, let's be clear, not as words from the painter's studio and from Montmartre, (which are already often not so bad, but anyway it's (today is a whole other world), but like words from a workman's workshop (I heard so many in my childhood, of those harsh cordialities, of those feigned abruptness, of those spoken nudges, said in a so good heart, heard, received with such a good heart), (and which bounced back so well, that is to say so right, so in the same tone that they had left, in the same tone that they had been thrown, to less than one *comma*, to near zero), (*zero comma zero*), like work words, like a word that one throws, like a blacksmith, like the blacksmith, like a word that we launch in the interval that the heavy hammer sounds on the heavy anvil. Like a bouncing word, a ball, a (well) bouncing word. I told you that too, therefore, also as a regimental word. As a word of brother-in-arms, like a word of mess and barracks. As a word of comrade, of companion, (of workshop); of comrade (of workshop) to comrade (of workshop); from companion to companion; almost like a companion word. You didn't hear it that way. So I was wrong. I am well aware that to play it takes two people, even in the hard games of work, and that you have to agree, deeply, to have laid down a deep status, even if it is tacit. So it was no more, it was no offense. Exactly it was *not yet* an offense. It was a harsh cordiality. The offense is born very precisely from the change of meaning, the change of shot, the change of language. On change of registry. The ball, which started in a certain game, was received in another game. Unfortunately. Thus I was wrong. A word, a remark, begun, launched in a certain sense, in and on a certain plane, in a certain language, has been continued, received in another sense, quite different, in and on a (completely) different plane, in and on a (completely) different language. I was wrong not to foresee it, not to count, not to foresee that it could be so, that it should perhaps be so, *that in fact* it would be so. That there would be, that escaped from my hands this misunderstanding would

be created by changing hands, that this offense would be created, false, real, by change of meaning, by change of plan, by change of language. By change of register. By a discontinuity, by a break in transmission. I am wrong.

It is he who puts out the toy railroad who must foresee the accidents of the game. The one who engages the part must think of everything. But is it really only me who started the game.

You go on long journeys, Halévy. Not just by rail and ship. But to discover this country of France, (and even discover, once more, once again, once after so many times, what we already know, what we know so well, what we have already discovered so many times), but to discover this country of France on the roads of France you make long journeys on foot. As old Quinet, returning from exile, regained possession of the soil of France, beating on all the roads of France,²³ wandering French Jew, so you young, and already less young, you take possession of so much land and so much road, of this ever new land. And we are indeed, in so many senses, the pupils of old Quinet, young Quinet reborn, if I may say so, reborn, like him, like those old republicans of the nationalist republicans (these words, this word does not in no way in the political sense, naturally, in and on the political level, in political language), finally patriotic republicans, fundamentally, profoundly, essentially, I would say substantially French. You have written, you have partly published, you are thinking, you are building, you will still write accounts of these journeys, these great journeys, of which we will end up making a notebook. You have written, you have published on the market even one or two admirable pages which we will eventually put at the head of this notebook. So walking at the same time and together so considerate. So walking and so meditating. Above all, you love, you've told me so a hundred times, you've written it to me, you must have written it down somewhere, you especially love going to see, visiting, talking in this

²³ Daniel Halévy had written an article in *Le Temps* on Edgar Quinet and Péguy had asked him to write another piece on Quinet for the *Cahiers*.

Loire Valley. You will go back there. You like to make the winegrowers talk at the edge of the vineyard, (and not only the tramps at the edge of the road, at the edge of the path, at the edge of the wood, at the end of the path, of the road, at the defile of the path hollow), you like to chat with them, to make the farmhands talk, the harvesters, who are not all Belgians, you are not afraid, on the contrary, of entering even the inns. You like, in particular, you like to make this great trip to go back to Bourbonnais, which is precisely the country of my grandmother. You will go back there. You will say hello as you pass for me to this little country of Gennetine(s),²⁴ which I have never seen, where I come from, which I do not even know how to write, and to Dornes,²⁵ which at least is in the dictionary. Well, Halévy, what I'm asking you is precisely to take another great trip, it's also to take the great trip of coming to me, to my country. That is to say. When you are with me, Halévy, when you are in my country, in my country of thought and in my country of speech, in my country of language, what I ask of you is to know well despite appearances, despite, it is to remember you well, it is not to forget, despite deceptive appearances, despite deceptive resemblances, despite the École Normale and so many appearances, other appearances, despite a neighborhood, neighborhoods misleading is to pay attention that when you are with me it is that you have actually made the same trip. You have come to the same point. It is that you have actually reached the end point of the same journey. You made the same move. When you are with me, Halévy, you are in a peasant's house; you are on one of those farms in Beauce (I am there as a farm boy, alas, as a plowman, not as a farmer), in a small farmhouse in Saint-Jean-de-Braye, in Vaumainbert (him also I do not know how it is written; and yet what I have been there times. It proves that there is a great distance between reality and the recording of reality.) in a small house of winemaker of Barrière-Saint-Marc and Fleury-aux-Choux, Saint-Jean-de-Braye and Goubleux, Chécý, Vennecy, Bon, Mardié. Loury, Boigny,²⁶ which must be pronounced *Bôgny*,

²⁴ A small village in central France north of Vichy. It is the birthplace of Péguy grandmother.

²⁵ A village in Central France slightly larger and a little to the north of Gennetine.

²⁶ These are all villages around Orléans.

with a very brief ô, Donnery, which must be pronounced *Deaunnery*, with a very long ô, a never-ending *eau*, which before the double *n* resounds like a very long deep thunder. Why one and the other, I don't know. It is the rule. These things are older than the local customs duty. I was still thinking about it, I was just thinking of you on my last trip to Orleans, for the Fair of the Mail. I thought that in these suburbs of Orléans (they don't say *the suburbs*, in the country, it's Paris that has a suburb), in these large suburbs of Orléans, in these common suburbs I know, after twenty years of absence, (or *the life of a player*,²⁷ it is the case to say it), (even much more than you can think, much more than you can know), there is perhaps well still fifteen or twenty houses of peasants, winegrowers, where I am received like an old friend, like an already old comrade, where the old people and the women receive me, welcome me, treat me, *talk to me* like a son, where the old children welcome me like a brother. It is to me that they tell if the girls are married, and to whom, and how, and if they already have children, (*it comes faster than incomes*), and *if the harvest will be good this year*, (*it won't be a good core this year*). What is stronger is that it is true; generally true; and that this year, so to speak, it is still unfortunately more particularly, singularly true. They literally have nothing. They were drowned in water.²⁸ Every day of water that comes (and God knows if it does) takes away what little they have left. There is no fruit, (to be sold to the people of Orleans, to the people of the city, and especially to the *removals*, (that is to say to the commission agents *who send it to Paris, and it is said that that go as far as England. Besides, I'm telling you that, you know it better than I. I don't know why I'm telling you all that, you must have seen all that, you're in Paris They were drowned in water. We had never seen that. And yet I am (not) beginning to be young.* There is no fruit. The animals eat everything; all the little that remains slugs, worms. All sorts of animals. *There's no danger of them drowning.* Vermin, they always find themselves, they always recognize themselves, they always do their thing, they find always on his account. It may well fall from the water. There is no danger that they will drown. Ah, if it were useful, it wouldn't succeed like that. But there is no prosperity than

²⁷ *Trente ans ou la Vie d'un joueur* was the title of a play by Victor Ducange in 1827.

²⁸ The area around which Péguy was born had canals connected to the Loire and when the canals were extended, some would lose their homes to the water.

for the vermin. *You think, with all that Calf that fell there.* There were no vegetables, everything sank. There was no fruit, everything sank, everything was devoured. There's not even a salad. There are no grapes. All the strength of the vine has turned into tendrils. And in green. And even. All that is dry, all that is rotten. And then there is disease everywhere. They tell you to put sulfur. We would put in, as much as so many. It would take more than the good Lord could bless. And then ingredients, dirt, chemicals, junk, poisons. Sulphates. *It's still expensive, that's the case.* We can't say that it poisons the vine, but it doesn't poison the disease either. You understand, too much water is falling. For sure there will still be nothing this year.

After which they invite you to come and harvest. It's not an irony, you know them. They don't know, but they know more than if they knew, they *feel* that irony is gross, that derision is gross, that irony is all that is grosser, that it has the coarse, discourteous grain, that it is all that is most contrary to the fine French genius. They have too much invincible inner joy, too much insurmountable secret joy even in pain, too much bravery to be ironic. They are too good Frenchmen, too old Frenchmen to be ironic. So they are talking to you seriously. *We say that we sell more expensively. But when there is nothing, we do not sell more expensive. We don't sell at all.* Such is their common sense. I could stand up to you until tomorrow morning, Halévy, I could talk to you about peasant(s) until tomorrow morning, true words, in which you wouldn't catch the shadow of a *peasantry*. I saw this year, on our very plateau, on our plain, what I had (yet) never seen in my life. It is no longer them who speak to you, through me, it is myself who speaks to you in my turn. Finally it is them me. I saw this year, near Saclay, what I had never seen in my life. And yet, as they say, I am no longer young. I saw what we have (was) perhaps never seen. A wheat stubble *which was* a natural meadow. I don't know if you understand me correctly. You know what a stubble is. In the old great maneuvers, wasn't it, a stubble was a sort of large upside-down brush on which one walked, an immense brush, as far as the eye could see, lying on one's back, on which one walked , (as one could). The back, the board, the wood of the brush was the earth itself, clayey, strong, hardened, horizontal, itself laid flat, hard as wood, stiff as wood. The earth laid on the back. *Supina, supinata, resupina.* And on all sides up to the horizon one saw

only this immense brush. And the lice of this brush were the innumerable stubbles, the hard wheat stubbles, the hard dry stubbles. And this grater, this hard-bristled brush got into your feet very cleanly. Crossing, supposedly, being felt through the most genuine soles of heavy boots. *The boots are heavy in the bag.* These points, almost inoffensive in appearance, passed as though through the thickest boot. Through the leather and despite the large regulatory studs. As through the same nails. And it made a certain noise, very particular, a noise that you don't forget once you've heard it once. Beneath a marching troop this immense dry crackling, this dry, stiff noise of something dry and stiff and straight and implicated that one breaks, that one bends for the first time, which therefore does not will never straighten perfectly again. Who will never be like before. This is what we saw over time. In our time. You can see that was the old days. Today I, Péguy, witness, here is what I saw, just yesterday, Sunday, August 14, 1910, three hundred meters from Saclay, halfway, just halfway next, thinking of you, a thin path, a thread of trail between Saclay and noticeably the middle of the beautiful, great side levee that bars the flow of the pond. I saw a stubble that was natural grassland. I don't know if you get it. There was grass like in a meadow. There had grown so many grasses in this wheat, weeds, weeds, (in wheat all the grasses are mad, all the grasses are weeds, even those which otherwise would not be bad, even those which in themselves and naturally, elsewhere (would only) be (only) wise; even those which in themselves are innocent; for they should not be there.) (They are not in their place, they are not in order.) (*In wheat all the grass are tares, that is to say, zizanie.*²⁹) that it was on the contrary as if we had mistakenly dropped a few ears, a few grains of wheat, in a natural meadow, which would have grown. And then, I don't know if you're following me correctly, we saw a huge green carpet; and a few badly dried culms in it, like lost *specimens*, like collector's rarities. And then, and you will believe me only because you have confidence in me, as in the end nothing must be lost, and that is what we have never seen, in the same field you had side by next to wheat raeulettes, (as usual), rare, and next to good little heaps of half-dried grass, my faith, beautiful little haystacks. This is what they had harvested this year in the same land. Hay and wheat.

²⁹ See Matthew 13:24-30.

I'm not saying wheat and hay. They had reaped two harvests in the same land. Unfortunate. A harvest of hay and a harvest of wheat. They would have preferred to make only one. That's what we had never seen, hay and wheat in the same square. And since nothing must be lost, the soil will *perhaps* be very good next year. Because when they go to plow their land, they will bury, they will bury green manure.

Lots of green manure.

They know too well how much irony is contrary to their genius, to the French genius. They talk to you very seriously. There is nothing this year. They think, continuously, of the same movement they think of next year's harvest. We do not know. *It may be much better.* It's not them who would talk, who would think of abandoning the vines. Their vines. They think that there will be a next year, countless next years, that perhaps fate will tire (the same that told you, that told you at the same time: *I am very old now. I'm hardly good for nothing. I'll hardly do the harvest now.*) For fifty years I've seen them wait for next year, *which will perhaps be much better.* I saw them thus cross, silent, tenacious, invincible, this enormous wave of disaster of the phylloxera,³⁰ which no other people would have carried.

That no other people had passed.

There will be no grapes. They invite you to come and harvest. They speak very seriously. This is where we see what a rite is, dear sociologists. They ritually invite you, it is a *ceremony*, as they have invited you so many times in all the other years before, just so, as they will invite you again countless years later. This is where we see that it is not the harvest that is made for the grapes, but that it is the grapes that are made for the harvest. That it is not the harvest which is done, as one might think, some coarse,

³⁰ The French Wine Blight of the late 19th century was thought to have been caused by the aphid Phylloxera. The aphids came from North America and an eventual solution was to graft vines on to native Texan rootstock, brought over to France by Thomas Munson, who was awarded the Legion of Honor Chevalier du Mérite Agricole in 1888.

some down to earth, to cut the grapes, but that it is on the contrary the harvest which is an institution, a ceremony, a ritual, annual, an anniversary, *for which* the grapes are made, this matter, and the cutting of the grapes. In a word, it is the vintage which is the *end*, and it is the grapes which are the *means*. Kant, Kant, Immortal Immanuel, you will try to arrange that with the principles of *pure practical Reason*. *Text of the 1788 edition, (A), under revision of the second edition 1792 (B) and of the fourth edition 1797 (D)*.³¹ 1788, 1792, 1797; what great dates. You must first harvest. Then we'll see if there's anything to harvest. May Christians celebrate a God who is present, being faithful to a God who is present as these incorrigible pagans (from paysons³²) feast, celebrate, lay off a generally absent god, as they remain faithful to an infidel, generally absent god. Fifteen or twenty houses where I have known for thirty years the mourning and the joys, the frequent mourning, the numerous mourning, the long mourning, the repeated, *crebri*, frequent mourning; and the brief, brief joys. I know who is in the cemetery and who is not. Not yet. Fifteen or twenty houses where I am received on one level, *from the piano*, without interference in anything. Fifteen or twenty houses where, when I pass *the step of (the) door*, there is not the shadow of the displacement of anything; neither in minds, nor in furniture, nor in hearts. They hardly ever call me *Monsieur Charles*—*because after all I'm going to be forty all the same*. And I really have to drink a little glass of wine, because it's the great rite, or else, what, it's that I wouldn't be part of the house anymore, and Paris would have decidedly corrupted me; (or else I would be (really) very sick). They talk to me sometimes, sometimes they venture to talk to me about Gallouédec,³³ who has been their general councilor for several years (and even mine, my native general councilor if I may say so; at least he was before the last elections , before last week's renewal; I'm sure, I want to believe he still is), because they suspect that I must know him in Paris. *He is also a teacher*. For them I am a teacher. And it's so true. They call it *talking politics*. Talking politics, for them, is always a little abnormal, a little

³¹ Péguy was reading from the cover of the 1878 French edition of the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

³² à un Dieu présent comme ces incorrigibles païens (de paysans) fêtent

³³ A Dreyfusard and a subscriber of the *Cahiers* who taught at a school in Orleans.

compromising, a little singular. A little dangerous. It is always a high-risk operation. We have to get started. We risk ourselves. (And we risk.) (And the strongest thing is that with current (political) mores in the countryside, in small towns, and even in large ones, it's true.) Also we're not absolutely at ease, even bold, to talk politics, only in the Place of all the boldness, of all the audacity, when one is well sheltered, in the heat, in the smoke, in the sweetness, in the warmth, in the pipes, behind the familiar door and windows, in the shelter, in the familiar atmosphere, aunt's shelter, of an old familiar cabaret. So there we can get started. There we are bold, we are covered, we fear nothing. We are safe from who knows what. And they speak of it gravely like the popes, and at the same time desperately, and at the same time laboriously. They are bold. And at the same time they apply themselves. And they apply themselves at the same time to being bold. This results in a huge expenditure of brain work. They never work (themselves), they never tire their heads so much as when they are a little drunk. They are serious then, they are seriously moved, (and at the same time, by a delicious, by a disarming irony (about themselves), by an amusing return to themselves they call that indeed, smiling in complicity, or apparently serious, to be (a little) moved.) they come out, not without difficulty, tight reasoning, invincible reasoning (*then you see well*), victorious reasoning, generous reasoning, severe reasoning, eloquent reasoning on the government of peoples, logical reasoning, holding the handrail, prodigious reasoning. They are then in a kind of bliss, in another kingdom. They instinctively realize perfectly well that they are in another language, in another kingdom, in another state than the ordinary kingdom of work and home, than the kingdom of the week. They are in a kind of ecstasy. Both excitement and daze together. So they talk, as much to get out of each other as to encourage each other. *It is used to give courage. To those who have none at all.*³⁴ Women are very familiar with this phenomenon, this particular condition. A woman commonly says in that country (and I think a little in the others): *My man must be a little drunk at this hour*: he talks politics. They talk about it sometimes, rarely, at home, and usually only when they've had a little drink of the good one. But I don't go to the cabaret. What must be their

³⁴ A familiar song of students.

confidence in me, and our intimacy, for them to engage in this risky operation, for them to talk to me, for them to dare to talk to me about Gallouédec *on an empty stomach*. Not without some fear. And some hope. I must know. I have to know about it. In Paris, all the same, I must know people, deputies, all that. They ask me if *he will do good to the country*.

I was thinking of you, Halévy, while contemplating the splendors of the Foire du Mail,³⁵ in that sudden immense solitude, in that silence that is forty-eight hours in Orleans. You will see the same. But they can't get you the same. You do well. And they would do well. There is something. There is a straw. You can make them go see the same. You cannot make them receive you the same. They cannot do it themselves. You can't even make you go see them the same. For them you are still a gentleman from the city. A gentleman who passes, a gentleman who comes. A gentleman entering. Who, deep down, is very kind, who does them the honor of coming to see them, in passing, who does them a lot of honor. What I never am; what for them (and even and above all for me, and for so many others) I will never be. Whatever you do, whatever confidence you inspire in them, whatever confidence they have in you, for them you are always a visitor (I certainly do not say a stranger), a traveler, like the travelers of old, a visitor, I say a host. They are fine people, Halévy, you know it, and they understand hospitality wonderfully. The proprieties, the duties of hospitality. But hospitality distances. Be sure that he receives from you with a total interference of respect, with a total interference of hospitality. These clean gardens, these proud vines, these trellises; those well-raked, well-raked alleys, those marvelously clean houses, those well-wiped, polished furniture, gleaming from having been wiped for centuries, those gleaming, well-waxed doors, those windows clear as day, those tiles on the floor washed as new, (we are told about the Dutch), and yet so old, so worn, so porous, like red sponges, so worn by the footsteps of so many generations, by the feet of grandfathers, by the clogs, (by the shoes, by the nails of the shoes), by the bare feet of ancestors now extinct, those panes of clear glass, perfectly

³⁵ A square in central Orléans.

transparent, those red brick tiles on the floor, so faded, spongy, worn by the footsteps of ancestors, that old secular clock in waxed walnut, this old (good) clockwork woman, inflexible but old, vigilant but old, careful and perhaps suspicious but old, all this well-done *cleaning*³⁶ is in itself for him, for them, my dear Halévy, (and also, inside also for me), this well-kept garden, this well-kept vineyard, these well-kept fields, this well-kept house; this *household* of the garden, this *household* of the vineyard, this *household* of the *fields*, this housekeeping of the well-kept house; and also that honeysuckle sometimes in the corner of a wall, rising, climbing the grate of a door, that old well, so leafy, so mossy; but which in reality is still used, is still used to draw water; all this receives you like a guest, Halévy, like a respected guest. All this does not receive you as the child of the house. Maybe they wouldn't dare offer you the glass of wine. You know, the wine of the year, as if by chance, well, I prefer to tell you: well, no, that's not it. But the one from two years ago. And they click their tongues. But as if by this same chance there is always a bottle from five years ago in a corner of the cellar. And their beautiful malice of centuries ago: *You know, there is a little dust on it, but it is good all the same.*

I don't want to offend anyone. However, I must declare that we Loire guys Loire are the ones who speak the fine French language. The tables are not polished, the chairs are not re-upholstered, the tiles are not washed for you as for me. For you the houses are welcoming. But to me they are all my home. They're all my cousin's house.

It's us Loire guys who don't just know, we are the ones who speak fine French. They all know well that during the innumerable years of childhood, innumerable in memory, and therefore in reality, in reality, so full, so new, so inexhaustible, so inexhaustible in memory and in reality, which form a point of support, a volume of support had somehow so inexhaustible in memory and in reality, they know very well that I too, that I like them, that I among

³⁶ The French word, 'ménage' refers to both housework and a household.

them for countless hours every morning, the same as a child, I tirelessly, ritually, wiped the same waxed furniture with a woolen cloth, until I was perfectly mirrored in it, until the perfect *mirrorer*, until the dust and the mist were perfectly exhausted. Thus, They know that I know like them, with them, among them, that I have experienced, like them, in them this greatest joy that it has ever been given to me, that it has been given to man to know. A perfect, closed, total joy; a *maximum*; without return, without regret, without remorse; without a speck of dust, without an atom of regret, without a shadow of a shadow. A plenitude, a perfection, a total. A fullness. Perfect satisfaction. We had our heads full and our hearts full. We were stuffed from it. May I ever write as we wiped the furniture, the dresser, the bed (there was not even a clock), may I ever have this impression of victory and calm, this certainty, this plenitude, this solitude, this impression of possession definitively, irrevocably acquired, at least for one day, may I, before a sentence searched like a buffet, have this living, this laborious, this working certainty, be sure that in the hollowest of fine, delicate, straight, robust moldings, no more than the flattest flat, the widest flat, the most beautiful shiny wooden flat, the most beautiful panel, to be more than mathematically sure that it does not today a grain of yesterday's dust remains for today, on the gleaming wood, on the waxed walnut from having been waxed, from having been rubbed so many times so many days that once again not an atom of dust.

To be more than mathematically sure. To be painstakingly, laboriously safe.

The monkey with the leopard
*Earn money at the fair.*³⁷

We have improved the fair a lot. *The world is making so much progress now.* The modest wooden horses, the glory of our childhoods, on which I dared not ride, have become sumptuous merry-go-rounds, all gleaming with gold and Cossacks (with golden spears) (because of the Russian alliance) (is it to

³⁷ La Fontaine, *Fables*, IX, III, "The monkey and the leopard."

symbolize borrowings), sumptuous, wondrous, superb, dazzling rides, each more dazzling than the other, (because there is competition), (at first it was marvelous horses, (which threw our poor old horses far into the shade), horses with dazzling colors, horses dripping with lights; with wild manes; then fantastic animals, all the beasts of creation, and even others who were never part of creation, elephants as for the king of India (in primary school they already know that it is the maharajah of Çapour-Tala (I put two *h*'s absolutely at random); giraffes; pigs, lots of big pigs that make people laugh; but now) today the carousels this sound t automobiles, of who knows how many horsepower; balloons, sphericals, submarines; tomorrow airplanes; roller coasters, (also); corn from the sea within reach of the most modest purses. We don't even need to go to Plouescat.³⁸ Steam and Electric Rides. All beating, all roaring with the noise of the engines. Of this humming, of this purring of an enormous insect. Where is the old blindfolded horse that from morning till night turned, turned the merry-go-round as if to raise water from a well. But don't worry, Halévy, it's easier to change the top than the bottom, than the inside. Fortunately, it is easier to modify the aspects than to alter the deeper realities. We have not changed the monkey with the leopard, which earn money at the fair. We will not change the fair itself, what makes the fair, the populations, the good people who crowd along in front of the booths. It works with a certain ritual step, a certain processional step, a certain ceremonial step, a certain unhappiness, slow and in a hurry, a crowd step, a provincial step, affected in a hurry, who knows although it will always happen (where are our steps, our haste from Paris), (a step of a crowd, affected crowd, officially of a crowd; conscious, happy, knowing oneself, feeling oneself a crowd; one must know that there is a crowd in Orléans) parading under the awnings of the small barracks, for the small merchants, (today so big, apparently so wealthy), crowding together, serious and in a hurry, wise and having fun, wisely, (madly), in front of the sales pitches, what am I saying, in front of the *parades* of the big barracks, the real barracks, the barracks proper, and everywhere also alas, almost everywhere stopping in front of the pavilions of the phonographs. These trumpets, alas, with a supposedly articulated voice. But you will see that they will defeat the

³⁸ A beach community in Brittany.

phonograph itself. A people a little more dressed up perhaps only. Than before. Foolishly *fashionable*; like in Paris. But the same people, workers and (petit) bourgeois, every evening (and even great evenings); and their wives and children (they still have a few); and on Sundays the same people from the countryside, all the people from the surrounding countryside, for ten leagues around, come on foot, in all the carriages, as if mobilized. Men, women, *beauties*, children. (When we say of a woman that she is beautiful, Halévy, in that country, that means (very exactly, as technically) that she (has) dressed herself, that she is on Sunday (and celebrations), (in the sense that we ourselves still say: *she made herself beautiful, she dressed herself beautiful.*) In particular *beautiful Sunday*, which is, as you know, the Sunday of the milieu. So it's the beautiful crowds, the big crowds, (so wise, so orderly, so (well) organized), that we get like a (great) result. *There were a lot of them at the Fair today. A dust. I have a headache. — Ah lady, it was a beautiful Sunday.*

Os homini,³⁹ like them I will go with my head down, my eyes on the ground, my forehead on the ground. Well then, Halévy, I ask you, pay close attention. Since I am them, at least do me the grace that you do them. When you thus speak to a farm boy, to some farm valet, when you enter into conversation with him, it does not occur to you that he might offend you, but knowing this fine people, and knowing that it is he who speaks French, that it is the fine flower of the French language, you are resolved to take all these remarks as remarks of friendship, hospitality, cordiality, as cordial remarks, as peoples. Without a hint of that odious, that low, that coarse, that vulgar, that popular joviality, which I hate. Often cordial, always cordial, never jovial, such are these fine people. It doesn't occur to you that they offend you. You even know very well *that he cannot* offend you. And then you don't say to him: *Excuse me, I'm Monsieur Halévy*. I am this same people, Halévy, I am this same farm boy, leaning on the same plow, above this same

³⁹ Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, Book I, v. 84-87. "On earth the brute creation bends its gaze,

but man was given a lofty countenance

and was commanded to behold the skies;

and with an upright face may view the stars:"

plain of Beauce. So I'm not even saying to you: Befriend me. I say to you: Be gracious to me also; grant me equality, grant me equity; treat me like them; since in short you have come to see me; do me the justice to believe not only that I do not offend you, but that *I cannot* offend you. Do me the equal treatment of treating me like them. Since in short you have come to my house.

Better still, and more, take good care of it, Halévy, take care of it. I am, I was the only peasant house that was open to you as a brother, and not just as a guest. Moreover, I was, absolutely speaking, the only peasant's house open to you. Will you, with your own hands, close it. I was the only peasant house that basically welcomed you like another peasant. Without any interference of respect or hospitality, without the shadow of any interference. I no longer speak of friendship, in the absence of friendship I was thus for you the most precious reference, a unique reference. This bitter cordiality which we had, heart to heart, so deeply sad, so deeply nourished with sadness, was the only peasant *association* you had. Are you exposing yourself to losing, are you going to lose at least this unique reference?

This dark confidence that we had. This conversation about the immense, the universal conspiracy of grown-ups. So perfectly secret, so perfectly guarded. Having traveled such a long, dark road together, shall we now part? Are we now going to separate? So shall we, shall we separate? For the long road we have left, so dark, will we, will our ways forever part. We were precious to each other, perhaps unique references. All that we had of difference, of gap between us gave precisely, was precisely what gave value, perhaps unique, to this perpetual mutual reference, what perhaps made it uniquely precious; fruitful, informative; this great distance of class and social situation; exterior distance, but interior, become interior for generations, interior incoming, interior entry, interior penetration, entry into the blood, tincture entered into the blood of the race; and this great distance of character, of temperament, of soul (not of heart), this great interior distance, which has become exterior, outgoing exterior, which

comes out through the skin, through (all) the pores of the skin, which manifests itself socially same, which makes you such a deeply sad optimist, and me an optimist, sometimes a courageous pessimist. You are a doctrinaire. The more our temperaments and our societies are different, the more we have basic distances, the more we are to each other, the more we are mutually precious witnesses; unique, I believe irreplaceable; mutually irreversible, if these two words can go together. The more we differ, the more we have basic distances, the more our weights, the better our sights, the more our triangulations have footing. We have thus become witnesses, readers who are doubtless irreplaceable. Who as much as I knew how to read, knew how to measure your marvelous *Histoire de quatre ans*⁴⁰ at first sight, which as much as I saw it, proclaimed at first sight its virtue as singular, the mysterious deepenings, the almost improbable retreats, the troubled horizons of anxiety, infinite avenues, advances, distresses, often unique grandeurs. Who as much as me is your good reader, a good reader of you. And you yourself how many times have I not written for you. How many pages were not addressed to you directly, personally, *sent*. You were, I believe, one of my good readers. Just see the text and get to know us. Are we going to give up this secret collaboration, the best of all, perhaps the only one, of sometimes thinking of each other when you are at your table? Will you find me a *replacement*, alas, a second, I say it aloud, someone who is worthy of me. As for me, I will not look for you. I have no taste for this kind of operation. There is such baseness in replacement, such infamy. A second is never a first. We are not replacing anyone. Nothing is replaced. Everything is irreversible. It is not at forty that one remakes one's life. I have in my boxes perhaps two thousand pages of copy, dialogues, landscapes where you are my interlocutor, my *Prince* for my *sendings*, where I address you, where I tell you what I want to say, essays, remarks, notebooks, stories where it is your name that passes, where it is you who are in the vocative. Where am I talking to you? Shall I do this unworthiness, unworthy of you, unworthy of me, shall I lie backwards, for forwards; I have two thousand pages that I may end up publishing in these notebooks. Am I going to cross out your name, on copy, on proofs; *deleatur*; am I going to strike, scratch.

⁴⁰ Daniel Halévy's future history on the years 1997-2001.

Carry out, alas, a solemn *radiation*. Replace with another name. Put another real name, forge, fake a fictitious name.

Will I get you a substitute? I confess to you that I don't feel the taste for it, that I don't feel the heart for it.

The intimate confidence of all, the confidence of the projects. The deepest, most secret confidence. All of us who write, Halévy, who are beginning to be a little versed in this difficult art, all of us who try, who propose to be clean writers, honest writers, you know, Halévy, we don't play smart. We leave that to the intellectual party, to play smart. We are not proud. For me, I don't hide it. I still have the tremor like the first day. I ought, however, to begin to know what it is to give *goods to print*. I should be getting jaded about what it's like to give a *clearance*. You know it, Halévy, I don't hide it. I never give a good shot except in the trembling. I never tackle a new work except in trembling. I live in the trembling of writing. And the further we go, I believe, the more we are afraid. I admire this great assurance of our intellectuals. Everything we've done, everything we have behind us (and yet we say that it's beginning, that it does a little), is behind us like nothing, like an immense plain. And everything that we still have to do, everything that we see, everything that we have before us (including what we will never do) is before us like immense mountains, made before us impassable mountains. Everything we said is like nothing. Flowing water, a hollow, a nothing in the palm of the hand. A water that has already passed, of which there is no longer any question. Everything that has not been said (yet, and everything that will never be said) creates impassable mountains before you. Mountains and mountains. All that we have spent is nothing. In front of all that remains to pass. And we feel very small. We are so small in front of reality, so small man. I admire these great intellectuals who, from the depths of their moleskin, lead reality with sticks. It may be a stick of command. We feel so small, so totally inadequate. We can see so clearly that Péguy is very small, we measure Péguy's life, career (work) so well. You can see the end of it so clearly, all the ends, the breadth, the *lay*. (or the *lé*). And that's nothing. As the good women used to say, it's not cloth in large widths.

So in this distress, to reassure ourselves, we talk about our projects. We like having someone to talk to about our projects. A friendly ear, (a friendly heart), an understanding, a friendly audience. We don't do it just to give ourselves courage. And consolation. A sort of anticipated, premature consolation. A consolation *from before*. All the better. All the more expensive. What one wants to give oneself, what one thus gives oneself, more profoundly, is another kind of anticipation, the anticipation of the insertion into the reality, produced, of this work that one holds everything, which one believes to hold everything, which nevertheless one does not hold, since it is not produced, which is not produced, which is not real, at least in this sense, which is not inscribed, which has not entered into (the order of) reality, into (the order of) the event, since it is not written. You know this state, Halévy. When we have a work in mind we believe that it is nothing, for the size, for the dimensions, that we hold it in the palm of the hand, *in cava manu*, we see it as a core, we do not see that it, we see it all in one (organic) point, in its small volume, we immediately see its end, the inside and the outside, all the ins and outs, all the pieces, all the members, all the organs, the whole thing, it's nothing, it's over, we have it there at hand. We will surely be finished tonight. And when you develop it, when you unroll it on paper, on the plane of paper, in this development, in this linear unfolding which is the very condition, which makes the institution, which is the constitution of the art of writing, which makes the law, we no longer know where we are going (if we are loyal, if we are honest, if we want to follow, if we faithfully follow the modalities, the modulations, the undulations of reality). (The geological curves.) (The curves, the folds of the terrain.) If we don't fake it, even if it is for (artificial) shortcuts. We are constantly appalled by the demands of this development, of this unfolding. It's exactly like in the mountains. This summit, which we had, which we held close at hand, it takes days and days of this work, of this necessarily linear walk (and necessarily in stages), to reach only the first advances. Will we ever see the end of it? Life is short. Will we even reach this first buttress? We can clearly see the end of Péguy's life. On everyone inside. We see, we clearly distinguish the scope, the impact of this trajectory. So we say, with an air that no one trusts: *I started my answer*

to Halévy. - *I already have three hundred pages of my **carnal dialogue***.⁴¹ — These comments would be odious if everyone did not feel the lamentable uneasiness, the dull distress. It's a poor, a pitiful anticipation that we want to make, that we give ourselves, we want to touch the peak and not have made the way, we want to lean on, we lean on and in the reality of a friendly memory, we want to take, we take an inscription of reality, of production, of release, for a project, for a work in progress, in the reality of a friendly memory, of an expectation, of a friendly audience. We want to touch the top of the hand. It is certainly a temptation, a carnal desire. A bodily, temporal desire. We really want, by this means, by this detour, by this advance, by this coup de force and anticipation, to *give* the body before its time to a work which legitimately, naturally is still only at the period of work, is still organically only in work. And we don't want to miss anything. And we don't want to waste any time. Not a crumb, not a time. Like a miser we squeeze the fingers of the hand. One holds all that nervously collected in advance in the hollow of the mind. Now you know that it is our constant state, since past works weigh nothing, since future works, possible, dreamed, impossible, weigh on us eternally.

All these mountains in front of you weigh down on your shoulders. They have to be overcome. Raise them up from the shoulders. Will we just enter it. To represent, to render this world, these three dimensions, with this pen which scrapes regularly, which runs on the paper. When one is at his table one finds, one sees clearly that the hand does not row, the hand does not advance, the pen does not advance at anything, the hand does not return. Oh no you're not in an automobile. You don't ride. Such is our miserable condition. The hand does not seem to move forward. And it always seems like we never said anything.

⁴¹ *Dialogue de l'histoire et de l'âme charnelle.*

It is not necessary to go as far as Saclay, it is not necessary to make a long journey. In Lozère itself, below the mill, *across from M. Poincaré*,⁴² in the fields right on the banks of the Yvette, in the fairly small sloping fields which rise gently (these are no longer the large fields, the immense fields of the plain, but it is not necessary to make a long journey), five hundred meters from the railway I would show you fields, of wheat, cut, of green stubble, of grass, where only they didn't separate the straw and the hay. So you see in a corner of the field rare, vague shapeless sheaves (aligned all the same, because the trade never loses its rights), (and that's the beauty of it), nameless sheaves. You approach, you just can't recognize them. Grass and oats. Grass and rye. Grass and wheat. All of this is drying up together, because, fortunately, the weather has been fine, well enough, for a week now, and *we bring in the wheat in good conditions*. One only asks, when they are going to beat, how the good Lord will recognize his own.

Who at any request, at any requisition, at the first word, without a word, if I may say at the first silence will recite to you, will tell you Hugo's verses, any, at any request, all those you want . *Forty years have passed*. Isn't it striking, Halévy, isn't it striking that it's this word, it's this number that comes up everywhere this year, and that it's the word, the number of Punishments, a half-verse of *Expiation*. So when Victor Hugo wrote his *Châtiments*, he was just as far from Waterloo as we are far from 70. Who would believe it. There was the same distance, time, the same space, the same course, between Napoleon and him, as between 70 and us, between Waterloo and the *Châtiments*, as between the Terrible Year and us. He was, in time, at the fall of the first Empire as we are at the fall of the Second. Singular errors, singular deceptions of the temporal perspective. As we are quite right to say, that these plains and these mountains of time are like the plains and mountains of the place, as uncertain, as deceptive. Unique perspectives. Singular optics. Singular errors, optical illusions. There are countries that are big and seem small. There are countries that are small and seem large. All like this, and with the same gaze, there are periods, times which are

⁴² Henri Poincaré, the mathematician, lived close to Péguy.

great and which seem small, which are long and which seem short. And there are times which are small, which are short, and which seem long, which seem great. It is a question of size (and not only of dimension, of length). It's not just a matter of more and less. It's a matter of full and deep. Flat and regrooved. It is also a question of the temporal destination of times and places. All this immense massif between Waterloo and Les Châtiments, this dug time, this excavated time, five reigns, without counting the one that fell, two revolutions, a restoration, an invasion, three or four regimes, two kings, three kings, one (second) Republic, a prince-president, a second, (a third) emperor, a coup d'état, a reaction, four or five reactions, five or six wars, made or to be made, a great conquest, so many movements, movements and counter-movements—and on the other hand these forty years of plain, of the great plain of this Third Republic, it's the same space, for the clocks, it's the same time. It's the same length of time.

We feel it even more vividly in this form, in the contrary, inverse form: We are, in time, at the fall of the Second Empire as it was at the fall of the First.

Who, emerging suddenly from the immortal rue Victor-Cousin, an extension of our rue de la Sorbonne, hurrying to take the train with you at this station *in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg*, as a reservist from Palaiseau said, which proves that Palaiseau has not degenerated since Bara,⁴³ and which also proves that the reserve has not degenerated, has not become unworthy of active duty, the same train, I think the 5:53 train, which is your train, because it stops at Massy-Palaiseau, which suddenly emerges in rue Soufflot and will tell you, at the first word from you, without further warning, the verses of the Panthéon which is at the end of rue Soufflot:

*Those who piously died for the fatherland
Have rights that crowds come and pray at their coffin.*

⁴³ A hero of the French Revolution who was born in Palaiseau.

*Among lovely names their name is the loveliest,
All glory by them stays and ephemerally falls;
And, like a mother would,
The voice of an entire people cradles them in their tomb!*

*Glory to our eternal France!
Glory to those who died for her!
To the martyrs! the brave! the strong!
To those inflamed by their example,
Who want a place in the temple.
And who will die like they died!*

*It is for these dead, whose shadow is welcome here,
That the high Pantheon raises into the clouds,
Above Paris, city of a thousand towers,
The queen of our Tyrs and of our Babylons,
This crown of columns
May the rising sun brighten up every day!*

*Glory to our eternal France!
Glory to those who died for her!
To the martyrs! the brave! the strong!
To those inflamed by their example,
Who want a place in the temple.
And who will die like they died!*

*Thus, when such dead slept in the tomb,
In vain forgetfulness, dark night where goes all that falls.
And stays over their sepulcher where we bow,
Each day, for them alone rising more faithful
The glory, ever new dawn,
Makes their memory shine and gilds again their names!*

Glory to our eternal France!
Glory to those who died for her!
To the martyrs! the brave! the strong!
To those inflamed by their example,
Who want a place in the temple.
*And who will die like they died!*⁴⁴

I didn't even know by heart that it was *July 1831*, nor that the title was *Hymne*. Whether it was a hymn or a hymne.⁴⁵ He was twenty-nine. You have noticed. You never know the titles of Victor Hugo. Except for *the Expiation*. The movement is such that it is always the first line, or the leading lines, which eat up the title, which become the title. So this is not *Hymne*. It is *Those who piously died for the fatherland, or Glory to our eternal France! Glory to those who died for her!* — *The Expiation* even, it is much more often, it is much more often *Waterloo! Waterloo! Waterloo! gloomy plain!* or *it was snowing. We were vanquished by his conquest.*⁴⁶ He himself named many in the first verses, and they are often the best named: *Oh! I know that they will tell lies without number. Vicomte de Foucault, when you grabbed. The highest attempt a man can make. Ring the bell, ring the bell always, [clarions of thought].*⁴⁷ We were talking about Hervé, I believe. Which will make you notice, no doubt, that Hugo was not a Herveïst. We know the rest. And it would be a fool to point it out. Some pedant. A new kind of pedant. Of the same kind. A pedant all the same. But who will point out to you this curiosity, this rarity, as a collector, after Hervé, after Napoleon, and after Napoleon's soldiers, and after Napoleon's marshals, rightly made a spell, and at Wagram,⁴⁸ and at the flag of

⁴⁴ Victor Hugo, *Les Chants du crépuscule*, III, “Hymne.” [Translator’s Note] Most of the poetry cited will be translated fairly literally because of expediency. When Péguy later begins analysing rhyme schemes, I will try to include the endings to give context for the rhymes.

⁴⁵ “Que ce fût un ou une hymne.” Péguy is here questioning the hymn was masculine or feminine.

⁴⁶ Hugo, *Les Châtiments*, V, XIII, “L’Expiation”, II et I.

⁴⁷ These are all the first verses of poems from *Les Châtiments*: I, XI; IV, XI; V, XII, & VII, I.

⁴⁸ A costly victory of Napoleon I northeast of Vienna in 1809 against the fifth coalition.

Wagram? who will wince over this name of Wagram and make you wince, who will have fun making you observe, who will point out to you this fun, this meeting so amusing, this coincidence so curious that of so many battles, of all these military battles, (and God knows if he knows any of them. See rather, see elsewhere: *Thus Gaul, then France, then glory.*) from all these battles it is precisely one that Hugo takes in the *Chatiments* against all the others , among all the others in order to symbolize, in order to represent to us, in order to signify to us the French battle, the French victory, *military honor*, French honor (against the Second Empire, I do not need to tell you, and against the third Napoleon), and it is precisely the Battle of Wagram. And in this battle what he takes is precisely the flag. He makes it the very flag, as symbolic, as representative, as significant, of France itself, of military France, of the honor of France, of the military history of France. A kind of central and culminating flag:

O flag of Wagram! O country of Voltaire!

You will tell me that it made the verse well. I believe it too. It's just a coincidence. But admit that it is wonderful. And even. We say it's just a coincidence. We don't know. He had read Wagram all the same read:

*O flag of Wagram! O country of Voltaire! Power, freedom, **old military honor,***

Eh, *old military honor*. It's Wagram. It is true that it rhymes with Voltaire. It must also be admitted that Voltaire is good here:

*Power, freedom, the old military honor.
Principles, rights, thought, they make at this moment
A vast abasement of all this glory.*

*All their confidence is in their smallness.
They say, feeling themselves of a puny species:
“Bah! we weigh nothing! reign.” Noble hearts!
So they don't know, these poor victorious dwarfs,
Jumped on the bulwark from the depths of a cave,
When it is an illustrious people that one governs,
A people in whom honor resounds and resounds...⁴⁹*

The honor is Wagram. Who in front of a setting sun, a beautiful setting sun over Luxembourg, saw on the contrary from the Panthéon, always saw from rue Soufflot, always at the time of the train, or otherwise, at another hour, who in front of one of these marvelous suns setting on the quays, on the bridges, by the entrance to your place Dauphine, or behind Notre-Dame, behind the monuments, behind the herd of monuments, behind the simple houses, behind the suburban hills, and also behind the urban hills, behind the vaporous hills, behind the planted hills, behind the clothed hills, behind the hills warmly clothed with monuments and houses, which before one of those sunsets over the infinity of the plain, before one of those skies of Paris and Ile-de-France, in front of one of these wonderful sunsets as the Ile de France has the secret, and Paris in Ile de France, which lit only by this word of the sun setting will leave instantly on these verses :

*At sunset.
You who are going to be seeking
Fortune,*

*Beware of the choir.
The earth, in the evening,
Is brown.⁵⁰*

⁴⁹ *Les Châtiments*, V, V, v. 1 - 11.

⁵⁰ A couplet from the “Song of the Fool” that is an epigraph in Hugo’s *Odes et ballades*(Ballades 10).

Who to this single word sunset, or more fully to the spectacle of a sunset will render to you the great, the high brutality of this verse:

This sun that we hope for is a setting sun!

*« It is perhaps evening that we take for a dawn!
Perhaps this sun towards which the man is leaning,
This sun that we call at the horizon that it gilds,
This sun that we hope for is a sun setting! »⁵¹*

Who clinging to the single word of tomorrow, apropos, irrelevant, will leave at a single stroke, will spring without even noticing:

*Oh! tomorrow is the great thing!
What will tomorrow be made of?
Man today sows the cause,
Tomorrow God ripens the effect.
Tomorrow, it's lightning in the sail,
It's the cloud on the star,
It's a traitor who reveals himself,
It's the ram that beats the towers.
It is the star that changes zone,
It is Paris that follows Babylon;
Tomorrow is the tree of the throne.
Today is it's velvet!*

*Tomorrow is the horse that falls white with foam.
Tomorrow, oh conquering one, it's Moscow that lights up,
The night, like a torch.*

⁵¹ *Les Chants du crépuscule*, "Prélude", v. 53-56.

*It's your old guard in the distance, littering the plain.
Tomorrow is Waterloo! Tomorrow is Saint Helena!
Tomorrow is the grave!*

*You can enter the cities
At the gallop of your steed,
Unravel the civil wars
With the edge of steel;
You can, O my captain.
Bar the haughty Thames.
Make victory uncertain
In love with your bugles,
Break all closed doors,
Surpass all fame.
Give as a star to armies
The star of your spurs!*

*God keeps time and leaves you space;
You can have all the space on earth.
To be as tall as a brow can be under the sky;
Sire, you can take, at your fancy,
Europe to Charlemagne, Asia to Mohamed;
But you will not take tomorrow from the Eternal One!*

III

O setback! O lesson! "When this man's child..."⁵²

We learned that in ninth grade, under the excellent M. Doret, in *optional* lessons, which were, to tell the truth, a sort of reward. Also we know it. Who will tell you the same, because it is the same, starting from the foot; *Eighteen eleven!* — *O time when peoples without number.* That's what we call it, how we've

⁵² Hugo, *Les Chants du crépuscule*, "Napoléon II" v. 55 - 91.

always called it. No one knows it's called *Napoleon II*. It's called *Eighteen eleven!*
— *O time...* and sometimes in the memoirs *Eighteen hundred and eleven*:

*Eighteen eleven! — O time when countless peoples
Waited, prostrate under a dark cloud,
That the sky would have said yes!
Felt centuries-old States tremble beneath them,
And gazed at the Louvre surrounded by thunder,
Like Mount Sinai!*⁵³

Whoever passes in front of Les Invalides will suddenly pick up the same one in the middle, because it is still the same:

*At the breath of the child, dome of the Invalides,
The flags prisoners under your splendid vaults
Quiver, as in the wind quiver the ears;
And her cry, that sweet cry that a nurse soothes.
Fit, we've all seen it, leaping and howling with ease
The monstrous cannons at your door crouch!*⁵⁴

I made a discovery, Halévy. Do not laugh. It is, I fear that it is a bibliographical discovery, that it is of the order of bibliography. Do not laugh. I made a bibliographocal discovery. Is it good? Do not laugh. It is my discovery that is good. It is even better, you will see that it is (even) better than you think. My discovery enters, as an integral part, into the history of literature, and even into the history of French letters. Or else there is no more justice. (And above all there is no longer a system.) Hugo was a maker. Spare me, please don't laugh at me. My discovery is not that Hugo was a maker. It wouldn't be a discovery. But we say he was a maker but we don't know how much of a maker he was. These are the things that we say, that we have become accustomed to saying, and we ourselves do not know to what extent it is true. Here is a monument. At the beginning of his career,

⁵³ Ibid, Stanza 1.

⁵⁴ Ibid, Stanza 4.

and even throughout his career, (because he always (re)started, he found that he never had enough, he knew very well that we are always in the attitude of a beginner, which one always begins for fortune, and perhaps for art), but especially during the first half of his career he affected to put extraordinary epigraphs on the least of his poems to convince us that he had, as they say, *an inexhaustible literature*. It began with the *Odes et Ballades*. We also know that it was the habit of his time, I mean since Chateaubriand and throughout this first great half of Romanticism. It was the beginning of romanticism. In romanticism it was the beginning of archaeology. But this was not just the beginning of romantic archaeology. It was also and above all already the beginning of all our scientific archaeology. Now it is almost an important fact of literary history, at least of his history and of his literary history that this care he had, that he took, this kindness, this docility, this anxiety to follow everything one did in that time, everything that was done, whatever was good. Here is someone who wanted to make a career (it seems that he did), and who did not believe that a career is made by itself. The restless and attentive docility, the following of this great revolutionary to the people of his time, to the fashions of his time, to the movements of his time, to what succeeded, is a spectacle all the more delightful as it can be tasted without a second thought: it was so successful. Now the *fourth ballad*, — *to Trilby*, — *le lutin d'Argail*, — bears this epigraph:

*Over to you, light shade.
Who on a passing wing
By the world fly.
And with a hissing murmur
The shady greenery
Gently shake;*

*I offer these violets,
These lilies and these flowers,
And these roses here,
These ruby roses.
Freshly hatched,*

And those carnations too!

Now he cheerfully attributes these two stanzas as an *Old Song*. It's unbelievable. You will see yourself in an edition. These two stanzas that everyone knows, that since our early childhood we all hail as an old memory, as one of the most admirable games of our great Du Bellay. I hear well. You will say to me: He is no less a great poet for that. I agree. It is even a little what we say. A poet is not forced to know the history of Literature, on the contrary, nor even the history of letters.⁵⁵ Finally, we should know. — A great poet doesn't have to have references. - I understand, but then he is not forced to put. I don't mind there being any reference. On the contrary, they bore me. They obsess me. And they don't succeed. You understand I may be stupid, they do not impose on me. They do not deceive me. Neither on the solidity of his knowledge, nor on the universality of his knowledge. It is true that I also do not ask that. Why then only does he pretend to offer it to me. Why does he put epigraphs on me, which I don't ask him for, and that being so, why does he put them on me falsely. Almost more than false, ignored. All Hugo is in there. That he doesn't give me references (I like that better), or that he gives me exact ones. Like everyone. But no, he brutalizes me, the public me, in all these ballads, in all his beginnings of work, in all his beginnings, in all his first half of life and work, in all his first half of career, and even in all the rest, he stupefies me with the most extraordinary references, which leave me in no doubt as to his erudition. Names we have never seen or known. Only in these ballads (not to mention the Odes, which already feared none), together Emile Deschamps; La Fontaine, *Imitation of Anacreon*; Shakespeare; Montenabri; Gonzalo Berceo, *The Battle of Simancas*; *Ancient chronicle*; *Reproaches al rey Rodrigo*; Avienus; André Ghenier. The references that I cannot verify are certainly good. What a pity that there is only one incomplete, vague, to the point of being literally false, and that it is this delicious poem, known to everyone, this delicious song by our very great Du Bellay, whom we have always found in the editions in *Les Jeux Rustiques*,

⁵⁵ I cut out the word *Vouère* because any translations I can think of don't fit. Vowing One. Promising One. I hope this footnote will be deleted soon because my ignorance will be corrected.

as coming, as addressed. *From a Winnower of Wheat to the Winds*. Montenabri, Gonzalo Berceo, Avienus, and he does not know, or finally he does not recognize a large piece of Du Bellay, one of the best known. What is most extraordinary is that these *Ballades*, and all the old one, the first Hugo, are full of references taken from Ronsard and the Pleiade. Or finally the French Renaissance. Only in these *Ballades*: Desportes, Baïf, Ronsard, (Segrais), and there are only fifteen ballads. And what is stronger than anything is that this Du Bellay, to whom we do not attribute in the book a text that everyone knows is by him, it is precisely to him that the whole the book is dedicated, or finally it is a reference to him which is, which makes the epigraph of the whole book:

*Let us also renew
Any old thought.*

Joachim du Bellay.

It is true that references assigned by name may not be better than references assigned anonymously, if I may say so. We no longer know. Confidence does not reign. All of our author is there. And then, as the misfortunes follow one another and resemble each other, and besides, it doesn't matter to him, *first* and together he calls, he attributes *Old song* to the text, or one of the most famous texts of our very great Du Bellay, (he who then professed to resituate, to restore the French Renaissance, especially against the seventeenth century, and especially I think because he had to reckon that the Renaissance is closer to the Middle Ages, c is therefore more romantic); (for he generally reasoned thus, so to speak); (I do not hide from myself that if we told him that he attributed Du Bellay *Old song*, first he would say that he attributed many others; second and above all he would not believe, in his thought, to have wronged him; perhaps on the contrary); (for *Old Song* in his mind was certainly something very good. He would certainly have referenced it affectionately, respectfully, honorably and for honor. He had, naturally, because it was the fashion, and he kept the fashion, he had almost always a taste, a superstitious respect for the former,

for the old, in this sense, thus understood; he had a mysterious, affectionate superstitious regard for it; always the good revolutionary; he practiced then, (he almost always practiced, even then, at the same time that he practiced, that he excelled, that he made his fortune in the new, professional, in progress, professional, in the modern sense), a certain superstition, a sort of mysticism of the *old*.) (A junk-dealer's mystique.)

Second, he quotes only two stanzas, the first two, instead of three which are also known, where the third is indispensable, which form a body together, where the third holds like a member, or rather in the body itself as an integral part, which cannot go without each other, which remember, which maintain themselves in memory as imperiously as each other. The one rather than the others. (And we will not say that it is to save money, since *Ballade dixième* he quotes at length, he puts in epigraph all the four stanzas, all the four verses of *La Chanson du Fou*, from the fourth act of *Cromwell*, where I believe that it is Cromwell himself, what authority! who thinks he can attribute it to his madman Elespuru (with a variant, moreover, because the editions of *Cromwell* bear:

See; on the horizon
No house,
None!

And the editions of the Tenth Ballad bear the epigraph:

See; on the horizon,
No house!
*None!*⁵⁶

⁵⁶ *Cromwell*, Act IV, Scene I.

Which makes the text gained in the range and a comma, and replacing a comma with an exclamation mark. Noticeable reinforcement. Of thought.

Third, these very two stanzas, he quotes them badly. Whatever the spelling differences between an ancient spelling and a modern spelling, I don't think they go as far as I see. But what do I see. I see that he also made a variation on his *Old song*. Long live freedom. But he may be overdoing it a bit. Because he didn't just make a variation in the title and in the author's name, or in the attribution. He also did, he introduced a variant in the text. And since he was not Du Bellay but Hugo, such a variant is called, for any other it would be called, a misquote. And all of Hugo is still in this misquote. Let's say it's a variant, but it's not happy. The text bore, as we know:

To you light troop,

All humanism was in this *light troupe*, all humanism and all Greek culture, all the bucolic Ancient and Renaissance, the rebirthing, the true, all the pagan and French Renaissance, all the resurgent tradition, all the flower, all the grace , and also all the precision of the antique and the French. Hesiod and Theocritus. It had even become like a technical word. Him Hugo, he does not hesitate. He quotes, he relates to the current of the pen:

*To you, **shadow** light,*

And right away it is no longer this at all. It is no longer, not only is it no longer time, but it is no longer a people, it is no longer of anything. Everything falls. The vulgarity has passed, the worst of all, the light vulgarity. All the romance is there. A slight inch of vulgarity crushed the fine antique molding. The common, romantic mastic clogged the eye and the rib. And it must be said that the whole poem, the whole play is like a challenge. It's already a challenge, and it's risking a lot, it's playing a big

game, for a modern man, to put on, to go and put on Du Bellay as an epigraph, and im such Du Bellay. A text like this, from the top of its small corner of an epigraph, puts everything on the ground. In particular, he naturally puts his *fourth ballad*, which is one of the bad ones, very neatly on the ground. Which is even so bad as this kind of protection he gives to this *old song* by pinning it to himself as an epigraph, by adopting it, in order to make it immortal no doubt, in order to pass it on to posterity, this aggregation, this connection that he has made of it, this adoption, (you follow the movement: the *fourth ballad* will surely go down to posterity, rather twice than once, since it is by Hugo. So he, good prince, generous, (he is young), in addition he will save this old song, which he loves, he will keep it for us for the memory of men, he will honor it, he will attach this small rowboat to his enormous boat), that it ends up doing , that it ends up giving one of the most delightful comedies that we have ever been shown. The most recent works of our historians have updated this singular contract, this kind of lease more than life, this kind of eternal lease by which Victor Hugo had ensured the exclusive ownership, the use and the employment of the word *ombre* singular and plural, especially in rhyme. These rhymes in *ombre(s)* have sometimes given it beautiful effects:

*Near the millstones, which one would have taken for rubble [décombres].
The lying reapers made dark groups [des groupes sombres] :⁵⁷*

But generally this lease did not benefit him. This (State) monopoly made him make it easier than the great verses. His *shadows* usually come too much, especially in rhyme, too much when expected. Another measure of the classical and the romantic, in the craft. Hugo's *ombre(s)*⁵⁸ rhymes served him much as the *ebre(s)* rhymes served the classics when the classics too abandoned themselves, let themselves go to their craft. When there were holes in the genius, which was seen, shortcomings, deficiencies.

⁵⁷ *La Légende des siècles*, “Booz endormi”, v. 26 & 27.

⁵⁸ *Ombre* is the French word for Shadow, but I am leaving it untranslated here because of Péguy’s analysis of the rhyming.

Shortcomings. *Èbre(s)* was the *ombre(s)* of the classics just as *ombre(s)* was the *èbre(s)* not so much of the romantics as of Hugo (who alone, *for the metier*, makes everything romantic). *Funèbres, ténèbres* is what sounds in the classical, in the classical register, what sounds in the romantic register *ombres, sombres, décombres*.⁵⁹ And as expected, it still sounds a little better. It sounds more noble. It speaks less of the nose.

Fourth, and all of Hugo is still in there, to *make something old*, to authenticate his "old song" as old, he gave it an old, fancy spelling which is indeed the most amusing there is: *esbranlez, fraîchement escloses*. Faced with an old text, there are only two attitudes to take: (don't worry, Halévy, we're going to recite it twice); (that's kind of why I'm doing it); or I write quietly in the modern style, without any affectation. Thus I find in a small international English edition published simultaneously in Paris, Brussels and Lausanne: *Les Chefs-d'Œuvres de la Poésie lyrique française. 'Lyrical works by Ronsard and his school. — Joachim du Bellay. — Rustic Games. — From a Winnowing of Wheat, to the Winds:*

*To you, O airy band,
Blowing over the land
On gusts of fleeting wing,
Who, rustling in the shade
Of leaves, grass, softly swayed,
Are faintly murmuring,*

*I bring, and offer you,
Lilies, and violets too,
And even roses: these,
Fresh-bloomed and ruby red
With petals rare, outspread;*

⁵⁹ shadows, dark, rubble

And pinks too, if you please.

*Blow fair and gentle, pray,
Over the plain this day,
Here, in the midday heat:
Whilst I, with every breath,
Gasping, near done to death,
Toil winnowing my wheat.⁶⁰*

or else take an old *writing style* from an old edition or from a scholarly edition. This is how I find in Marty-Laveaux; and again it would be necessary to merge old rising 's' like 'ſ', (and not all final 's' like our 's' today), which perhaps do not exist naturally at Allainguillaume in our current Didots:

IEVX RVSTIQVES
D'VN VANNEVR de BLE, AVX VENTS.

*A VOUS troppe légère,
Qui d'œle passagère
Par le monde volez,
Et d'un sifflant murmure
L'ombrageuse verdure
Doulcement esbranlez,*

*l'offre ces violettes.
Ces lis & ces fleurettes,
Et ces roses icy,
Ces vermeillettes roses.*

⁶⁰ Joachim du Bellay, "A Winnower of Wheat, to the Winds", in *Lyrics of the French Renaissance*, trans. by Norman R. Shapiro (New Haven: Yale UP, 2002), 235-7.

*Tout freschement écloses.
Et ces œilletz aussi.*

*De vostre douce halaine
Euentez ceste plaine,
Euentez ce seiour :
Ce pendant que i'ahanne
A mon blé, que ie vanne
A la chaleur du iour.⁶¹*

(While I am copying this Marty-Laveaux for the printers, I am applying myself so much to forming my writing well, so that there are no typos, that if Bédier saw my copy, he would surely hire me to copy his texts for his printers.)

And until the end of his days this quotation remained thus, *varied*, not only false, but disguised. Mutated. Even in the most definitive editions, the most *ne varietur*, up to that which appeared, and which appears, in Hetzel and in Quantin, where the double initial, *V. H.*, in signature, is fastened with a sort of belt. Which proves he didn't have a secretary. Not a friend. Not a reader. Or that he had such a bad temper that no one dared put a word to him. And it amounts to the same. It is the same in two different forms.

All this not only in *ballades* but immediately after *odes* where he references and quotes and *attributes* very well (I didn't go there to see; all the references that we haven't checked are always good) Rémi Belleau, Ronsard and even Jean de la Taille, mixed with a Lithuanian Daino.

All references that are not checked are obviously good. We are quite right to call these editions *ne varietur*. It never moves. Except for a few punctuation differences, just enough to show that we weren't even collating. Not even at the printing press. I found this *old song*, which finally he wants to

⁶¹ I left the French in the way Péguy printed it, using the older orthography. At least, until I find a 16th century English translation that is similar.

put out (worthy of it), and which, the ungrateful, throws his *fourth ballad* on the floor, in the first edition, in the hands of de Peslouan. I find it again in the three-franc-fifty belted edition, except that this time we have softened it considerably, reduced the punctuation at the end. Whence an unfortunate weakening of thought, of *all old thought*. In the belt we have deleted the two final commas of the two penultimate verses, and we have deleted the exclamation from the final exclamation point, which gives, instead of one of the first texts that we have given:

He had put the old spellings, or even not, here, there, why not there, we don't know why.

The references that are not checked are the good ones. The proof. They're not just the best. An elder said that they are the (only) good ones. He was haunted by *ombre(s)*. It was on *ombre* that he fell when he had to fall. In his very title *Rays and Shadows*. It is true that he had owed, or that he owed to this rhyme, adjoined to the deep rhymes in *oir*, one of his deepest, one of his greatest sinkings, quadrangular deepenings; and it is precisely in *Rays and Shadows*:

*The end of the road, which lives days without number, [nombre]
Where once to wait for me it liked to sit [à s'asseoir],
Has worn away by hitting, when the road is dark [sombre],
The great moaning chariots which return in the evening [soir].*⁶²

The classics did not only have the rhymes in *èbre(s)*, if I may say so as expected rhymes; *ténèbres, funèbres, célèbres* :

⁶² Victor Hugo, "Tristesse d'Olympio", v. 69 à 72.

*O how many acts and exploits famous [célèbres]
Remained without glory in the darkness [ténèbres].*⁶³

They had *entrailles, funérailles, batailles: foudre, poudre; marque(s), monarque(s)*; and in Racine *Oreste, funeste*:

*Who would have thought that a shore to my wishes so fatal [funeste]
Would first present Pylades to the eyes of Orestes [Oreste]?*⁶⁴

And sometimes it's beautiful, and sometimes it's expected:

*I live you with regret, in this state fatal [funeste].
Ready to follow the deplorable everywhere Orestes [Oreste],*⁶⁵

It is even perhaps the strongest thing he has done, that it is expected, and so beautiful.

*And letting you touch a pity fatal [funeste].
From a war so long maintain the rest [reste].*⁶⁶

There is also *encor* and *Hector* in rhyme. It is extremely remarkable, in all Andromache already, how much Racine puts proper names in rhyme, which is a straight and grand and brave and direct way of squaring the verse. *Greece, Sparta, Helena, Troy, Odysseus, Achilles, Epirus, Pyrrhus, Hermione*, and even *States*. This gives the verse a deliberate, complete construction, a full square completion, an absence of hesitation, a desire to fill. *Pylades. Troy* returns twice, three times to the page, twice with *prey*, once with *joy*. — *Phrygia. the*

⁶³ *O combien d'actions, combien d'exploits célèbres
Sont demeurés sans gloire au milieu des ténèbres.* Corneille, *Le Cid*, acte IV, cs. II, v. 1301 et 1302

⁶⁴ Racine, *Andromaque*, acte I, sc. I, v. 4 et 5.

⁶⁵ Racine, *Andromaque*, acte I, sc. I, v. 45 et 46.

⁶⁶ Racine, *Andromaque*, acte I, sc. II, v. 153 et 154.

Trojans.

Cléone

*And what does his sight have for you that is fatal [funeste]?
Madame, isn't it always the same Orestes [Oreste] ⁶⁷*

And *stay*. Same page:

*Well. Madame, well, listen to Orestes [Oreste].
Pyrrhus has begun, at least do the rest [reste]. ⁶⁸*

*Such is my love's blindness fatal [funeste].
You know it. Mrs; and the fate of Orestes [Oreste] ⁶⁹*

*I hear you. Such is my share disastrous [funeste]:
The heart is for Pyrrhus, and the wishes for Orestes [Oreste]. ⁷⁰*

Ilium. Andromache. Trojan.

*His eyes were opening, Pylades; she listened to Orestes [Oreste],
Spoke to him, pitied him. A word would have done the rest [reste]. ⁷¹*

Cleon even with Hermione. Cephisa.

⁶⁷ Racine, *Andromaque*, acte II, sc. I, v. 389 et 390.

⁶⁸ Racine, *Andromaque*, acte II, sc. V, v. 409 et 410.

⁶⁹ Racine, *Andromaque*, acte II, sc. V, v. 481 et 482.

⁷⁰ Racine, *Andromaque*, acte II, sc. V, v. 537 et 538.

⁷¹ Racine, *Andromaque*, acte III, sc. I, v. 745 et 746.

*Ah! what I fear, Madame, such a disastrous calm [un calme si funeste]!
And that it would be much better [mieux]...*

*Hermione
Are you bringing Orestes?*

Cleone

*He comes. Madam, he is coming;*⁷²

Agamemnon. the state. Cleon again with Hermione. And before the terrible verse:

No, I will deprive you of this pleasure disastrous [funeste].

*Madame: he will only die by the hand of Orestes [Oreste].*⁷³

He leaves me, the ingrate! this embarrassment fatal [funeste].

*No, no, once again: let Orestes act [agir Oreste].*⁷⁴

Here, in his transports, is the only care that remains to him [qui lui reste].

⁷² Racine, *Andromaque*, acte IV, sc. II, v. 1141 à 1143.

⁷³ *Andromaque*, acte iv, sc. III, v. 389 et 390.

⁷⁴ *Andromaque*, acte v, sc. I, v. 1417 et 1418

Hermione

The perfidious! He will die. But what did Orestes say to you [t'a dit Oreste]?⁷⁵

How sound, after these perfidies of cruelties, after this tragedy of hell, the verses of Corneille:

*I saw him all bloody, in the midst of battles [batailles],
Make a beautiful rampart of a thousand funerals [funérailles].⁷⁶*

Let herself overthrow her walls. And with his own hands tears his entrails!⁷⁷

Even the expected rhyming verses:

*Farewell then, since in vain I try to resolve you:
All covered with laurels, still fear the [la] lightning*

Or the [le] lightning.

Honor, happiness come unceasingly into rhyme, together, in Corneille, especially naturally in *Le Cid*. But it must be said that *honor* in Corneille is a kind of *proper* name. It is a name of a person, a name of someone. Which we know very well.

*New dignity, fatal to my happiness! [bonheur]
High precipice from which falls my honor! [honneur]⁷⁸*

⁷⁵ *Andromaque*, acte v, sc. II, v. 1457 et 1458.

⁷⁶ Corneille, *Horace*, acte IV, sc. v, v. 1311 et 1312.

⁷⁷ Corneille, *Horace*, acte IV, sc. v, v. 1311 et 1312.

⁷⁸ Corneille, *Le Cid*, acte I, sc. iv, v. 247 et 248.

*Worthy enemy of my greatest happiness. [bonheur]
Iron that causes my pain,
were you given to me to avenge my honor? honneur]*⁷⁹

*And one can reduce me to live without happiness, [bonheur]
But not resolve me to live without honor. [honneur]*⁸⁰

*May I with my eyes see falling there this lightning [foudre].
To see its houses in ashes, and your laurels in dust; [poudre]*⁸¹

*And, in this high degree of power and honor. [honneur]
The greatest will hold your love there to happiness. bonheur]*⁸²

*I discovered enough in you illustrious marks
To prefer you even to the happiest monarchs:*⁸³

When Orestes is no longer there, stay and fatal come together:

*You must presume of him as of the rest:
Death is for them neither shameful nor fatal [funeste];*⁸⁴

The rhyme *main(s)*, *Romain(s)*; — *homme*, *Rome* is everywhere in Hugo; it was naturally already everywhere in Corneille and they join deeply by this craft. Here is what should be considered a little, it is to considerations of this order that one should docilely indulge before believing that one can base everything on a separation of the classical and the romantic. There would be so much to say. Hugo was perhaps basically a badly ambitious classical

⁷⁹ Corneille, *Le Cid*, acte I, sc. vi, v. 317 to 319.

⁸⁰ Corneille, *Le Cid*, acte II, sc. I v. 395 et 396.

⁸¹ Corneille, *Horace*, Act IV, sc. v, v. 1315 & 1316.

⁸² Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, Act II, sc. I, v. 391 & 392.

⁸³ Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, Act II, sc. II, v. 469 & 470.

⁸⁴ Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, Act III, sc. III, v. 945 & 946.

poet who, to arrive, dressed and made up as a romantic. Because it was the fashion that was coming. In a romantic fashion. There would be a whole lot of work to be done, who knows, a thesis, on a whole family of verses in Hugo, in the whole first half of his work, but basically in all his work, which is incontestably a Virgilian family. And a second work, much more considerable perhaps, on a Cornelian family which I believe is still much larger. More numerous. On the other hand, I believe that we would not find a single Racinian verse in Hugo.

*Alas! it was himself; and never has our Rome
Produced a greater heart nor seen a more honest man. [homme]⁸⁵*

That I thus deprive myself of the only good that to me rests!

Pauline

Save yourselves from a sight both disastrous.⁸⁶

I abhor false gods.

POLYEUCT

And I hate them.

⁸⁵ Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, ACt I, sc. III, v. 181 et 182.

⁸⁶ Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, Act II, sc. ii, v. 545 et 546.

NEARCH

I hold their unholy cult.

POLYEUCT

*And I hold it fatal.*⁸⁷

*But this same duty which conquered him in Rome,
And which ranges me here under the laws of a man. [homme]*⁸⁸

One of the finest examples, I am not saying one of the most curious, but one of the most striking, of the fact that there is a fortune for rhymes too, a destiny, is the fate of rhymes of *ort* in Corneille; *mort, sort, effort, port*; especially *mort* and *sort*. These rhymes serve to make ordinary verses, everyday verses; (ordinary verses of Corneille):

*Let's go through our tears to make another effort;
And only employ us after our death [mort].*⁸⁹

*On my equals, Néarque, a beautiful eye is very strong; [fort]
Such is afraid to anger him who does not fear death [mort].*⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, Act II, sc. vi, v. 641 et 642.

⁸⁸ Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, Act II, sc. ii, v. 513 et 514.

⁸⁹ Corneille, *Horace*, Act IV, sc. viii, v. 1401 & 1402.

⁹⁰ Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, Act I, sc. I, v. 87 & 88.

*And all the rigor of your first sort
Against your merit would have been a vain effort.*⁹¹

Then in *Polyeucte* they go up; they go up little by little:

*If however, after this stroke of fate, I have enough life to seek death.*⁹²

They go up, they go up again:

*Than to marry a man, after his sad fate. [sort]
Who, in any way, is the cause of his death [mort];*⁹³

In *Polyeucte* he rises again, he reaches a first summit of spiritual greatness, of holiness:

*From the first gust of wind he leads me to the port.
And, coming out of baptism, he sends me to death [mort].*⁹⁴

During this time in *Les Horaces* he had reached a still loftier summit, a greater grandeur, but a temporal grandeur, a summit of temporal grandeur, a summit of heroism:

*To die for the country is such a worthy fate. [sort]
That one would seek buried such a beautiful death [mort].*⁹⁵

So in *Polyeucte* holiness justly overlapping in heroism we arrive with a final blow, a last ascent to a second summit, a second step, a last step, to the supreme summit; to a greatness, to a summit of greatness of a supreme greatness, of a unique greatness; for it is, so to speak, at a spiritual summit

⁹¹ Corneille, *Polyeucte*, Act II, sc. II, v. 467 & 468.

⁹² Corneille, *Polyeucte*, Act II, sc. II, v. 559 & 560.

⁹³ Corneille, *Polyeucte*, Act IV, sc. v, v. 1345 & 1346.

⁹⁴ Corneille, *Polyeucte*, Act IV, sc. III, v. 1229 & 1230.

⁹⁵ Corneille, *Horace*, Act II, sc. III, v. 441 & 442.

as of a temporal grandeur. It's a cross-check. In the *Horaces* (which we are told he called himself *Horace*), he had already said:

*That. men, gods, demons and fate [sort]
Prepare against us a general effort;*⁹⁶

In *Polyeucte* it is a cross-check. For he attains to a grandeur as temporally spiritual, to a pinnacle as temporally spiritual; to a single pinnacle of heroism in holiness, (but which is perhaps also in a sense, seen from the other side, a pinnacle of holiness in heroism; I mean that such a heroism of holiness cannot occur perhaps only in a naturally heroic world, in the Cornelian world; here again there is an insertion of the spiritual into the temporal, of the supernatural into the natural; of holiness into heroism; a temporal nourishment of the spiritual through the temporal, in the temporal, a nourishment, a starting point for holiness through and in heroism; hence this unique summit of heroic holiness); these two lines of which it is impossible not to see the correspondence and organic and voluntary to the two penultimate lines of *Horaces*, I mean to our two penultimate lines, to those which we quoted penultimately, these two culminating lines whose correspondence and organic and voluntary to the two culminating verses of the *Horaces* is striking; infinitely more than obvious; to the point that these two lines and these two form, make in the two works (in a sense corresponding) a symmetry, an answer, a capital correspondence of culmination, of crowning; on which, of which we will explain ourselves some day, which we will seek some day to deepen; in the sense that I hope that we will show that *le Cid* and *Horace* represent two temporal heroisms which, *raised to the eternal*, give *Polyeucte*, which transferred to the plane of the eternal, in the register of the eternal, with all their temporal roots intersect and at the same time thus end together, come to an end, crown each other in *Polyeucte*, thus producing there, thus rising there, thus completing there as natural, not a supernatural, antinatural nor above all extranatural, (which is the great danger), but a natural and supernatural

⁹⁶ Corneille, *Horace*, Act II, sc. III, v. 425 & 426.

supernatural, literally *supernatural*; there representing in completion, in crowning not an eternal heroism, a heroism of salvation, a heroism of holiness *in the air*, (which is the immense danger), but an eternal heroism still provided precisely with all its temporal origin, with all its temporal roots, with all its people, with all its temporal roots; a heroism of holiness which rises from the earth but which is not previously uprooted from the earth; which has not been previously washed in sterilized water; which one could even say does not uproot itself from it; which tears itself away from it but at bottom does not uproot itself from it; which is therefore not intellectual but carnal; which is, which is therefore real; which is, which remains carnal not only by its origin, by its departure, by its people, by all its taste, by all its sap, but also at least by the ministry of prayer, of the double prayer, both rising; from the prayer of those who remain to those who have left, to those who have already left, who left first; to ask for their intercession; of prayer, of the intercession of those who have left for those who remain. Thus this eternal heroism is eternally of temporal origin, this heroism of holiness is eternally of an origin, of carnal production. This is what makes the price, infinite. This is the very mystery of the incarnation. This is also what makes it accurate. Not only that's what makes it human, but that's exactly what makes it Christian. This insertion, this articulation of the eternal in the temporal, of the spiritual in the carnal, of the saint in the hero. Otherwise not only is there no longer a man, but exactly, technically, so to speak, there is no longer a Christian. No longer the saint. This articulation, this insertion makes the capital piece of Christianity, of holiness. Any other arrangement is, only gives, a literary construction, or what amounts to the same thing, an intellectual construction. A holiness must come from the earth, rise from the earth. Holiness must tear itself away from the earth, laboriously, painfully, in a holy way. It has to tear itself away from it with all its roots. Otherwise not only is it not human, but it is not Christian. It must not be previously, arbitrarily, intellectually uprooted, uprooted. So we only have shoddy miracles. If I may say sanctification is not an assumption; it is much more like in a certain sense an imitation of the Ascension. The verses of intercession are everywhere in *Polyeucte*:

*And you who, still emerging from victory,
Look at my labors from the abode of glory,
Dear Néarque, to vanquish such a strong enemy,
lend your hand from heaven to your friend [ami].⁹⁷*

*And it is there that soon, seeing God face to face.
More easily for you I will obtain this grace.⁹⁸*

*Polyeucte calls me to this happy demise [trépas]:
I see Néarque and him stretching out to me their arms [bras].⁹⁹*

Here is the very formula of the root extracting; as expected it is in the *stanzas* and everyone knows it:

*Shameful attachments of the flesh and the world.
Why don't you leave me when I've left you!¹⁰⁰*

Here is the penultimate fortune of rhymes of *ort*:

*After showing me Néarque in death [mort].
After trying love and its effort,¹⁰¹*

Here is the penultimate fortune:

Nearchus

God himself feared death [mort].

⁹⁷ Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, Act IV, sc. I, v. 1089 à 1092.

⁹⁸ Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, Act V, sc. II, v. 1555 et 1556.

⁹⁹ Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, Act V, sc. v., v. 1733 et 1734.

¹⁰⁰ Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, Act IV, sc. II, v. 1107 et 1108.

¹⁰¹ Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, Act V, sc. III, v. 1649 et 1650.

Polyeucte

*He nevertheless offered himself: let us follow this holy effort;*¹⁰²

And we know that here is the last one; they are literally the two verses of *Horace* transferred into the eternal register, by an organic operation and together by voluntary deliberation:

*If dying for his prince is an illustrious fate [sort],
When one dies for his God, what will be the death [mort].*¹⁰³

Such were our discoveries, Halévy, the discoveries that we communicated to each other, our sensational discoveries. Thus proving that we too were very capable, when necessary, of doing “work” *like them*. Did you know, for example, that he not only gloried

*... from his Lorraine father, his Vendée mother,*¹⁰⁴

but that he once gloried in having a Saxon name. I speak of Hugo, I no longer speak of Corneille. Yes, yes. It is true that he was young. It was in the beginnings. — *And then*, as Ghéon¹⁰⁵ said (it was perhaps Copeau,¹⁰⁶ at Croué¹⁰⁷'s place), *what Hugo was not pleased about*. He was right. You have to congratulate yourself. All the same he was not always pleased to have a

¹⁰² Corneille, *Polyeucte*, Act II, sc. vi, v. 683 et 684.

¹⁰³ Corneille, *Polyeucte*, Act IV, sc. III, v. 1213 et 1214.

¹⁰⁴ See Hugo, *Feuilles d'automne*, “Mon père vieux soldat, ma mère vendéenne.”

¹⁰⁵ The French playwright and novelist, Henri Ghéon.

¹⁰⁶ French theater director and actor, Jacques Copeau, who founded Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier.

¹⁰⁷ Jean Croué was a childhood friend of Péguy's who was also an actor at the Comédie-Française and a subscriber of the *Cahiers*.

Saxon name. It is at the end of the seventh ode of the third book. (III-7).¹⁰⁸ It is in the ode that we commonly call, that we think we know by this name of the *ode to the Column*. (Shortly). Hugo had named it longer, longer, more naively, with a sort of disarming naivety of a map of Paris which basically gave him his strength all his life: *Ode the seventh*. — *to the Column*. — PLACE VENDÔME. — *Purva magnis*. It is true that at the time of this ode it was perhaps necessary to specify. The "column of the Place Vendome" was perhaps not yet the column. It was still only Napoleon who had made it, (a breath), and the bronze coating of the guns taken from the Austrians, of the twelve hundred guns taken from the enemy, I think in one campaign. It still had only this bronze coating of the greatest history, of the greatest military glory, it still had only this coating of 1805. Politics had not yet passed there, the all-powerful politics, I mean the only omnipotent one, domestic politics, the one where the French fight against each other; because isn't it, to fight against the Austrians everyone does that, everyone can do the same. It's not smart. What is smart is to fight between us. Nor could he call it *the Vendôme column*, that would have been too familiar. Then there was competition from the other column.¹⁰⁹ Throughout Louis-Philippe and the Second Republic and the Second Empire, it worked very well. There was this perfect duality, the two columns of the Temple, *God said: — Two are needed; and in the sanctuary... One sculpted the ideal and the other the real...* We forgot the two columns, together, twins, of the square, of the Throne barrier. It was perfect, this competition, the Vendôme column, the July column; two sisters; the eldest, the youngest; become as big as each other; a man on one, a man on the other; on one a well-dressed man; more than dressed; clothed; draped; or armed; on the other an undressed young man. Everything was fine. One, it is said, was the genius of Liberty. I will grant that the other was perhaps the genius of war; the parallelism of these two verticals had been pushed so far in people's minds that Vendôme had ended up becoming a sort of name of the month. Wonderful correspondence, ready-made antithesis for Hugo: the column of Victory, the column of Liberty; the

¹⁰⁸ This is how Péguy referred to different editions of the *Cahiers*..

¹⁰⁹ The July Column built in the center of the place de la Bastille to remember the July Revolution of 1830.

Column of Military Glory, the Column of Civil Glory. Between us, this antithesis was a bit artificial, and therefore quite made for Hugo. For the column of Liberty was also a column of Victory, at least over the Swiss and over a few good Frenchmen, and I have heard it said that this civil Glory had above all been *procured* by gunshots. Finally, *with all that*, that is to say with Napoleon and the Austrians, the Column was not yet the column. It was still, as it is called, as Hugo so aptly invokes, only the *Column of the Place Vendome*. What it needed, for this Column, to become *the column*, was to have been first thrown to the ground and then remounted; what it lacked (it must be said is a bit of that kind of glory, it must be said, of *publicity* that Hervé gave to the flag of Wagram), what it lacked was the Commune, Courbet, (Vuillaume¹¹⁰ as a chronicler) . The reactionary governments having taken care not to knock down the column of July, the competition has fallen. It is because of Vuillaume that we can say: the column. It is because of the tradition of the Republican opposition. It was because of Vuillaume that Hugo at the age of eighty could say *the column*. But he couldn't at twenty, because of Vuillaume's absence. He needed a story proper to this column, an *affair*. A proper glory. The Republicans made it for Hugo. Here is the *Saxon name*. It is precisely in *the Column*. You may not be like me. I find this *Saxon* to be prodigious. But in an ode *to the Column*, it goes beyond everything. It is particularly well placed. It is prodigious in the second degree. It's like Du Bellay, he certainly no longer thought of the Saxons. To the real ones. He had forgotten the 14,000 Saxons of Leipzig and the Württemberg cavalry. *February 1827*, he was twenty-five years old; yet only fourteen years ago:

¹¹⁰ Maxime Vuillaume was a French engineer and a participant in the 1871 Commune who survived and wrote famously about the commune and his life before and after.

*It is I who would be silent! Myself intoxicated once [naguère]
 My name. Saxon, mingled among battle cries [cris de guerre]!
 I, who followed the flight of a flag triumphant!
 Who, joining to the bugles my voice broken [entrecoupée],
 Had for first rattle the golden knot of a sword [épée]!
 I, who was a soldier when I was a child [enfant]!*¹¹¹

Unfortunately, he was not a soldier when he was a man.

No, brothers! no, french of this age of waiting [attente]!

In the old editions this verse was written as follows:

No, brothers! no, French of this age of waiting [attente]!

Which was obviously the correct spelling. *French*, not *french*. *Big capital* and not *lowercase*. It was in the definitive edition that the fault was made, which was not in the first, in the old editions. It is quite contrary to the saying. That's all his secretaries could find for him. Like his whole life is there. We were able to make, we made him deluxe editions; countless; very expensive; very ugly: it was not edited correctly. In this icy indifference, in this total lack of care(s), in this poverty, in this cold negligence, how clearly its real indigence of parents and friends shines. Failing himself, he had no friend, no devotee to work properly for him. This man really without friends, without a secretary, without a family. Full of incredible family stories. Failing himself, he had no one capable of reading him a proper proof. And yet on the one hand he earned money, these badly established books sold like bread, and on the other hand he paid, like Napoleon he paid his family quite dearly.

¹¹¹ Hugo, *Odes et ballades*, “À la colonne de la place Vendôme.”

No, brothers! no, French of this age of waiting [attente]!

It is even certain, for someone who has had some experience of typography, *typographiarum cuidam perito*, that it is the lowercase *f* of *frères*[brothers] that brought the lowercase *f* of *French*. It is a well-known phenomenon. It is even perhaps the most frequent case. A seemingly identical recommencement in fact entails, as a result, in the composition a truly totally identical recommencement. *No, fr* the first time inevitably leads to *non, fr* the second time. Memory, in this case, continues. Memory, the recall of memory, then, plays full, plays to the full. The second time then happens, inevitably forms like the first. It is one of the best known, most common phenomena of current psychology which is learned in workshops and not in the *laboratories* of more or less experimental *practical(s)* psychology.

No, brothers! no, French of this age of waiting [attente]!

We all grew up on the threshold of the tent.

Condemned to peace, eaglets banished from both [deux].

Let us know at least, watching over the glories paternal,

Guard against all affront, jealous sentinels.

*The armor of our ancestors [aïeux]!*¹¹²

An edition that exudes lack of care, that's what we did for its *ne varietur* edition and for its belt buckle tightened to the last notch.

Such were the findings that we communicated, Halévy, the discoveries that we shared with each other; such and such. One pushed the other, one brought the other, immediately one led to the other. One pushed, the other pulled. Or, on the contrary, one blocked the other, prevented passage, when there were too many. Such were our rare relaxations. There are less innocent ones. There are less pure ones. We also know how to analyze. We also know how to work in detail. But we do not believe that the detail exhausts neither the work nor any other reality, we believe on the contrary that it is infinitely far from it. We also know how to *do* bibliography. We

¹¹² Hugo, *Odes et ballades*, “À la colonne de la place Vendôme.”

didn't just have good ones; we didn't just have good ones, which is a step above; we sometimes had happy ones.

One evening, do you remember? it was I who told you the sweet story, the story of *Jérimadeth*. That evening, therefore, we were not sailing in silence. You know, you remember what the problem was:

*All rested in Ur and in Jerimadeth;
The stars dotted the sky, deep and dark [sombre];
The thin, clear crescent among these flowers of shadow [ombre]
Shone in the west, and Ruth wondered [se demandait],*

*Motionless, half opening his eyes under his veils.
What a god, what a reaper of eternal summer [été]
Had, in departing, negligently thrown [jeté]
This golden sickle into the field of stars [étoiles].*¹¹³

Let us salute here one of the most beautiful poems that has ever been written in French, and in Greek, and in European. Let us salute, in two stanzas, eight of the most beautiful verses of this most beautiful poem. Let us first salute our old acquaintances, rhymes in *shade*, which intervening for the second time in this poem have, here, crowned it, enabled it to crown two of its most beautiful verses. But there remained, not that formidable Spanish infantry, but the question of Jerimadeth.

Of all the Hebrew names that Hugo could choose to crown a verse, it must be confessed that there was certainly none that sounded as good, as beautiful as Jerimadeth, and above all that sounded as Hebrew; who was at this point of the time and place, of the country; also *local color* and *temporal color*. We must do him justice, not only to Jerimadeth but to Hugo, that of all the Hebrew names that presented themselves, that he could choose from, that asked, that implored, that were at his feet, there were certainly none that made this point, by its very form, by its utterance, and also by its phonetics, if I may say so; by its configuration, especially by its spelling,

¹¹³ Hugo, *La Légende des siècles*, "Booz endormi"

which was a real *geo-geography*; that *h* in particular that there was at the end, the two legs, the two towers of Notre-Dame, and which already so solemnly inaugurated the very name of Hugo; the Saxon name; which made it to such an extent that we were there; that we were there; that it was Ruth who was lying at Boaz's feet. Such was *the state of the question*, the famous state of the question. Such was the first time.

The second time was that Hebrew scholars, (*this age is merciless*¹¹⁴), furious, inside, vexed inside because they didn't know this Hebrew name inside, looked for it in a German atlas. It looks like he wasn't there. When a Hebrew name is not in a German atlas, it is lost. It was declared that it did not exist, that it was a forged name. We forge ourselves, as the other says. As one had admired the choice, so one admired the *forge*. For the same reasons. He hadn't chosen a very Hebrew name, but he had coined a very Hebrew name. Thinking about it, it was even stronger. Find a name that exists, everyone can do the same. Finding a name that doesn't exist, that's the end game. And that was the second time.

Two years passed. There would never have been a third time if a wise young man had not one day written in pencil on a piece of paper this sentence which I deliver to your meditations:

I rhyme with dait.

And immediately there was a great dazzle in people's minds and many eyes opened. *The scales will fall from their eyes*¹¹⁵. That was perhaps a bit, I think, of what our good masters called *renewing the question*, renewing **the state of the question**. You asked me, my friend, if it was I who had made this invention (this discovery?) It was obvious that it was not me. *A young man*, it was not me. *Advise*, it wasn't me. If I had ever been a shrewd young man, my dear Halévy, what would my fortune be today. I will not usurp vain glory. I will not adorn myself with a vain insight. I replied that I had found this *pipe* a few years ago in a young little magazine sent to me,

¹¹⁴ La Fontaine, *Fables*, IX, 2, v. 54.

¹¹⁵ Isaiah 35:5.

and that the article, as far as I remember, was signed by a name today already much better known, for it was, I think, signed by the name of M. Eugène Marsan, attached today to *la Revue critique des Idées et des Livres*, — *Nouvelle librairie nationale*, — 85, rue de Rennes, Paris. Not very far from 149, as you can see. Which proves, Halévy, that one must always be on good terms with young people. And you should always read them. As for me, I admit that I totally admire the cheekbones he had that day. I totally admire him. Come to think of it, that was the day he did *Boaz Asleep*. He had slept with God. With Creator God:

*“For a long time, the one with whom I slept [dormi],
O Lord! left my bed for yours [vôtre];
And we are still all mixed up with each other [autre].
She half alive and I dead by half [demi].*

We have such the impression, we have such evidence that never perhaps a creature, that he himself was aware, that he himself had known with a sudden flash, suddenly, in a sudden flash that never man perhaps, that in a thrill of triumph he had felt that never man perhaps, not even the ancients, the Greeks, not even the ancient pagans, Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus had entered so fully, so in the fullness of carnal creation, in the womb of creation, which he had I will not say only that he had not only reached a peak, (that would be speaking his language, his own language, but his ordinary language, his everyday language), but that suddenly, (not with a wingbeat), he dominated all carnal creation, all the temporal and carnal world, (that ever creature), that never man perhaps, not even the ancient pagans had entered so far, so fully, so suddenly into the secret, into the operation. one even of creation (carnal); and even literally of the incarnation, that is to say literally of the putting into flesh, of the insertion of the eternal into the temporal. He clearly felt that suddenly, by a masterstroke, he seized, he embraced, he dominated this whole carnal, temporal and carnal world, this whole world of fecundity, of carnal perpetuity, of the carnal race, and even, thereby, even the entrance, the inscription, the insertion of the eternal in the temporal, of the eternal in the carnal, of the eternal life in the carnal life.

And HOMO FACTUS EST.¹¹⁶ Gentiles and Jews generally do not consider the incarnation. Christians consider it (less than they should, but anyway they consider it, at least professionally, politically very much, habitually very much, customarily, some, (formerly all the people), mystically), but professionally even so to speak, precisely, by an effect of their very discipline and their orientation, I mean very exactly the sense in which they are turned, where their mind is turned, where their soul is turned, where their heart is usually turned, habitually and even mystically they hardly consider it except coming from the eternal, from the side of the eternal, proceeding from the eternal, *ab aeterno, ab aeternitate*. What makes the unique value of this poem, (and what makes it infinitely more than a poem, (and Hugo felt it well, the beggar, the old man, knew it well), is that it is perhaps to be the only time that we have so purely, so fully, and no doubt even absolutely the only time that we have a pagan gaze (and a Jewish gaze) of the incarnation, an incarnation seen, coming from the Jewish world and from the pagan world, an incarnation that came as a carnal crowning, as a carnal culmination, as an accomplishment, as a carnal fulfillment, as a carnal plenitude of a carnal series.

The incarnation is only a culminating case, more than eminent, supreme, a limit case, a supreme collection at the midpoint of this perpetual inscription, of this (entirely) mysterious insertion of the eternal into the temporal, of the spiritual into the carnal which is the hinge, which is cardinal, which is, which makes the very articulation, the elbow and the knee of all creation of the world and of man, I mean of this world, the elbow and the knee, the joint of every creature, (of every human, material creature, of every creature of this world), the elbow, the knee, the joint of every man, the elbow, the knee, the joint of Jesus, the elbow, the knee, the articulation of the organization of all life, of all human life, of all material life, of all life in this world. We rejoin here what we said of *Polyeucte*, that any sanctification which is grossly abstracted from the flesh is an operation

¹¹⁶ An allusion to the Nicene Creed and John 1:14.

without *interest*. But and *homo factus* is; there are two ways of considering this inscription, this mysterious, perpetual insertion. Or rather there are two *places* from which to consider it. Christians generally consider it from the side of the eternal, from the place of the eternal, coming from the eternal, placing themselves with the eternal, (and my God, that's kind of their job). It's their job. It is from there that they contemplate this culminating insertion, this point of re-concentration, this gathering together in one point of all the eternal in all the temporal. That's usually their point of view, their own point, their point of view, their side of seeing, and my God it's quite natural. In a word they consider this great story, this unique story, this supreme case, this borderline case, this culmination, this flowering, this climax, this coronation, this carnal inscription, this temporal inscription, this point of completion, (and of beginning), especially as a story that happened to Jesus. *Et homo factus est*. Eternity was made, became time. The eternal has been made, has become temporal. The spiritual has been made, has become carnal. It is (mostly) a story that happened to eternity, to the eternal, to the spiritual, to Jesus, to God. To have the counterpart, the view from the other side, the reverse view so to speak, this story as a story *arriving on earth*, **of having given birth to God**, we would have to have the opposite, we would have to have that the earthly, the carnal, the temporal, the pagans (and the mystics of the first law, the Jews) should also consider the incarnation. But that's what they won't do. And my God it is also quite natural. And you can't blame them. We can't blame them. It was not, in a sense, their office. It was not, in a sense, their destination. Their profession. It would have had to consider the incarnation from their side, from their point of view. So that we had the other part, the counter part. So that contrary (jointly), this incarnation, this point of incarnation should come, present itself in the order of the temporal event like a flower and like a temporal fruit, like a flower and like a fruit of the earth, like a culmination, like a temporal crowning, like a supreme blow of temporal fecundity, so to speak, literally like an extraordinary success of carnal fecundity, like an inflorescence, like a carnal implantation, like a culmination, like a crown fructification, like a forcerie, however natural, like a carnal coronation, like a story (culminating, supreme, limit) arrived at the flesh and the earth. But finally, by deficiency, by deficiency we cannot perhaps ask the pagans, (the

Jews), to consider, to contemplate the incarnation. Maybe it wasn't their natural destination. It may not be their job. So all the counter part we missed. When it is found a pagan, a singular, (and a Jew, a biblical one), to consider the incarnation from the carnal side; on the other side; to contemplate, to consider the insertion of the eternal in the temporal, of the spiritual in the corporeal, in the carnal, on the side of the temporal, on the side of the corporeal, on the side of the carnal. To consider, to contemplate from the other side, coming from the other side, located from the other side. To consider eternity coming from the century, him coming from the century, eternity entering the century, and jointly, complementarily the century welcoming eternity. To consider, to contemplate God from the side of his creature, coming from the side of his creature, situated as his creature and from the side of his creature. God entering into his creature, the creature welcoming (his) God, a series of creatures, the lineage of David, ending up in God as carnal fruit. The incarnation, seen from this side, the insertion, this cardinal insertion, thus appears as a welcome, as a welcome, as a recollection of the Eternal in the flesh, as a completion of a carnal series, as a crowning of a carnal race, and not only as a story that happened to the flesh, and to the earth, but as the crowning, as the culmination of a story that happened to the flesh, and to the earth.

In this view the very people, people race of Israel culminates, like a tree of life, comes to an end, culminates to produce itself carnally God:

*And this dream was such that Boaz saw an oak [chêne]
Which, coming out of its belly, went Up to the blue sky [ciel bleu];
A race rose there like a long chain [chaîne];
A king was singing below, above was dying a god [dieu].*

No doubt he put *dieu* [god] with a small *d*: *un dieu* [a god].¹¹⁷ But let's not hit each other. It is perhaps much less the culmination of paganism than a tribute paid to free thought. You had to be a free thinker in 1860 and some. Or *you shouldn't* be a free-thinker. You had to be a free-thinker or a cleric.

¹¹⁷ Robert Burac points out how in the first edition of *La Légende des siècles*, there is a capital D at this point. Burac posits that Péguy confused this verse (40) with verse 84.

Politics wanted us to be one or the other. Hugo's policy notably wanted him to be one. Hugo had to be, for Hugo it was necessary to be a free-thinker. This *un dieu [a god]*, this little d is a good point, a surveillance that Hugo's policy exercised over his genius. The genius was naturally mystical. It's a bad trick, a (very) little bad trick that politics wanted to play on the genius, politics on the mystic, the politician on the man of genius, on the poet and the mystic. Or don't we even hit so much, not even that: maybe it's just a stroke of typography, a little trick of typography, maybe it's just a *shell*: there are so many.

A king was singing below, above was dying a God.

This Hugo, who in his career has put so many Great Capital Letters where it should not have been: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, Reason, Justice, Law and the rest, for once he had to put one, the politician got frightened, he balked at this great capital letter. He reared up.

Matthew takes not the genealogy but the very generation of Jesus, so to speak, by the foot. By the base. Since Abraham, who was the second Adam. No longer just a carnal Adam, created, tempted, lost, driven out, father of all men, but a second carnal Adam, begotten, elected, chosen father of a chosen people. Matthew places himself at this point of election, at this point of origin, from one origin at a time, carnal and spiritual together. *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham*. Starting from this point of origin; of carnal origin; of spiritual origin; origin of election it goes down the time:

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

Abraham begot Isaac. And Isaac begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Judas and his brethren.

And Judas begot Phares and Zera of Thamar. And Phares begot Esron. And Esron begot Aram.

And Aram begot Aminadab. And Aminadab begot Naasson. And Naasson begot Salmon.

And Salmon begot Booz of Rahab. And Booz begot Obed of Ruth. And Obed begot Jesse.

And Jesse begot David the king. And David the king begot Solomon, of her that had been the wife of Urias.

And Solomon begot Roboam. And Roboam begot Abia. And Abia begot Asa.

And Asa begot Josaphat. And Josaphat begot Joram. And Joram begot Ozias.

And Ozias begot Joatham. And Joatham begot Achaz. And Achaz begot Ezechias.

And Ezechias begot Manasses. And Manasses begot Amon. And Amon begot Josias.

And Josias begot Jechonias and his brethren in the transmigration of Babylon.

And after the transmigration of Babylon, Jechonias begot Salathiel. And Salathiel begot Zorobabel.

And Zorobabel begot Abiud. And Abiud begot Eliacim. And Eliacim begot Azor.

And Azor begot Sadoc. And Sadoc begot Achim. And Achim begot Eliud.

And Eliud begot Eleazar. And Eleazar begot Mathan. And Mathan begot Jacob.

And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

So all the generations, from Abraham to David, are fourteen generations. And from David to the transmigration of Babylon, are fourteen generations: and from the transmigration of Babylon to Christ are fourteen generations.

Now the generation of Christ was in this wise.¹¹⁸

It is therefore a carnal generation, but it is an essentially Christian carnal generation.

¹¹⁸ Matthew 1:1-18. I used the 1899 Douay-Reims, while the original prints the Vulgate.

It is indeed a carnal generation, and which is only too carnal; in one way ; in our opinion; for it passes through crimes of the flesh, or at least it receives the closest reflection of crimes of the flesh. A neighborhood, an immediate reflection. An alliance, an affinity, a confinement, a marriage; a connectedness; the most immediate. More than that, to tell the truth, it goes through at least a crime of the flesh. And undoubtedly one of the most atrocious in history, that no story has ever left us. Literally, precisely to consider only the carnal, only the carnal filiation, carnally it passes exactly by this straight wire, by the filiation, by the wire of this greatest crime of the flesh. For it is not only the generation of Ruth and Boaz, it is not even only the generation of Eliakim and of the crimes, of the Racinian crime, of the ambush of Joad; it passes, or very near, so near that it really passes, it passes through the crimes of kings. Matthew, in his great loyalty, in this sort of typical peasant probity that he has, of rustic and calm simplicity, Matthew does not hide it from us. It's not just King Solomon. *Ex ea quae flees Uriae*. This line of kings generally criminal, carnally criminal, criminally carnal, incessantly recommencing criminals, against whom, for whom God had not too many, if he had enough, of all his prophets. We usually don't pay attention to it. This lineage, this carnal generation is so simple in Matthew, this linear generation, so simply exposed, so simply as it unfolds, as it parades, that in this linear series the mind does not stop at certain names, at names close to who we pass, to names *by which* we pass. And it is not only. It's not just Eliakim (and Joad). It's not just Solomon and David. *Ex ea quae flees Uriae*, honest Matthew does not hide it from us.

We must say it, the carnal lineage of Jesus is frightening. Few men, *other* men, have perhaps had so many criminal ancestors, and such criminals. Especially so carnally criminal. This is partly what gives the mystery of the Incarnation all its value, all its depth, a frightening remoteness. All his outburst, all his load of humanity. Carnal. At least in part, and in large part.

He places himself, the peasant Matthew, so crudely truthful, at the point of origin, carnal, temporal, to Abraham, this second Adam, carnal, spiritual, of choice. Starting from there he calmly follows time, he descends calmly, quietly time, he unwinds, he unwinds a thread, he constitutes, he gives, he presents a lineage, a race, a linear series. This series will have two

times: David, Abraham. It will have three periods, the *transmigration* of Babylon being an epoch. It is a filiation, it all begins quietly at the origin and follows, and descends the order of time. It begins at the beginning, follows the order, ends at the end, reaches the culmination, reaches the crowning, completes itself at the completion. We follow with him this slope, this vertical line, this generation so simply, so linearly descending. But it's a carnal Christian generation. This Matthew was Christian. That is to say a spiritually carnal generation; carnal of election; eternal temporal.

On the contrary, Luke makes an extraction. *On the contrary*, I mean that it works, that it goes in the opposite direction. One proceeds, the other recedes. Placing himself at Jesus, and even at the aged Jesus, *beginning as if he was thirty years old*, he makes a vertical ascent, as if even in a more linear way, an ascent of a people, an ascent of extraction of carnal filiation. Starting from Jesus, he will seek Jesus, the temporal people of Jesus, right down to the first Adam, the Adam of flesh. He goes back in time. He ascends the temporal people. It performs like a search, a request, a vertical carnal rise:

And Jesus himself was beginning about the age of thirty years; being (as it was supposed) the son of Joseph, who was of Heli, who was of Mathat,

Who was of Levi, who was of Melchi, who was of Janne, who was of Joseph,

Who was of Mathathias, who was of Amos, who was of Nahum, who was of Heshi, who was of Nagge,

Who was of Mahath, who was of Mathathias, who was of Semei, who was of Joseph, who was of Juda,

Who was of Joanna, who was of Reza, who was of Zorobabel, who was of Salathiel, who was of Neri,

Who was of Melchi, who was of Addi, who was of Cosan, who was of Helmadan, who was of Her,

Who was of Jesus, who was of Eliezer, who was of Jorim, who was of Mathat, who was of Levi,

*Who was of Simeon, who was of Judas, who was of Joseph, who was of Jona, who was of **Eliakim**,*

***Who** was of Melea, who was of Menna, who was of Mathatha, who was of Nathan, **who was of David**,*

***Who** was of Jesse, who was of Obed, **who was of Booz**, who was of Salmon, who was of Naasson,*

Who was of Aminadab, who was of Aram, who was of Esron, who was of Phares, who was of Judas,

***Who was of Jacob, who was of Isaac**, who was of Abraham, who was of Thare, who was of Nachor,*

Who was of Sarug, who was of Ragau, who was of Phaleg, who was of Heber, who was of Sale,

*Who was of Cainan, who was of Arphaxad, **who was of Sem, who was of Noe**, who was of Lamech,*

***Who was of Mathusale, who was of Henoch**, who was of Jared, who was of Malaleel, who was of Cainan,*

*Who was of Henos, **who was of Seth**, who was of Adam, who was of God.¹¹⁹*

Ex ea quae fuit Uriae; Adam qui fuit Dei, it must be admitted that the verb *sum* has singular fortunes; in this Latin; especially in the third person singular of the past tense of its indicative. *Adam who was of God*. I know of nothing more poignant than this long vertical line, this singular parade of names and Jews of whose memory, and even in reality, we know only a few; and I was wrong to mark these few with typography; they must be ignored in this carnal sequence, they must be like the others, they must be confused, they must not be seen. What makes the unique beauty of this list is precisely this modest, this obscure homogeneity; all of the same rank, which is the

¹¹⁹ Luke 3:23-38.

rank of father and the rank of son; paternity, parentage; father, son, father, son, all the same; all the same obscure greatness; all like each other; this long procession of names and men where we can salute only a few, the famous, who intellectually, spiritually fill, seem to fill memory and history. Some very great personages, (historical so to speak), two or three kings, or more,

A king sang below, above a god died.

Some half-famous, and filling all the innumerable crowd of obscure ones. But as it is a carnal link, a descent, a carnal generation all these obscure ones are no less necessary, are no less indispensable, do not count less than the famous, the dark links do not count no less than the famous links, than the illustrious links, since it is a carnal chain,

A race rose there like a long chain.

This carnal chain, this chain of race, Luc takes it, the doctor Luc, unlike Matthew, but it's the same chain. On the contrary, he takes it, that is to say in the opposite direction, Matthieu lowers it, Luke (re)raises it, but it's the same chain.

Matthew lowers time, Luc raises it. But it's the same time. Matthew begins by laying down the *Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham*. He places himself in Abraham. Then he descends from cascade to cascade, from rank to rank, he deduces from father to son, from carnal generation to carnal generation. Luke, on the contrary, places himself in Jesus, and not only in Jesus, but in Jesus *beginning about when he was thirty years old*, and situating himself there, starting from there, going up from son to father, *who flees, who flees*, from carnal generation to carnal generation, from grade to grade it goes back to the first Adam, who fled God. What mysterious carnal filiation there is in the very first Adam, in the creation of the first Adam, in the carnal creation of the carnal Adam, what thus there is of carnality in the *Pater Noster* itself, in the *Our **Father***, and that it is indeed a question of a real father, a father for good, all this mystery is already, marvelously collected, in this *which flees* coming continuously, without anything distinguishes, without anything separating it, in a continuous

series, in a homogeneous series after these innumerable *which flees*, without anything distinguishing it from them. without anything separating it, by this identical, homogeneous term coming in a continuous series after so many other terms, after so many same terms, after so many other same terms, by what in continuous crowning of the continuous series of all these others. Nothing distinguishes him, except that he is the last, that he is the supreme; that there is none after.

Matthew's generation is as it were. Placed first in Abraham, it descends from grade to grade as if following the laws of gravity. Of a material heaviness, of a carnal heaviness. Naturally heavy. It is historic. It follows the thread of the event, the meaning of the event, the thread of the race. It follows the movement of history. It takes Its time. The story took it well. It follows the passage of time. It is binary. Each name appears twice. Like son, like father. *Qui filius, idem pater. Qui genitus, idem genuit.* He proceeds, he dies. Luke recedes. Luke goes back. Luke regresses. It's like a judicial inquiry that he is pursuing. It is like an investigation, a justice operation, a recovery of justice. A request. It goes up; it continues like an inquisition, a search going up step by step. A requisition. Starting from Jesus, whom he has, he goes up the thread to the last term, to the first, to the first author, to the first father. It is a search, a request, an ascending requisition. It is a claim of paternity. Starting from Jesus, whom it holds, it goes back to the point of origin. It is in more of a hurry. It climbs. It (re)climbs from rank to rank, greeting the great, the known, passing by strangers, treating them all equally, princes and poor people, kings and shepherds, criminals and poor honest people, greeting the some, saluting the others, also with a single nod, with just one, with a simple flight, for there is a time. Going up this Jacob's ladder of a linear series;

As Jacob slept, as Judith slept.

It is at a time. Each heir is quoted only once, by the ministry of that *which flees*. Every blood heir. Every *prince of the blood*. Every heir to the temporal race. Temporal blood, carnal blood and eternal blood. *Ut putabatur filius Joseph*, with a single nod, as if curt, he will therefore salute the illustrious and the obscure.

Kings and shepherds are of the same rank there,

Eliakim, under the shadow, under the arm, under the shadow of the arm of that sinister Joad, under the shadow of the cloak, Eliakim who, king, having become king, was, I think, to assassinate the son of the high priest, his boyfriend, his little comrade Zecharias, then become high priest himself; this little altar boy, this little future, this little Racinian already criminal; the crimes of David, the greatnesses of David, David the criminal king, David the adulterer king, David the psalmist king, and victorious king; the race of David; the blood of David; he will be born of the seed of David; he was born of the race of David. And before David, Solomon, the crimes and the splendors of Solomon, and the temple. Oriental sumptuousness. Boaz, who was a sort of great landowner. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that is to say, going up, with him, and as if upside down, Jacob, Isaac, Abraham. Shem and Noah. Methuselah, Enoch. Seth, Adam.

A double time, a time, descending, ascending, and although they generally do not go by the same names, except when they are illustrious names, and again, (and we don't really care, and even to know s they go through the same number of names for the corresponding part), it is all the same the same route that they both follow. In these two senses, in its two opposite senses. It's a carnal road, it's a carnal sonship, but it's a Christian carnal road, it's a Christian carnal sonship. Whether it is an ascent, whether it is a descent, it is always *the book of the generation* of **JESUS CHRIST**. It is always the spiritual, temporal eternal, Christian carnal advent of Jesus Christ. It is always, it is already two Christians who placed after Jesus, doing their office, consider, contemplate the incarnation from the side of the miracle, from the side of eternity; this insertion of the eternal in the temporal, of the spiritual in the carnal, it is two Christians who consider it, who contemplate it from the side of the eternal, from the side of the spiritual, situating themselves in the eternal, in the spiritual, coming from the eternal, from the spiritual; in a word, doing their job, their office as Christians. It's always a story that happened to Jesus. And it is always an advent much more than an event.

In the singular Hugo, it is a story come to earth. A story that came to the flesh, a culmination, a crowning of the flesh. Christians, by their very office, consider, contemplate the incarnation. But out of office they also only consider it, they naturally contemplate it only with a consideration, a Christian contemplation. The pagans, (the Jews), by their very office do not consider it, naturally, do not look at it, do not see it, ignore it. So we don't have the counterpart. To have the counterpart (to consideration, to Christian contemplation, a consideration, a pagan contemplation of the incarnation), it would be necessary for a pagan, breaking his office, to have the unforeseen idea, the incredible idea of considering, contemplating the incarnation, from its side, from the pagan side. It would be necessary that by an exception, by a miracle, a pagan, making an exception, remaining a pagan all the same, breaking his office but only breaking it on this particular point, on a single point, on this point, had the implausible idea to consider, he pagan, remaining pagan, to contemplate the mystery of the incarnation. If a pagan did, this, staying on the pagan side, coming from the pagan side, staying in a situation, coming from a pagan situation, then, but only then, by some unknown stroke of luck, then we might have a counterpart, the counterpart.

It is this incredible wager that Hugo took up; it is this wager that he has won. Which he naturally held; which he naturally won; effortlessly; without shooting; in an amplitude, in a movement, in a style, in a unique plenitude, itself improbable, in a kind of balancing of a rhythm, of an incredible happiness, of an incredible fecundity. Itself unique and utterly implausible. In a curve of fullness, of a unique movement. Unheard of. Once achieved, once succeeded, once obtained, one does not know how; that never happened, that will never happen again. It needed, in fact, firstly a pagan, secondly a great pagan, and thirdly that this pagan and this great pagan, who came after Jesus, living more or less in a Christian world, believing himself perhaps more or less sincerely more or less Christian, had the idea, *received the vocation*, witness from the outside, extrinsic witness, to consider, to contemplate, as a pagan, one of the central mysteries of the Christian mystery.

It was this challenge that he took up, it was this wager that he took all out once.

It is indeed without any effort, without any exercise, without any trickery that he was pagan. He was doubly pagan. It was his very nature, his genius. Negatively and positively. First, (and it is useful to say, it must be said for a modern, for a man who lived in modern times, where so many people are who do not believe, for a man who lived in modern times, in the modern world, temporally among the moderns), first in that he was in no way a Christian. Second, in that he was pagan. Naturally, of a pagan race.

Hugo was never a Christian. He was not. And naturally even less, if possible, in the first period of his life, in the Legitimist, Orleanist, Royalist, officially Catholic (officially Christian) period, than in the rest of his life, in the second period, in the Napoleonic, Caesarian, (revolutionary), democratic, republican period. Vaguely pantheistic, if you will. It's always like that. On the one hand, Christian is what he was certainly the least. He was not at all. One even almost wonders how he succeeded, how he could not have been so at all. On the other hand, he was less of a Christian I believe than anyone in modern times (where so many men have been more or less so, who did not believe it, where so many men have not, who believed it to be, or who said so.) It has not even received any of those innumerable Christian infiltrations, almost inevitable even today, it has not been enlightened with any of those chiaroscuros, d None of these scattered glimmers, none of these Christian illuminations which for all intents and purposes maintain in the modern world, for all intents and purposes, in modern times, if not the reign of the reign of God, at least wrinkled of the reign of God, the maintenance, tradition, idea, preservation of the idea of the reign of God. He was by no means a Christian. Even less than one might reasonably suppose. And so to speak intellectually to calculate it. He had no Christian heart, (he who professionally, so to speak, made so many prayers, (in literature). (It is true that he had no pagan heart either, since no doubt he had no heart at all, but he had *the heathen genius*).

He had a modern heart, which is a second way of saying he didn't. And he had the pagan genius. Ancient, natural, (mythological and pantheistic); anciently, naturally pagan.

Second, he was a very great pagan. I mean by that, so to speak technically, (and it was, it's a second challenge cutting on the first, mounting on the first, overlapping, it was like a second miracle, like a carnal miracle rising, reinforcing on the first miracle), by which I mean a poet placed, temporally, carnally located as close to the carnal source of creation as the greatest poets of pagan antiquity. There is properly the second miracle, the carnal miracle, overlapping on the first. Falling back on the first. That a man whom we almost knew, if we had not been born in the provinces, whom we could know, whom we could touch, whose big white beard we still see in the last images, in the images of the end, in apotheoses on the walls of the rooms of all the houses, and the big eyelids, especially the two lower eyelids, as if a little swollen (he had looked at the world so much), a man whom we followed for eleven years, for twelve years, I mean we historically, biographically, chronologically doubled for twelve years, whom we supposedly saw buried under the Third Republic, (the newspapers were full of his burial; we were already in high school, sixth grade, and I see myself still seriously arguing in court, like a serious kid, about *what he was worth*: already I was a serious kid; a poor and serious child; worried; I must be forgiven for the fact that I am still a kid, but that I am not so serious; I was already madly fanatical about it, especially even more so I believe because I had just learned for the excellent M. Guerrier *Moïse sur le Nil*, on entering sixth grade at Easter:

*“My sisters, the wave is cooler at the first lights of the day!”*¹²⁰

already I was always defending him; we were not yet in a good fifth of our master M. Simore; and there are already twenty-five years, and the royalties will not run more than twenty-five years, not even); twenty-five little twenty-five years old; (and these second twenty-five years unfortunately decrease every day, and the others increase); that a man whom we have seen

¹²⁰ Hugo, *Odes et ballades*, IV, III, “Moïse sur le Nil”, v. I.

(*Fit, we have all seen him* ¹²¹), whom we have all seen guarded, watched nights and nights by soldiers armed with torches in that unforgettable funeral wake, in that unforgettable vigil of arms, in this unforgettable (pagan) vigil, in this unforgettable (pagan) ceremony of the Arc de Triomphe, on these unforgettable evenings, on these serene evenings of May or June, of a May or the beginning of June, and it there have never been such beautiful evenings.

*I like serene and beautiful evenings, I like evenings,*¹²²

that a man whom we have seen buried in the Pantheon (and finally we have at least seen Leconte de Lisle,¹²³ who was his successor), and himself, if we had been in Paris only, by chance, instead of being in Orleans, born in Paris, brought up, brought up in Paris, he himself we saw, he and his burial, was one of the greatest pagan poets that there ever was in the world; and if not in heart, at least in genius, one of the greatest poets, one of the greatest pagans, that there ever was; that a man who was a senator of the Third Republic, who wore a top hat like everyone else, when necessary, and an umbrella when it rained was at the same time in modern times a man located so close to the carnal source, if not closer, a man who drank from the hollow of his hand, at the source of carnal creation, as near, if not closer than the greatest of the Ancients, than the oldest of the heathen, and than the First of the First, this is one of those challenges that France holds, and that only she can hold, that only she can carry, this is one of those gifts that from time to time she brings to the universe, which only she can provide; what she does to the world, for the amazement of the world; one would almost be tempted, one would almost be tempted to say: It's one of those fantasies that happens from time to time, and that alone in the world, alone in the universe, can happen. It's one of those challenges, it's one of those challenges. Let us French people hold on. This is one of those contributions that we make from time to time in the regime of the dowry of

¹²¹ Hugo, *Les Chants du crépuscule*, V, "Napoléon II", I, v. 23.

¹²² Hugo, *Les Feuilles d'automne*, XXXV, "Soleils couchants", v.1.

¹²³ de Lisle was elected to the Académie française after after Hugo's death to take his spot.

humanity. These are our contributions, our royal endowments. This is one of those strokes of fortune, one of those strokes of genius (one of those strokes of grace), that we French not only succeed, that we obtain; that from time to time we put in the common of the universe. You have to get used to this idea that when Hugo looked at the sun and the moon, the moon and the stars, the sky and the sea, the sky and the earth, the earth and the sea, the sea and the coast, the sands of dune,

*Bloom the blue thistle of the sands,*¹²⁴

when he looked at the man and the woman, the child; the plain and the forest; the wall and the house; the plain and the harvest; the house and the trellis; the vine and the house: the wheat and the bread; the wheel and the car; the bread on the table and the wine in the glasses (his competence went to the limits of carnal bread, of temporal wine; what a Christian poet he would have been, if he had been a Christian), when he watched the beggar pass on the road, when he saw any soldiers pass he enjoyed it as much, he seized as much, he took possession of it as much, he looked, he saw with a gaze as young, as fresh, as unworn, as new, as unblunted, as indolent, as temporally ageless, as ageless in the world, temporal, (despite his big eyelids), he embraced with such a new embrace, he seized with such a new grasp, he embraced the universe, carnal, with a carnal embrace, with such a new embrace, the whole earth, *orbem terrarum*,¹²⁵ and the river Ocean, which itself embraces the world, with a kind of first embrace as new, as inexperienced as Hesiod and Homer, as Aeschylus, more inexperienced, more untested than Pindar. He ate his bread, (the bread of the body), with a better appetite, and his leg of beef, he drank his wine with a better heart than a companion of Achilles, (much more than a companion of Ulysses). This is one of our French tricks. He saw the enclosure and the espalier. He knew how to see a tree. Every vessel, every steamboat, was a ship to him. And he knew directly that the sea is unlabourable. Which means you can't plow it. I know very well that all this, this unique gift, this genius was

¹²⁴ Hugo, *Les Contemplations*, "Paroles sur la dune", V, XIII.

¹²⁵ Cf. Homer, *The Iliad*, XIV. 245-246.

generally drowned in heaps of literature(s), in accumulations of talent. This pagan mystique was consumed with politics, devoured by one, several, at least two, a double politics. This ancient, this unique genius, this unique pagan, this man of unique genius was ravaged by at least one double politician: a politician of politics, who made him a democrat, and a politician of literature, who made him a romantic. This genius was rotten with talent(s). But it is very difficult for a man who has received (on deposit) such a genius not to sometimes escape; and sometimes not realizing. He had received this unique gift, among all men he had received this gift, younger than the ancients before the ancients he had received this gift of seeing creation as if it came out of the hands of the Creator this morning. It must be admitted that he never escaped, that he never realized as in *Booz endormi*. It was said that the people who had given so many heroes and so many saints, countless, so many citizens and so many Christians, so many righteous, so many martyrs,

*And Vonde with impassable folds,*¹²⁶

so many poets and so many artists, so many inventors, (so many scholars), and who would tirelessly give, was to give, would tirelessly give so many others, an indefatigable sap, an indefatigable rising and rising race, so many warriors and victims would be that too, so many thinkers and philosophers; the greatest tragic poet; the greatest thinker; the greatest philosopher, (not to speak of the present century); would also be the one who forty centuries away, out of his time, out of his place; irrelevant; forty centuries apart, thirty and forty centuries behind would give one of the greatest pagan poets there has ever been in the created world.

All that, my dear Halévy, was to tell you. That from the first time one comes into contact with this extraordinary text, this *Booz endormi*, from the oldest years, from the lowest first classes of high school, and then every time you reread it, which is always the first, the first time you read it (precisely in part, in large part, because of this novelty that we were saying, because of this firstness), all the times especially the time that one rereads it, that one reads

it in one's memory (where it remains intact, where it remains new, where it remains whole, first), all the times that one recites it and let us recite it to ourselves and I recite it to you, we are immediately warned by a secret warning, we are instantly seized by a shock, a dull, sudden shock, a sudden revelation, we are instantly penetrated, suddenly obvious, you instantly feel that it is quite different, that it is much more and infinitely other than a text. I believe you, my friend. It's the only counterpart we have. This is the only report we have. It is the only replica that we have in the pagan world of what are in the Christian world the considerations, the contemplations of the incarnation. This is the only example we have, and doubtless ever will have, of what a pagan prophecy *would be*, if those two words could go together.

As common Dreyfusards, Halévy, we remember very well the feelings we had for the *law of dispossession*. We know very well, as on the first day, although we no longer say it, who was for and who was *against*, who dishonored themselves *for* (all the radicals in particular, minus three or four, minus one perhaps in the end only, who was Vazeille), who honored himself *against*, who was reporter for it in the Chamber and in the Senate, which two great senators among others honored themselves against, Bérenger, Waldeck-Rousseau. But you are right, Garnier, this law of dispossession was nothing, was nothing, in comparison with this law of the universal dispossession of mysticism by politics.

A poet too, a poet within, an included poet can be dispossessed by his politics, by one or more politics. By its political policy. By its literature policy. A genius can be not only eaten away, not only ravaged, but dispossessed by a talent, by the talent which parasitizes him, by the talent which eats away at him. By the miserable talent that devours him. By the ordinary talent that accompanies it. Which surrounds it. Which circumvents it, invades it and floods it. By his ordinary talent. What is perhaps most prodigious in Corneille, which makes him not only the greatest tragic (poet), but a unique case, is perhaps this unique purity of genius, this total incapacity of talent that made him fall perfectly flat when the genius was not there. This is perhaps what is most beautiful in a sense and greatest in this greatest of all tragedies. This incapacity, when the genius was not there, this total, organic

involuntary, this lack of organization to know how to do it, to have a talent, to have talent, to substitute for genius the insubstitutable means of talent.

Even in a man like Hugo, a finished politician, rotten with politics, genius sometimes defends itself. He often defends himself. Politics itself helps in this, calculation, by a curious outcome, by a curious return. A man like Hugo, an old politician, poet, politician, realizes very well, at least from time to time, half instinct, half intelligence, half understanding; half agreement; that it is still genius that pays the most, and even at bottom it is perhaps only genius that pays; that it is the best investment, perhaps the only one; that it is ultimately genius that gives the volume, the basic surface, the base of support; that the parasite would be nothing without the parasitized; that false coins would not take if there were no real ones.

That it is the good coins in a sense that authenticate the bad ones, that it is the true coins, so to speak, that guarantee the fake ones. Who make all the value, if one can say, the value of circulation, of the false ones.

We began to grasp what this extraordinary text, *Booz endormi*, is a bit like, when we saw that it is essentially a recapture. A text, a work of genius recapturing talent, out side of talent. The unique fruit of recapture, of a unique recapture, of a unique operation of recapture. A recapture so sovereign, so masterful, so sure of itself that it does not even ignore talent, that it does not even disregard it, that it does not even fall flat, in its own absences, like in the great honesty of Corneille, but that he plays it, on the contrary constantly, that he plays it as if he were sovereign, with a certainty, with an ease, with an incredible impudence. Let him have fun. *The king is having fun*. The king performs a unique recapture operation. A kind of confiscation. He seizes the regalian right. *Booz endormi* is full of talent. But in what state this talent is reduced. In a state of exercise, in a state of flexibility, in a state of servitude. Almost in a state of contempt from too much success. It is played, constantly played, turned around, turned, diverted; rolled, wrapped, developed. It is truly more than liberation. It's revenge, it's the sovereignty of genius. Talent is constantly a plaything there. A ball, a toy which the genius juggles.

The genius juggles it to such an extent that one would take pity on this poor talent.

Be convinced that when Hugo saw the beggar on the road, (I say Hugo in his times of recovery), he saw him for what he is, really what he really is, the ancient beggar, the ancient supplicant, the supplicant parallel to the ancient road. When he looked at the marble slab of one of our fireplaces, or the cemented brick of one of our modern fireplaces, he saw it for what it is: the stone of the hearth. The ancient hearthstone. When he looked at the door from the street, and the step of the door, which is generally of hewn stone, on this hewn stone he clearly distinguished the ancient line, the sacred threshold, for it is the same line. It's the same threshold. Clytemnestre has just laid the Odéon carpet there. And Agamemnon's feet will not touch the threshold. Be persuaded that a senator, when he attended the sessions of the Senate, did not see him what he was, what this assembly was: the council of elders: Creon has just summoned it. And there was a great misfortune in the city: the War, the Commune. Let us follow this shock which grips us with any reading of *Boaz*, with any recitation, which is a whole first reading, which is a whole first recitation. Let's follow this take. Instant. Let us take this hold. Let us listen, let us follow this warning which does not deceive, this apprehension which never deceives. There had been, and it was already a great marvel, one of our greatest French marvels, there had been several very great biblical poems, literally biblical, very truly biblical, of the very first biblical grandeur carried out, conducted until the full accomplishment of biblical greatness not by Jews but by Christians, finally by Frenchmen. And not only *Moses*. And not just Samson. And not only *Dalila*. Vigny, Lamartine. I'm not talking about Leconte de Lisle, constantly crushed under his archaeology, constantly lost, constantly squeezed, constantly tracked down in his archaeology. But through Hugo's ministry, on this unique day, in this poem more than a poem, since there is more than a poem, we have this unique (at least temporal) miracle, this unique double miracle: First, in the first degree, thirty and forty centuries after Homer and the origins of Homer one of the greatest carnal pagan (and biblical) poems that there ever were. Thirty and forty centuries after Moses and the antecedents of Moses. And as this man lived all the same in his time, lived all the same twenty centuries after Jesus Christ, *post Christum*

natum, as he lived more or less in a Christian world, as he believed more or less sincerely to be or to have been a Christian , secondly, in the second degree this poem, pagan among all, temporal, carnal among all, (but perhaps, but above all for what mysterious reason), this eminent poem eminently pagan, eminently temporal, eminently carnal, full of the harvest, carnal wheat, vine and carnal wine, full of the earth and the belly carries precisely, comes back, intersects precisely to do, to be the only pagan view that we have of the mystery of the incarnation, of the mystery from carnal and temporal insertion, finally the only gaze coming from the pagan side, from the pagan situation, the only consideration, the only carnal pagan, anterior, earthly contemplation, all earthy and all ancient. Vegetal like a trunk. Quite full as of an accomplishment, a crowning moment of temporal outpouring.

A gaze full of wheat from the barns.

It follows that this poem, more than a poem, falls back to the second degree, overlaps with being an earlier, later testimony, a testimony in advance, twenty centuries late, the only pagan *testimony* that we have of this essentially, centrally Christian operation. And to be no longer only twenty centuries away but thirty and forty a biblical testimony, a (biblical) prophecy. And so to finally be together literally the only pagan prophecy we have; the only true, only real pagan prophecy that we have; neither, not only a Jewish prophecy, which is the state, the *habitus* of prophecies, their place; but an ancient, Latin and Greek and ancient prophecy of central Christian operation. The only look we have from the world of the city on the world of salvation. And the only time even rigorously that You can put together without them swearing, without them contradicting each other invincibly, without fighting against each other together, without screaming to be mated, these two words: *prophecy* — *pagan*.

It's impossible, it's undeniable, I pity anyone who doesn't feel instantly that that day happened in Hugo's head, (with a deaf instantaneousness, deep, immediate, direct), in his temporal head. of Hugo a completely different operation, infinitely other, infinitely more than the invoice, than the fabrication (or the fiction), than the making even of a very great poem.

(And naturally I confess, I am ready to be the first to confess that we are naturally very far from having exhausted its deep recesses), (from having deepened, exhausted its mystery). (Because what we have just done, my poor children, is never anything but an analysis and several times we have felt the panting of analysis pass). I pity the one who would not feel the blow, who would not receive the blow struck by this poem. Let's be clear, I don't pity him only as a literary critic, as a literary historian, as a literary reader, which is only of relative importance. The question is precisely not to know if, but to know that this poem does not only go beyond the history of literature, that it does not only go beyond the history of letters. It is a reference, a unique transfer from the pagan to the Christian, from the greatest pagan to the central Christian. I pity him as a Christian, as having no sense of the sacred. I am very struck that one of the most profound Christians I know, one of the Catholics of the most authentic lineage, having this very year to speak in the *Journal de Coutances* of a *mystery* which had appeared in Christianity, and wishing to speak of it no not so much as a critic and as a literary historian as as a Catholic and as a Christian, which is the only way that I recognize of speaking of it, has been directly led to make a reference, so to speak, preliminary to this *Booz endormi*. Not a literary reference. But a reference of the order of the sacred. It is true that I know this friend of twenty years; and that the sacraments are for him, provide him with nourishment (as the pope has so wisely reminded him); and not devotions, a stupefaction, a blunting, a dulling of the tip of the bud of the inner life.

That Hugo himself, the author, himself felt that what was going through his head that day was something out of the ordinary is what is beyond doubt when one only knows how to look at a text . This curve, this ease of pagan pride. This easy plenitude. This swelling of his power. This tone as advantageous. And almost provocative. This curve of pride. This advantage taken, removed. This kind of very special tone. This movement of an easy river, the Loire and the victorious Rhine. As he had no Christian feeling, he had no counterpart. So pagan pride, the pride of a victorious domination flowed that day in a bed of plenitude, in a bed of ease, in a bed of facility. That he felt that day that he was rocking a whole world, Hugo, (he was not so stupid, when it came to his career, his successes, his talent, his glory, and especially when it was about his genius), that this day was for him a day of

choice certainly unique, that it had occurred this day, this unique day, for Hugo, to the advantage of Hugo, (we don't know why, but it's always like this), we don't know what contamination between the kingdom of genius and the kingdom of grace, we don't know what flow, what effusion (spiritually carnal), what derivation, what an overflow from the kingdom of grace into the kingdom of genius; that something extraordinary had happened in his head that day; that he had perhaps been chosen for who knows what; by a nominative decree; in any case for something serious; for something unique; for something big; and surely for something successful; for a unique, for a great, for a serious success; that it was necessary to take advantage of it; that it was always taken; that on that day he reached a peak; which he might not, certainly not have achieved alone; that such happiness does not always happen; that perhaps they only happen once; that they may never even arrive; that we must therefore take advantage of it, and give ourselves to it; that then we will see; that afterwards we don't know what can happen; that afterwards you don't know what life is made of: I don't want it as proof, I don't want it as a signature. I only want as proof of this this pagan pride, of which this poem is full, of which this poem overflows, of which this poem abounds, this ease, this carnal plenitude, this game, this kind of amusement, this constant challenge in the expression itself. Never had a river had so much fun. Never had there been such a full-sided river. This kind of impudence and government and haughtiness in ease. And I only want this *Jérimadeth* as a signature, this enormous joke, this admirable insolence; this meaning made *to all, present and to come*, that this time he had entered into the fullness and the rights of creation. Until I was shown *Jérimadeth* on a map in an authentic atlas of the Holy Land, I see in the forging of this name one of those insolences, one of those meanings, one of those boldnesses which surpass all. And which therefore mean more than anything. And as he had every chance that day, the first two syllables were very Hebrew, because they were also the first two syllables of Jericho, which is, I think, authentic. His word, his name went like Jericho. What, painfully choosing a name among those that exist, laboriously, what servitude, what flattening, what submission to history and to geography. What baseness. And then it's not convenient. The names that exist are not always exactly the ones we need, those we want, those we need. The

geography is so badly done. The proof is that Blanchard no longer dares to come see me. And then, looking for a real name that goes well, that makes the rhyme in advance in the atlases, basically it's also faked, (if not more), and in short it's much more in bad faith than to forge everything quietly for rhyme a name to rhyme. And while we forge to forge it all. *When one is Danube*, one must not be embarrassed. There is more bad faith in cheating, in faking to take a real name, since in short this name we do not take it naturally, we do not take it casually, as it comes, as it presents itself, we do not take it at random, but we seek it insidiously with the ulterior motive of finding it precisely as we need it to be. Since it is necessary to choose, given that it is necessary to choose, we do not even take the essential name, the one that would represent the most, the one that would represent at the center. But we take the one that rhymes. So might as well do it. Better do it. It's easier. It's more frank. It's straighter. Let us not descend to such baseness. Let us mark, signify our sovereign will. We are not only the masters of this hour. We are the masters of this word. Let us enjoy in full, let us give in full, this fortune which today we have. Let's not be fooled by geography, which doesn't have the names we want. Today we command, we dominate (since we produce), reality itself. Besides, haven't we heard that even geographers today totally despise nomenclature. We have the right to do at least like the geographers. Let's not be, let's not be made more geographers than geographers.

Victor-Marie, Count Hugo. Peer of France. Member of the Institute. He knew what a success weighs. He knew what such a triumph is worth. How precarious, momentary, instantaneous it was; that it was the triumph of a day; all the more uniquely precious; and that we had to take advantage of it while we were there. Because we are not there twice. Such a fortune is not given twice in a lifetime. He was paid in order to know it. Especially since he had missed so many times, that he would miss so many times what that day he had perhaps fortuitously obtained. Fortuitously, by strong fortune, by a stroke of luck. He knew well what it was to miss, and what it cost, and what it felt like. Hard experience had often taught him this, had often made him feel it. He had too much instinct, and even too much intelligence, especially too much control not to have felt, not to know all the times that he missed, that he had missed. But he also had too much not to feel, not to

know that this time it was there, that he wasn't missing. Since that was it, in this unexpected stroke of fortune, so long hoped for, so long awaited (so bitterly perhaps, so anxiously in the secret of the heart, of the pagan heart, of the carnal heart, of the ambitious heart), since Celt In short, there was no shortage of times, well, we would take some, for all the other times, for our whole life, and we would make the world see well, by the ministry of this *Jérivadeth*, by the greatest license that a poet can have. ever given, by this sovereign, by this incredible insolence, by the signification, by the declaration, by the proclamation of this *Jérivadeth*, we would let the world know that today indeed we would be paying for it and that we would dominated, that one held the world. That we would take it and give it to ourselves. *O cruel memory of its past glories.*¹²⁷ Bad memory, imperious memory of the glories missed so many times, memory ahead of the glories that he would miss, that he was perhaps going to miss so many more times (less times). Especially those two times he had missed, or was going to miss in the same vein. For this Boaz was definitely a ridge between the depressions of literature. This first time, in *Le Sacre de la Femme*, for the first Adam he had really thought he was touching, entering, he had really thought he felt the vein pass, the same vein. It had only been a flash:

However, Until now, it was Adam, Hairy ¹²⁸

And he had fallen back to rubbish, to heaps of literature down to the last excluded verse. Has habits, abundances, facilities. His *God invisible to the philosopher*, which immediately follows Boaz, is grotesque. His *first encounter of Christ with the tomb*, which immediately follows, is generally only an anticlerical epigram. As in all this desert, in all these stones of literature, in all these stones, in all this fasting, in these days and these days of fasting in the desert, this sudden, this full intoxication of the *Booz* is explained, bursts forth. In the pagan itself, in the pure pagan, to consider even purely the pagan vein and not even this insertion, this reference of the pagan on the Christian, in the pure pagan vein itself he was never to find a Boaz, (to

¹²⁷ Corneille, *Le Cid*, Act I, sc. IV, v. 245.

¹²⁸ Hugo, *La Légende des siècles*, v, v.1

consider only what is pagan in *Booz*, to consider only the pagan vein), not even in his great poems officially, professionally pagan, not even in *the Giant*, *the Titan*, *the Satyr*.¹²⁹

In this indecency, in this insolence, in this august nakedness, in this counting we can see, as a geologist sees, the different layers, the different foundations of his poem. He felt so strong, he concealed nothing of this disposition. Of this testimony. The welds are apparent, and we see very well how he needed this Celtic rhyme in *dait*. The first layer, the base, the horizontal support bar is certainly the culmination verse, the crowning verse, the last verse,

This golden sickle in the field of stars [étoiles].

The second layer, the stroke of genius but no longer perhaps of vision, is the other verse laid down; posed in all its grandeur; the discovery, perhaps not so much the first vision, the direct vision; naked vision; stripped; the find together, both made and sprung:

What a god, what a reaper of eternal summer [été]

And then, secondly, as a subsidiary:

Had, on leaving, negligently thrown away [jeté]

The different terrains, the different layers, the different strata appear very clearly, as in an honest geological section. He was so strong that day that he could even be honest. The rest must not be said to be filling, (filling him), but it is no longer articulation, framework. It is no longer organization and organ. It must therefore be said that it is filling. And not fullness, but the setting in fullness. It's almost a proliferation, it's a sedimentation, this kind of sedimentation that was specific to him. Finally verses like it did as much as he wanted, when things weren't bad. He would have done you until tomorrow morning:

¹²⁹ Three poems in *La Légende des siècles*.

*The stars dotted the deep and dark sky [sombre];
The thin, clear crescent among these shade flowers [fleurs de l'ombre]
Shone in the west.*

Immobile, half opening his eyes under his veils.

In this sediment, in this fat silt and *Ruth wondered* [*Ruth se demandait*, at the end of the stanza, announcing the decisive strophe, the coronal strophe, isolating it, cutting it too, leaving it suspended, suspended over our heads like a block, like a square mountain, was itself its indispensable cornerstone, rectangular, quadrangular, its hewn stone, its stone which does not move. It had to be like that, and like that in the rhyme at the end of the stanza. It is the cornerstone. It's all up to her. So there had to be this other rhyme in *dait*.

It would be necessary to have in typography as in geology colors to mark the different layers of such a construction, the foundations; the structure; what is primary, secondary, tertiary; what is flat and what is curved; what is horizontal and what smells; contour lines and terrain curves; isometries and planimetries; what is rock and what is humus, a deposit, a curve, a peat, a fertile mud.

All rested in Ur and in Jerimadeth;

The stars dotted the deep and dark sky [sombre];
The thin, clear crescent among these shade flowers [fleurs de l'ombre]
Shined in the west, **and Ruth wondered**, [Ruth se demandait

Motionless, half-opening its eyes under its veils.
*What a god, **what a reaper of eternal summer***
*Had, on leaving, **negligently thrown away***

A time.

This golden sickle in the field of stars.

We too, in the absence of colors, we have our hatchings. But we miss it. In particular, we need a stronger degree for the last line. For the sovereign plenitude, for the horizontal calm of this last verse.

Should we note, when we analyze a little in detail, that when the verses are not quite full and that even in the full verses all the force comes to the rhyme, as it should.

Should we finally go into the end of the work, into the last profession, into the last detail, point out this pushed parallelism, this singular conformity, more than conformity, identity of construction between this penultimate stanza and another *launching* stanza, a another *penultimate* stanza from the middle of the poem. An identity of structure, of striking framework. Oh oh are we also going to establish a *laboratory of French literature* rue de la Sorbonne. I put the two stanzas on the table in my laboratory. Here is the first, that of the linen, the penultimate; we may be starting to know:

*All rested in Ur and in Jerimadeth;
The stars dotted the deep and dark sky [sombre];
The thin, clear crescent among these shade flowers [fleurs de l'ombre]
Shined in the west, and Ruth wondered, [Ruth se demandait.*

And everything remains in the air.

Here is now the first of the two, the first test, the first model of the same structure, of the same frame exactly; the *other* penultimate, the first penultimate:

*As Jacob slept, as slept Judith,
Boaz, his eyes closed, lay under the foliage [feuillée];
Now, the gate of heaven having half-opened [entre-bâillée]
Above his head, a dream descended from it.*

And everything also remains in the air. It is also a stanza that announces, a stanza that opens. An entrance. An apparitor, a usher of a stanza.

Everything is there. It is a symmetry of construction, of use, of employment, of perfect destination. Pushed to the last detail. These are two twinned stanzas, *geminatae*, which correspond perfectly. The first announces the second, for those who have something sense of structure, the second

recalls the first. The first prepares the second, is an anticipated image of the second. It is indeed the same resonance, the same strike given to two beats.

Everything is there. The first horizontal verse, large, balanced on two proper nouns, the two proper nouns of the hemistich; one in hemistich, the other in rhyme:

All rested in Ur and Jerimadeth;

As Jacob slept, as Judith slept,

(and then it is impossible not to see how Jerimadeth, thus placed (I am not speaking of *Judith*) is Hebrew, when you think about it. Not only does it have the same beginning as *Jericho*. *Judith* Nothing is Jewish like a big capital *J* And it rhymes so wonderfully with all those beautiful Jewish names: (Josabeth), Japheth, (that of J; how right I was), Nazareth, Genesareth, Seth. (As we can clearly see that it is from the same family.)

The second unspecified verse: (from any of Victor Hugo):

The stars dotted the deep and dark sky;

Booz, eyes closed, was lying under the foliage ;

feminine rhymes. Heavy and long; trailing, trailing. Then on either side a piece of a verse and a half which on both sides creates a first suspension, a first degree, in the suspension, a first expectation:

The thin, clear crescent among these shade flowers Shone in the west,

Now, the door of heaven having opened ajar above his head.

Finally the cornerstone of a half-verse which creates a new expectation, which puts, which holds, which leaves everything in suspense, on second-degree expectation:

and Ruth wondered,

a dream descended.

finally the end of the end, the rich rhyme of a common noun with a proper noun, with supporting consonant; on supporting consonant; and the rhyme with this proper name, which is the last of the last, the last refinement, for a master rhymers, the rhyme with this proper name of a personal tense of the conjugation of a verb: *Judith, descendit; Jerimadeth,* asked. In both cases, (with a proper noun), third person singular (perfect or imperfect) indicative. Imperfect or past tense. The unexpected rhyme, or finally expected by dint of not being expected, the expected doubly unexpected rhyme; not at all that lazy rhyme expected, that lively rhyme which makes noun rhyme with noun, adjective with adjective, verb with verb, adverb with adverb.

Who will tell you the truth. Who will now reveal the secrets of the bill to you. For such were our serious Comic Relaxations. There are less serious ones. There are less wise ones. There are less crazy. Who will tell you about the plain, in front of another sunset, (there are so many), sad and red and big on the pond of Saclay, sad and long on the plain, on the stubble and on the wheat, in front, under a cloudy sky that will recite to you the great verses of rain and fine weather; the weather and how much time passes; temporal time and climatic time; *das Wetter* and *die Zeit*; — *tempus, tempestas atque temperies*:

*The sun set this evening in the clouds;
Tomorrow will come the storm, and the evening, and the night;
Then the dawn, and its clarity of obstructed vapours.
Then the nights, then the days, no time fleeing!*

*All these days will pass; they will pass buried
On the face of the seas, on the face of the mountains.
On rivers of silver, on forests where rolls
Like a confused hymn of the dead we love.*

*And the face of the waters, and the forehead of the mountains.
Wrinkled and unaged, and the evergreen woods
Will go rejuvenating; the river of the countryside
Will ceaselessly take to the mountains the flow that it gives to the seas.*

*But me, under each day bowing lower my head.
I pass, and, chilled under this joyous sun.
I'll be leaving soon, in the middle of the party.
Without anything missing from the immense and radiant world!*¹³⁰

April 1829. He was 27 years old. He wasn't quite ready to leave in the middle of the party. He passed, but he passed slowly. Fortunately, it cooled only gradually under this joyous sun. You said to me: These verses, these poems are precisely the poems of this country, of this Ile de France.

They were made for this very country. They are nourished by this country. From these landscapes. From these horizons. It was this country that he crossed on foot when he went to see Madame Drouet. She lived here or within twenty leagues in such a country, in such a castle, in such a house. For I know more verses and you know more history. And so we play the blind and the paralyzed. We noticed in fact that the preceding poem, (in the same *Feuilles d'automne*; we do not notice enough this title, *les Feuilles d'automne*; it was at twenty-seven that he dropped his *Feuilles d'automne* (that one, at twenty-six. He always knew how to do it. He was always precocious. He was always the king of the clever ones.) to *Mademoiselle Louise B.*, was called Bièvre. It is not very successful. It's not even successful at all. It is a blank excitement of literature, false, a hodgepodge, a jumble, a heap of literature. Cold excitement. First it starts with the *ombre* rhymes, which is always a bad sign in Hugo. We noticed on this that Hugo generally succeeds much less when he describes to describe, or finally when he wants to describe, especially a landscape, than when he describes without doing it on purpose, and perhaps without realizing it, in a certain sense. , as much as a man like Hugo may not notice. And he may not be the only one. I mean that it describes much better, or finally that it describes well, if it is to describe, when without thinking about it, without heading so to speak towards the description, towards the landscape it situates in a country, involuntarily, almost, perhaps unconsciously, because it has to be, a feeling which then seems to fix all his attention (Between a thousand examples the *Tristesse*

¹³⁰ This is the end of "Soleils couchants"

d'Olympio). (My God, how right those good country people, how right those wine-growers on the slopes of Orleans are to *know* that I am a teacher). I replied that he had dedicated his poem to the worst disasters by placing it under the invocation of Fénelon. That everything that came from Fénelon brought bad luck. That it was his own encouragement to sputter, a guarantee of sputtering, and that he had followed that own encouragement. That, moreover, these landscapes (in nature) were infinitely more beautiful than for Fénelon. That it was a rude misinterpretation to have put them under Fenelon's invocation. That he was a sinister boss. That, moreover, this phrase, so much so, over which one goes into ecstasies in the boarding schools: *A horizon made to perfection for the pleasure of the eyes* was the phrase that I hated the most in all French literature; and all the literature I know; and those that I don't know. That she annoys me; and in itself; and because she is from Fénelon; and because she is, I believe, from *Télémaque*. First, we always quote her. And I don't like quotes.

Well-known verses; too well-known verses; unknown verses; unknown verses. They were perhaps not all by Victor Hugo. Who passing in front of the Senate being repaired, (it too is cooling under the joyful sun), Luxembourg Palace, the side of Luxembourg, and seeing merry union masons, (unless they are merry civil servant masons; or rather it's certainly the two together), cheerfully climbing up incredible ladders (in France we have always known how to do scaffolding very well), which will tell you dully as in itself and in spite of itself the inevitable

*Bold companions whistled on their ladder.*¹³¹

Who will tell you what you know much better than me. But to say to someone who knows much better than you, that is what pleases me, that is the teaching that I *distribute*, isn't that the real teaching. The Principle of True Teaching. Tell someone who knows much better than you. This distribution, however, would not be complete, because it would not be scholarly, because it would not be scientific, this edition would not be scholarly if we did not put notes in it. Have you ever seen a scholarly edition

¹³¹ Sully Prudhomme, *Les Épreuves*, "Un sonnet", v. 10.

where there were no footnotes. So we'll take our notes, and pell-mell we'll line them up here. But to make them more learned, even to be learned, we will arrange them in paragraphs. We will supposedly classify them by paragraphs. And so that these paragraphs are more scholarly, so that they are truly scientific, we will number them. Everyone knows that the numbering is the numeration, and that the numeration, that the number is the beginning of science. For isn't the number in good French the number and isn't the number one part, isn't it one subject of the two of mathematics.

§ 1. — *On the calculation* (still science) *that we have made over forty years.* "Another calculation, or the same, over forty years." Forty years can be forty years of age or forty years of duration. With this proviso that it is duration that brings age. (*It's raining first truths.*) Thus this age that we have, these forty years, a nothing, this nothing duration that separates us from first childhood, these forty years that fit in the palm of the hand, on the one hand it is all that separates us from 70, which is so far, and also, so long, on the other hand it is what separated *les Châtiments* from Waterloo, the Hugo from the *Châtiments* du Napoleon from Waterloo.

On the other hand, when we were children, we were infinitely closer to the *Châtiments* than he was to Waterloo. For we were touching, so to speak, on the *Châtiments*. We touched them with our hands. When I was young and Boitier made me read them, in short it was a book that had just been published. The Republic also had just appeared. Was a book that had just been published. And that we read, with what heart. We were twenty years from the *Châtiments*, thirty years, and he was forty years from Waterloo. Carried away by the current, all occupied, held by the constraint and by the abundance of life, we did not realize that it was around 1895, (we were twenty-five years old), that we passed the critical point. 1894; 1895; 1898. The Dreyfus affair was already fermenting. At least inside. Secretly for us. Not secretly for everyone. For a year it had been decreed. It had been opened. Officially open. Open as per a decree of (the) destination. One year, two years she was going to ferment, brood, win, win. Three years, and she was about to break out for the sacrifice of our youth.

Thus we did not realize that around this year 1895 we passed the critical point, that is to say that we were, that we came away from the *Châtiments* exactly as the *Châtiments* were distant from Waterloo. Hugo was then a bisector, he spent a moment as a bisector between Napoleon and us. But we had much else in mind, we had much else to do, a madness was devouring us, than to see that we were overstepping critical points. Two lengths of time were equal: Napoleon to Hugo, Hugo to us. An imbalance is established today and the balance will no longer be established. We don't know how it happens, of these two lengths of time, one has not moved, will not move again. The other takes a day every day. Time passes. The date stops. Time passes. The date remains. The date is an inscription of time. In a few years we will be one and a half times further from Hugo, from this Hugo, than he was from this Napoleon. But all our lives we will continue to *believe* that we touch the *Châtiments* and to know that the *Châtiments* did not touch Waterloo. The obscure accounts that we unconsciously establish when coming into the world to know where we are, to see in ourselves at what time in the world we come into the world, at what time, on what date we appear, we others in our turn, the global, summary calculations that we make without even realizing it when we reach the age of reason to know where we are, how placed we are, (that is to say, in short, a little who we are) , are invincible. They are unbreakable. And as the other said unfailing. They count for all of life. We can never get rid of it. They always remain. Deep down we don't even try to get rid of it. We do not at all want to strip ourselves of it, to redo, to start our calculations over again. Our accounts. Deeper down, more profoundly, we are so happy not to start them again, not to try to start them over, not to want to, not even to have the idea of starting them over. An even deeper and dearer feeling that laziness pushes us there and keeps us there. Holds us there and maintains us there. We prefer to hold them valid, we hold them valid for existence; for all our life; for all our time. Basically, without thinking about it too much, without really wanting to think about it, we hold them valid for our very eternity.

It's one of the biggest difficulties, let's say the word it's one of the biggest, the most serious inner annoyances, if not the most serious, (so I'm not surprised that we don't hear about it anywhere), of pedagogy, — I mean of course of paternity, — of spiritual paternity and carnal paternity, — that

this invincible tendency that we have, that this temptation to make people serve, to make our account also count for our children, for subsequent generations. An account which should not even serve us, which should not even count for ourselves, if we knew how to grow old, if we agreed to grow old. You only settle once in a lifetime. We already had so much trouble getting settled. First of all, then, we want this installation to count for all of life. Serve for life. And we succeed somehow. We don't want to *start life again*. Then we love children. We love them badly. So we don't like them. We believe that it is love and paternity, we believe that it is paternal love to want, to make their life an extension of ours. That our installation matters to them. Serve for them. That our account counts for them. Let our children settle for them, count for them, start for them. They are seven years old. They are twelve years old. Let them do their accounts, who are chasing us.

§ 2. — Let us pursue our marvelous, our mysterious research. The real *ode to the Column*, quite simply, is not in the *Odes*; it is not an *ode*; finally it is not entitled an ode. It is in *Les Chants du Crépuscule*, the second song.¹³² *Les Chants du Crépuscule*, at least their beginning, their departure, are entirely under the influence, one could almost say under the inspiration, at least temporary, at least provisional, of the revolution of 1830. He had naturally seen very well, or rather, what is better, he had very well felt that these three days were not, *could not* be a simple beginning again, a beginning pure and simple, a more or less *imitation*. traditional of the great revolutionary days of the great Revolution; that they were, that they had to be something quite different; because the Empire had since come into being, the Empire had come between, the imperial epic, there had been the Empire between the two. He had fully felt all that there was, all that there had been in these new Napoleonic days, of imperial *glory*, of imperial war, of imperial epic. It is not in his preface that we see it, in his *preface* without title or mention of a preface, dated October 25, 1835, and which, like all his prose prefaces, is a masterpiece of stammering. It is already in the *Prélude*, which is beautiful,

¹³² It is titled "à la Colonne."

being in verse, dated October 20, 1835, and after which, in fact, there was nothing more to put in the preface:

What name do you call you, troubled hour where we are?

where are precisely the three or four main lines of this stanza:

*« It is perhaps the evening that we take for a dawn!
Perhaps this sun towards which the man is leaning
This sun that we call on the horizon that it gilds.
This sun that we hope for is a setting sun! »*

This war [guerre] connection, this Napoleonic connection is marked on the threshold of the collection, in the first poem of the collection, *Dicté après Juillet 1830*, in verses of which some are good and others bad:

*Brothers ! and you too have your days!
Your victories, oak and crowned flowers.
Your civic laurels, your buried dead.
Your triumphs, so beautiful at the dawn of life.
Your young standards, with holes to envy
Old flags of Austerlitz!*

But one cannot say that this kinship, this connection, escaped him.

*Be proud; you have done as much as your fathers [pères].
The rights of an entire people **conquered by so many wars [guerres],**
You pulled them alive from the shroud.
July gave you, to save your families,...*

You are their sons! it's their blood, it's their soul.. .

They started it all: you have your turn.

*It is for you that they traced with funerals
This triumphal circle of plains of battles.
Victorious path, prodigious work.
Who departed from France to embrace the earth.*

*Passing through Moscow, Cadiz, Rome and Cairo,
Go from Jemappes to Montmirail!*

§ 3. — One cannot read Hugo too much to take lessons in constancy. One cannot believe how many times he missed, attempted, tried, started over certain pieces, certain verses and certain stanzas, before reaching, in one day of happiness, the final form, the plenitude. How many times he threw essays in all directions, before getting the piece once. Essays that never came back to him, that never remained on his conscience, since he published them, since he published everything. There would be a whole job to do, or rather a multitude of *jobs*, to take all these families, all these relatives, all these filiations, all these contaminations, the good children and the bad, the good comers and the bad comers, the Apollonians and runts, the knights Phoebus and Quasimodo, follow all these traces, note the attempts, the glorious and the inglorious, measure the steps, finally achieve triumph with him. He had a unique gift among all, a particularly precious gift for the worker, for the producer, for a workaholic like himself, for a heavy workman: this particular cynicism, so perfect, this pagan impudence, this shamelessness which almost indiscriminately gave to the public, and sensibly as honorably as each other, all that he produced; the good and the bad; knowing well that in the heap there was (some) very good; and that if it wasn't for today it would be for tomorrow.

§ 4. — He said himself that one should never correct a book except by making another one. In particular *Odes and Ballades*, preface of 1828: *because, his method* — (he loved to speak of himself in the third person, *the author, the author of this book*) — *consisting in amending his mind rather than reworking his books, and, as he has said elsewhere, to correct a work in another work, we understand that each of the writings he publishes...*

§ 5. — The last stanza which we have just quoted is, for example, *in fine [in the end]*, an unfortunate attempt to enclose in one stanza, in one verse, in a few lines, the whole *space*, the whole extent of the Napoleonic conquest. .

*Victorious path, prodigious work,
Who departed from France to embrace the earth,*

*Passing through Moscow, Cadiz, Rome and Cairo,
Goes from Jemappes to Montmirail!*

is nothing else, is only the laborious, circumvented, linear, painful essay, several times clumsy, which in the same collection, two years later, in *One thousand eight hundred and eleven!* — (*August 10, 1830 — August 1832*) — was to burst forth in this line of prodigious evocation; successful, total, of a magnitude equal to the magnitude of its object:

*It was not Madrid, the Kremlin and the Lighthouse, Diana in the morning humming
her brass band,*

§ 6. — Which proves that a line is always greater than several lines.

§ 7. — As also a word is always greater than several words.

§ 8. — Also I cannot suffer people who put several words.

§ 9. — Our children do not have to pick up (the thread) from the same place, from the same point as us. We only forget that. That's all.

§ 10. — Our children are not our age. And that's all. They are not our age of humanity.

§ 11. — A word is not the same in one writer and in another. One pulls it out of the belly. The other pulls it out of his overcoat pocket.

§ 12. — The wounds that we receive are found in Racine. The beings that we are we find it in Corneille.

§ 13. — *Continuation of **Dictated after July 1830.** - You are*

*You are the children of belligerent high schools!
There you applauded our past victories;
All your games were shaded by the folds of a standard.
Often Napoleon, full of great thoughts,
Passing by, arms crossed, in your hurried lines,
Magnetized your brows with a look!*

Eagle they were to follow, eagle of our army

§ 14. — It is immediately after that comes *II. — At the Column.* — The connection is not marked in the text only, it is marked in the very order of the poems. The epigraph teaches us, an epigraph which is no longer an old song and which is no longer by Du Bellay, an epigraph teaches us that *Several petitioners ask that the Chamber intervene to have Napoleon's ashes transported under the column of the Place Vendôme.*

After a short deliberation, the House proceeds to the order of the day.

(Chamber of Deputies, session of October 7, 1830.)

This is the poem

*Oh! when he was building, with his colossal hand,
For his throne, leaning on vassal Europe.*

*This sovereign pillar,
This bronze, in front of which all is only powder and sand,
Sublime monument, twice imperishable,*

Made of glory and brass;

*When he was building it, so that one day in the city
Or foreign war or civil war
There would smash their chariot,*

This is for the Commune. And also for war. For the two wars combined.

§ 15. — If a note is learned, a note on a note is learned squared. So this is a note on the previous note. Similarly, parallel *supported on vassal Europe* is also half *essai*, a pale essay of the great beginning of *Mil eight hundred and eleven!* —

*O time when countless peoples
Waited, prostrate under a dark cloud.
Heaven would have said yes!*

Felt centuries-old states tremble beneath them. And looked at the Louvre surrounded by thunders, Like a Mount Sindi!

Bent over like a horse that senses its master coming

§ 16. — This is no longer a note on a note. It's another. In Hugo la Colonne, the Arc de Triomphe, and les Invalides walk together, if I may say so. There is a historical, political connection; real, literary connection between these three monuments. Today, by a historical and political event that it would be appropriate to examine more deeply, by a real and literary event, the position of these three terms has changed, the connection has changed. The Column has disappeared, despite Vuillaume. And it is the Pantheon which has come to replace it. Especially since Hugo came there and made it return, if it is allowed to speak thus, to the great men. Today the trilogy of monuments is the Arc-de Triomphe, the Panthéon and les Invalides.

§ 17. — The wounds we receive, we receive them in Racine; the beings that we are, we are in Corneille.

§ 18. 'Whatever they say about it, whatever they may even think about it, the French are generally Cornelians. And on the other hand as there are only the French

§ 19. — When we make, in our turn, when we redo after so many others the famous *parallel* (so unequal) of *Corneille and Racine*, we will easily recognize, it will be one of our first observations, one of our capital recognitions, but a of our preliminary recognitions, so to speak, on the threshold, before the threshold, that Corneille never works except in the domain of grace and that Racine never works except in the domain of disgrace. Corneille never operates except in the realm of salvation, Racine never operates except in the realm of perdition. Corneille has never been able to make criminals and sinners (his greatest criminals and his greatest sinners), who were not enlightened by some reflection, some gleam of grace, who were not nourished by some infiltration of grace; watered; who did not

save themselves in some point, in some way. Somehow. And even the sacred ones of Racine are steeped in disgrace. It is not Phèdre alone who is a pagan, and a Christian, and a Jansenist who lacked grace. Not just all of his women and all of his victims and all of his men. But even his children, which is infinitely worse, but his very sacred ones, his execrable priests, Joad, Eliakim, Josabeth; Esther, Mordecai; his very prophet, or his prophets. They are all irrevocably steeped in disgrace (would this be Jansenist disgrace; which, placed like a germ, like a virus at the very origin, at the point of origin of man and work, would have then and slowly and patiently diffused to the most distant members; as if naturally; by a natural diffusion; without counting the auxiliary contaminations of a friendship only interrupted), (and perhaps only apparently interrupted), they are all someone who lacked grace. Not only Christians who lacked grace, but all, pagans, so to speak, who lacked grace, Greeks, Romans; infidels to whom (it may be said, strange as it may seem), whose grace has failed; Turks; finally of the Jews themselves, of the prophets who lacked grace, as far as one can say, at least precisely the grace of prophecy.

On the other hand, there is something disarming, truly touching in seeing the frenzied, frenetic stubbornness, the stubbornness, the effort, the perseverance, the endurance, the force of self-illusion, the ignorance of self, the extraordinary constancy, the application, the studious, the seriousness, the patience, the school with which Corneille strived throughout the immense second half of his career.

*Fate, which of honor opens the barrier to us,
Offers to our constancy an illustrious matter;*¹³³

laboriously applied himself to making extraordinary criminals, blacker than smoke black, without ever succeeding, the old man and the master, with all this work, despite all this work, to make a single disgraced being. Racine has never been able to produce a *gracious* being, not even Berenice.

¹³³ Corneille, *Horace*, Act II, sc. III, v. 431 & 432.

Corneille could ever only create graceful people, Racine could ever only create disgraced people, and what is tragic is that it is impossible to deny that he created them quite naturally, that they came from him, that they came to him naturally in this way.

Corneille's supposedly most hardened old criminals have purer hearts than Racine's youngest teenagers (and especially teenage girls). The powerlessness of Cornelian cruelty is disarming. The natural, profound cruelty of the Racinians is limitless. And that without any exception. This very Iphigenia, for example, to limit ourselves in these notes and in this inscription to a single example, this very Iphigenia for example of which we are always told, how fundamentally cruel she is already (the cruelty of young people, the worst of all, the only one perhaps irrevocable, implacable, infernal, irrevocably condemned, irrevocably lost), (incurable and moreover literally monstrous), as her submission to her father has a base of cruelty, as it is already the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. This terrible answer to his father, of a deaf tragic cruelty:

My Father,
Stop worrying, *you are not betrayed.*
When you order, *you will be obeyed.*
My life is your property. You want to take it back:
Your orders straightforwardly could have been heard.
With an eye as happy, with a heart also submissive
That I accepted the husband that you promised me,
I will know, s 'it is necessary, victim obedient,
Tend to Calchas iron a head innocent, And respecting the blow by yourself
ordered,
*You return all the blood that you gave me.*¹³⁴

There is not a word, not a verse, not a half-line, not a phrase, not a conjunction, there is not a word that does not bear to put the adversary, (the father), in its error. Racinian dialogue is generally a combat (one could say constantly a combat); in the Racinian dialogue the partner is generally,

¹³⁴ Racine, *Iphigénie*, Act IV, sc. iv.

constantly an adversary; the characteristic of the Racinian character is that the Racinian character speaks constantly to put the adversary in the wrong, only proposes to put the adversary in the wrong, which is the very beginning, the principle of cruelty. The Cornelian characters, on the contrary, who are courtesy, even generosity, even when he doesn't want to, *even when they don't want to*, never speak except to put the adversary, the partner, the very enemy *in his senses*, and then liberally conquer that reason.

Everything is an adversary, everything is an enemy to Racine's characters, they are all enemies of each other and they never speak except to put the adversary in the wrong and thus justify in advance together, within, the cruelties they will exercise on him, as he himself has already justified the cruelties he will exercise on them.

Racine's victims are themselves more cruel than Corneille's executioners. These poor executioners of Corneille do not succeed in being really cruel. They are not so naturally, sincerely. They are ignorant of refinement, which is all cruelty. Refinement does not come to them. They have no taste for it, they have no skill in it. No control. They are not inspired by it. They ignore gentleness, which is everything and more than cruelty. It is a genre in which they do not succeed.

Even Esther is no better. She has, one would immediately see that she is just as cruel, if not more so; she has all the perfidy of cruelty more than that of a woman of the world, of a court woman, and moreover, moreover, which finishes everything, as Joad has consecrated her.

But where this Iphigenia is especially formidable is in the tenderness. Where she is invincible is in the cruelty of tenderness. So there is not a word that does not carry:

*If yet this respect, if this obedience
Appears in your eyes worthy of another reward,* ¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Racine, *Iphigénie*, Act IV, sc. iv.

(Basically there is not a word that is not murderous). (And all of them should be marked).

*If you complain of a mother in rain's troubles,
I dare to tell you here that in the state where I am
Perhaps enough honors surrounded my life
Not to wish that it were taken away from me.
Nor that in snatching it from me a severe fate
So close to my birth would have marked the end of it.
Daughter of Agamemnon, it was I who first,
Lord, called you by this sweet name of father;
It is I who have so long pleased your eyes.
Made you of this name thank the Gods,¹³⁶*

(What verses; a unique sweetness; and only an aftertaste of filial cruelty remains, so to speak; a taste, a kind of filial cruelty of young Atride, of who knows what young Atride, with all the refinements, as in germ, in filial, in youth, in young bud. What incredible verses, expended on that. He too what a Christian poet he would have been, but *if he had been a Christian.*"

*And for whom so many times lavishing your caresses.
You have no blood disdained weaknesses.
Alas! with pleasure I was told
All the names of the countries that you are going to tame;¹³⁷*

(Compare the harsh, harsh and almost insolent response, one would almost dare to say the putting in his place, the retortion, the retorting, the *defense*, the putting back in place of Rodrigue to his father, *after*, when he put on the right to do it, when he began by doing his duty, almost insolent, so together, so melted, so loyally respectful and almost insolent, no greater innocence. What innocence in this revolt of the Cid. What impotence of cruelty, of offense in these Cornelians. There is no danger that Iphigenie will be insolent. She is infinitely worse. Under each of her words, under her

¹³⁶ Racine, *Iphigénie*, Act IV, sc. iv.

¹³⁷ Racine, *Iphigénie*, Act IV, sc. iv.

very silences, even more, under each of her silences smolders an insolence that she does not want to dispense, an impertinence voluntarily restrained, reduced, renewed, held in hand, held as a guide, an insolence, a royal impertinence, king's daughter, what a king, (secretly a daughter of Atride); or the last, the worst of all, an insolence of tenderness, a tender impertinence.

*And already, of Ilium presaging the conquest,
Of such a beautiful triumph I prepare the feast.
I did not expect that to begin it,
My blood would be the first you had to shed.
Not that the fear of the blow with which I am threatened
Makes me recall your past goodness.
Have no fear: my heart, jealous of your honor,
Will not make a father like you blush;
And if I had only had my life to defend.
I would have had to contain such a tender memory.
But to my sad fate, you know,
Lord, A mother, a lover attached their happiness.
A king worthy of you thought he saw the Day
Which was to light up our illustrious marriage.
Already sure of my heart to its promised flame.
He considered himself lucky: you had allowed me to.
He knows your purpose; Judge of its alarms.
My mother is in front of you, and you see her tears.
Forgive the efforts I have just made
To prevent the tears that I will cost them.*

AGAMEMNON

*My daughter, it is too true. I don't know for what crime
The wrath of the gods asks for a victim;
But they named you. A cruel oracle*

*Wants your blood to flow here on an altar.
To defend your Days from their murderous laws
My love had not waited for your prayers.
I won't tell you...*

It would be necessary to quote the whole poem, the whole tragedy. Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra. Achilles alone, who is stupid, is less evil. He is not, so to speak, cruel. But it is by degradation, by erasure. He might want to. But he can't. He does not know how.

All I want to remember for today, all we can remember in this note is that Iphigenia speaks, thinks and feels in the same register as Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. And his cruelty, this sort of native cruelty is further aggravated, infinitely, by what is (apparently) innocent in it, by what it is an innocent cruelty, a (big) child's cruelty. Cruelty is everywhere in Racine. It is, it makes the very fabric of his work, the texture. His children (Eliakim) at bottom are more cruel than his women, with the aggravation of childhood, of the apparent, of the pretended innocence of childhood. And his women are naturally more cruel than his men, which is saying something. Or to go deeper perhaps, his men are women, they have all suffered from female contamination, from some female contamination. They are all devirilized, and it is the very feminine cruelty that is found in them.

§ **20**. — Cf. this great ignorance of Corneille's disease, this great inexperience, this great incompetence, this sovereign awkwardness, notably of cruelty, which is perhaps all the evil. His great criminals. His traitors do not betray. They would like to. But they don't know. They cannot. This great impotence of evil. Especially cruelty. This lack of invention of evil, of cruelty; this total lack of imagination. And on the contrary, Racine's terrible invention, this terrible invention of evil, of cruelty; this prodigious Racinian imagination.

§ **21**. — Cornelians never hurt themselves, even and especially when they kill themselves; their honor then is precisely not to wound themselves, in a sense not to harm themselves. The more enemies they are, the more they fight, the less also, the less they wish each other harm, the less they wish each other harm, the less they hurt themselves and they want to hurt

themselves. It is the Corneilian idea itself, one could say the Corneilian system, the great Corneilian honor. On the contrary, these unfortunate characters of Racine, they have so much cruelty in their blood, in their carnal blood, that even when they are not enemies, even when they are not fighting, they always hurt each other. They are naturally hurtful. They hurt by profession, by office, by nature. By attitude. They would hurt to give themselves countenance. They came into the world wounding, and constant exercise sharpens their cruelty, maintains the sharpness, the peak of their cruelty. Their hurt. Even when they don't mean each other harm, they worry. By nature, by training; by habit, by exercise; by bearing, by this countenance; by idleness, the worst of all; by attitude taken, kept; by an attitude of heart. By taste acquired, kept. And they always end up wishing each other harm, if only for worrying about it and having worried about it.

§ 22. — Liberality is a certain grace in matters of money. Greed, on the contrary, is a certain retractibility there.

§ 23. — There is also and generally (and it is the same) a certain liberality of heart and a certain avarice of heart.

§ 24. "Corneille is full of liberality." There is constantly in Racine a perpetually intelligent avarice.

§ 25. — Corneille is puffed up with perpetual forgiveness. They forgive themselves in advance, by nature, everything they do to each other. In Racine, it is diametrically the opposite. They don't forgive themselves even what they haven't done to themselves.

§ 26. — When we will do our *Polyeucte* (you never doubted that we will do it), it will perhaps be the time not to try to give an idea of the greatness of Corneille, but to propose to enter a little into the detail of the organization of this greatness.

§ 27. — By his very impotence of evil, of cruelty, Corneille goes deeper than Racine. For cruelty is not, far from it, what is most profound. It is not the depth of the heart, it is not the depth of man. There is often a great deal of vanity in it. Charity goes infinitely deeper. It is, if I may say so, a

worse, infinitely worse vice (an infinitely worse inhumanity, superhumanity, subhumanity). More biting, infinitely deeper, more dominant, more attached to its prey. The saints and the martyrs are infinitely more molded, bound by charity, infinitely more molded by (the) charity, infinitely more bitten by charity than the criminals, than the cruel are bitten by cruelty. The imprint, more than the imprint, the wound, the bite, the food is infinitely deeper, more indelible. (Worse). Charity than cruelty. The saint is infinitely more marked than the cruel. He is infinitely more devoured by charity than the cruel are bitten by cruelty. *His heart consumed with love. His heart devoured with love.*¹³⁸ One could almost say that the saint is more irrefutably the victim of his charity than the criminal, that the cruel is the victim of his cruelty.

§ 28. "That's why Corneille was drawn from all sides towards *Polyeucte*." He was led, he climbed from all sides towards *Polyeucte*. By all this grace, of which his work is full; by all this charity, of which his work is full; by all his heroism; by twenty further climbs.

§ 29. 'We're still talking about Racine's prescription. The common opinion is that an order reigns in the life and work of Racine and that it does not reign, in the same way and far from it, in the life and work of Corneille. That there is an order in the life and work of Racine. We have to get along. On this word. On the meaning of this word. Racine is administered with a certain impeccably intelligent orderliness which reigns noticeably in the construction of life, almost sovereignly in the construction of the work, which continues, (but then sovereignly), down to the smallest detail. We would have to agree a lot on this ordinance. It is real, and sovereign, in the dialogue, in the detail, in the detail of the dialogue. The little that we have given of *Iphigénie* is striking in order, marvelous in *this* order. But as soon as one pushes a little further one notices almost immediately that this ordinance is not always an order, and that quickly, and that soon it is far from it; this learned, this perfect, this intelligent, this harmonious, this almost too intelligent, this admirable arrangement, (almost a little tiring), (and which by a kind of tension would tire), (by a application

¹³⁸ A quote from *The Mystery of the Charity of Joan of Arc*.

as too held, sustained, maintained, that one gives and that one receives, which would make one cry out), very soon one realizes that this impeccable order, far from being always an order, often covers the worst disorders, organic. Everyone is forced to notice the organic disorder that there is in *Phèdre* (I say organic of tragedy, here I only say organic of art, I am not talking about the others, the other organics); not only an (intimate) mess of life; but a mess of art; a growing organic mess of art. This disorder bursts into *Phèdre*, where moreover abound not only the beautiful verses, but verses of a depth, (of humanity, of disgrace), of a repercussion, of an incredible beauty; and so many of the most beautiful verses there are in French. This disorder bursts out before all eyes in *Phèdre*, but it is everywhere, but it was frequent, he himself felt it, he himself knew it. And it had been growing, for a long time, almost since always, when it burst into *Phèdre* and when he himself, knowing it, cut short his work, the production of his work by the most daring stop that there is perhaps in the history of letters, by the most mysterious, by the most secret, itself by the most tragic. By the most eminently, by the most deeply, so to speak by the most technically tragic. More than any other, he alone perhaps this great psychologist knew his secret evil; this intimate impotence of order; this singular infirmity proper; his mysterious evil; his own disgrace. The more the gift of verse came to him, rose to him, deep verse, deaf verse so to speak, verse with unlimited resonance, with resonance of infinite depth, on the other hand the more he lacked order, inner order, the deep organism, the organic framework; the organization of the organic; the order of the organization; the organization of tragedy; a deeper order. Strange annoyance. He felt it himself, the implacable analyst. Let's believe that he felt it, that he saw it, that he knew it more than we do. He, the cruel analyst, the master of cruelty, he felt better than anyone this supreme cruelty, the only irreparable one perhaps, the cruelty of the gift. An interruption, a silence of twelve and fourteen years, a diet, a youth of fourteen brought him no relief, if it is true that the same disorder never breaks out, does not break out anywhere so much as in *Esther* and *Athalie*: with this aggravation that it becomes there the worst of all, a disorder of the sacristy, the most incoherent of all. Because when we are told about the *ordinance of Athalie*, first we must not confuse *sumptuous* with *grand*, and then we have the right to speak of sumptuous ordinance,

provided that it is well understood and that it remains understood that we know that ordinance does not mean order. Profound order, organic order.

§ 30. — The apparatus is not order. Or rather sometimes it can be a piece of clothing of interior disorder, sometimes an apparatus, an exterior mechanism, a lever mechanism, a simple tool, a faithful, pious, deferential, obedient exterior translation of order, of a profound internal order. A manifestation, a representation of order. It can be an overcoat thrown over some mess. It can be a faithful garment that carries the secret of articulations, of articulation, of an interior order.

§ 31. — So once again what we commonly believe, what we first believe is quite simply diametrically the opposite of what conceals a deeper reality. The prescription is in Racine, a prescription almost so flawless that it grabs our hearts and makes us cry out. That it would make us scream. But a deep order, an order of race, even an order of flesh is in Corneille. Not only are Racine's tragedies not always organized in the secrecy of their bodies (but *on the contrary* contrived), but generally they are not organized *among themselves*. I would gladly say that they are like a digital series. I mean that in a certain sense one starts over the other, as a number starts over a number. They are ordinal numbers which follow one another, and consequently cardinal numbers. He himself felt it well and when he broke the series, one had no other impression than that of a linear series which stops, which is interrupted, which is interrupted, of an arithmetic series. which fortuitously would stop; that one breaks; of a homogeneous and unilinear series in a certain sense; one has only the impression of an interruption; one does not have the impression of a decrowning or an incrowning, of an incompleteness or a descompletion, of an organism which would not reach its completion, its crowning; of a lack; or if you will a lack in quantity only; by no means of a lack in quality, in form, in completion, in chief and in crown.

They all have the same merit. He would have made a tragedy like so many others (tragedies), like so many others his, after so many others, an undeniable masterpiece; like so many masterpieces, after so many masterpieces. An *Iphigénie en Tauride*. What else, what a masterpiece, destined in advance to be a masterpiece. But a masterpiece, so to speak, in a

homogeneous linear series of masterpieces. A masterpiece without astonishment. Basically he always performed the same tragedy, which was always a pure masterpiece, by varying it, by constantly varying the givens (almost arbitrarily and as it were intellectually, as one varies, as an exercise, the givens geometry or arithmetic problem, usually a math problem). A Racinian tragedy is in a sense always the same tragedy. Which is properly the Racinian tragedy. Thus the series of his tragedies is in a sense like a mathematical series, like an arithmetic series, like a linear series of masterpieces. In no way a construction, an organic structure. He himself felt it and in order not to do the same he constantly varied the data, as if to create a different problem each time; but by no means the interior data, the race and the blood, the carnal roots of the race and the heart; that, no man, were he a man of the greatest genius, and of the rarest, no man can make them vary; no man can revise them; for it is deeper than genius itself, it is the very source, the strain and the origin of genius; and everything; no man can vary them when he wishes; when it is convenient for him; at will; no man can conveniently vary them intellectually and arbitrarily. It was still a rehearsal. He was doing rehearsals for him, or rather he was continuing, he was rehearsing a deep inner rehearsal. He manifested, he represented a kind of incitable interior repetition. To escape it, to escape it, he constantly had the characters act out, he varied the conditions. But he could only vary them externally, he could only vary external and, so to speak, geographical conditions; topographical, chronological. History. The event. And yet at bottom the event was always the same. On the one hand, less exterior, he constantly varied the very tragic situations of his characters (and the scenic situations), the reciprocal passionate situations of his lovers and his mistresses; (but all that was already given, indicated, limited, measured in *Andromaque*, once for all, once for all his tragedies, once for all his career, the *maximum* game was given in *Andromaque*, the four-player game, with maximum of irreversibility (in passion, each of the four, (or of the five, exactly, because Hector must be included there), each of the who loving who loves another, (and the circuit only stopping because 'Hector is dead), (and (thus) (or perhaps even not thus, not for that) because Andromaque and him, (alone), form a closed couple), (and this closed couple alone can stop the circuit, such a circuit, put an end to it). And it is not by chance that

we are led to speak of *maximum* and by maximum. It is not by chance that we are forced to bring in this expression coming from mathematics. It is certain that every tragedy of Racine rests on a kind of arithmetic game, on arithmetic combination. On a combination of numbers, of a certain number for each. *Andromaque* for example at the beginning is a combination of four (or five); it gives sensibly the *maximum* number, the *maximum* number. Very simple arithmetic formulas give (immediately) the number of events that can arise from these four (or from these five), the maximum *number* of events that can arise from a determined number of characters interfering *maximum* between them. It is a limited number itself. Beneath every tragedy of Racine there is, we can distinguish this arithmetical thread. Even *Berenice* is not purely, solely a tragedy for two. It is even itself also a tragedy for four, if one counts, as one must, reason of State, a character certainly more important, a character less pale, a character more a character than poor Antiochus.

Any Racinian tragedy, or rather the Racinian tragedy, always presents itself as having an arithmetical framework. And to make one tragedy a year, new, the same, to renew his same perpetual tragedy, his same masterpiece, Racine is forced, Racine is reduced to arithmetically varying the data, the arithmetic conditions of this arithmetic framework, the number and the situation, the reciprocal situations (arithmetic and as if geometric) of its characters, of its passionate people.

§ 32. — *Repair to Root and rectification for the same.* 'You can hear me well, Halévy, fortunately you forgive me as I go on. You can sense how rude I feel myself, how much I feel like a barbarian, how much I ask myself forgiveness when I push such a crude analysis into Racine's work. Hundreds, thousands of verses assail me from all sides, so pure, so beautiful, so harmonious; more than Virgilians; so melodious even; of such line, of such plenitude, of such beauty; of such a curve; so perfect; of such achievement; so perfectly pure, so perfectly beautiful, so perfectly harmonious; of such a line, of such a cut; of such a coronation; if plastics; if statuary; of such an evocation; of such marble; so many inimitable verses, of perfect beauty and purity; to the depths, to the depths of infinite humanity. And certainly among all, if it

were only these four verses, the four culminating verses, the four verses of Berenice, make heard an eternal protest; they are even seven:

*Forever! Ah! Lord, do you think to yourself
How awful this cruel word is when one loves?
In a month, in a year, how will we suffer.
Lord, that so many seas separate me from you?
May the day begin again, and may the day end,
Without Titus ever being able to see Berenice,
Without all day I being able to see Titus?*¹³⁹

But we are forty years old, I believe I said so. We know of life, we know, we have experienced life. We are more demanding. It is no longer enough for us that a marble is impeccable. All we need now is a marble garment. We want, we must search further. More besides. Beneath the perfectly fine, perfectly pure grain of this marble, under the flawless, perfectly harmonious folds of this garment, of this covering, under the antique, inimitable folds, under the antique drapery we want to know if a heart beats pure, or if this would not be a cruel heart; under this invincibly golden patina we want to know what blood flows in these veins; and if they are sinful veins, at least of what sin; thankless task, thankless proposal, thankless talk; thankless requirement, virile requirement; thankless request, thankless requisition; quarantine requirement we want to know how these marble muscles are articulated, how they are inserted in the shoulder and in the hip, how one put the arm in their shoulder. To put it quite roughly. Under these harmonious folds, under these incomparable folds of clothing, it is necessary, we want to know if the organic construction is correct, if there is an organic construction, if the being is correct, if it is organized, organic.

And we are led to ask ourselves if there isn't an entirely different severity, an entirely different organization in Corneille's rough stone.

§ 33. — What we are only asking ourselves here, what we are noticing precisely at this moment, is not what *the* Racinian tragedy is worth, what we

¹³⁹ Racine, *Bérénice*, Act IV, sc. v, v. 1111 - 1117.

are studying, what we want to consider a little, is the relation sustained between the successive tragedies of Racine. This relation is that they constitute, that they are the same, that they are all together, in their turn, year by year, the Racinian tragedy, only displaced, as if sliding over an annual register, over an annual register, I mean on a register by years; or, if you like, that the Racinian tragedy passes from year to year through (all) the tragedies of Racine. What is *the* Racinian tragedy worth then, what it is, what it is, as it is, that, my children, will require a little more than notes. What it is itself in itself precisely under these transformations, through these displacements. In all these cases, under all these coatings.

§ 34. — **Note on a note.** — The very quarrels of Racine with his Jansenist masters, so bitter, so *cruel* itself, the ingratitude of this ungrateful heart in no way prove that he was not a Jansenist, that he would not have been so originally, that he would not have remained so, that he would not have been so naturally. It is one of the most frequent cases, the best known not only in literary history but in all history. Of all history. We often do not quarrel so well, at this level of acidity, at this level of cruelty, at this level of will, and at the same time of instinct, at this level of penetration, at this level of certainty, at this level of level, than with who we are (or have remain) in ourself.

§ 35. We know very well what we mean when we speak of a heathen, an infidel, a Jew who lacked grace.

§ 36. — On the graceful and the disgraceful, one obviously needs some resolution to admit, to agree, to see that Berenice herself is a disgraceful being. It is obviously necessary for that to break with many mental habits. You have to redo a lot of creases. But when you go, when you reach the organization itself, you have to recognize that it is not a *gracious* being. In the sense of grace she is not a happy being. She is, it must be said, *unhappy*.

§ 37. — On the contrary, Corneille's labors in order not to succeed in making unhappy people, that is to say, basically, ungraceful, disgraced beings, is admirable. Basically, there is not a Corneille woman of whom one can say: *She is an unhappy woman*; and all the same there is not a man of Corneille of whom one can say: *He is unhappy*.

§ 38. — In the Racinian dialogue there is not a single word that does not bear. Not only not a word, but not an oversight, not a half-silence that isn't worthwhile, that isn't skillful, willed, done. Which does not carry, that is to say which does not carry a blow. Which does not hurt, which does not serve to hurt someone. Corneille's characters do not offend. They don't know how to offend, even and above all when they solemnly propose it to themselves, when they have come on purpose for that from behind the racks. Don Gomès, Count of Gormas, does everything he can to offend Don Diègue. He came on purpose to get her a big quarrel. He accumulates hurtful words, (proof of his impotence), parodies, imitations of words, hurtful allusions, reminders, repetitions of words, dashes, points and hammer blows (of weapons). All this apparatus (him) succeeds so little that to end it he is forced to give it a slap in the face. So it's ritual. He recognizes himself. Don Diègue also recognizes himself. Everyone recognizes each other. Everybody is happy. Don Diegue. Rodrigue will recognize himself. Chimene. The count is very happy to have finally entered into the rule. He is on his business. He is in his state, in his habit, in his safety. In its folds. He is sure of his business. Everyone is sure (with him, and with don Diègue) that there has been an offense. It is committed. We had enough trouble getting it. It is declared. Decreed. It is official. She is accomplished. At last. It was time. Basically everyone receives a great relief. Finally we see where we are going. Racine's characters don't need ritual ceremony, rite and rudeness to offend. They offend all the time. They don't have to give a slap in the face to find words that pierce the heart. Racine's characters constantly offend, and basically they do just that. It is not this innocent rogue who offends, but it is the innocent, it is the gentle, it is the tender Iphigenia who knows how to offend, it is the delicate and unfortunate Bérénice herself:

Well, so it's true that Titus is abandoning me?

We must separate; and it is he who orders it.

Ah! cruel, is it time to declare it to me?

Well ! reign, cruel; content or even glory :

You don't count Berenice's tears for anything

*You are emperor. Lord, and you cry!*¹⁴⁰

§ 39. — This is where we see how much rudeness, especially this willed and seemingly innocent rudeness, is different than offense and cruelty. Different than disgrace and ingratitude.

§ 40. We also see, we know well enough how much this word *cruel(le)* and even cruelty recurs in Racine. How many times does it appear there. This is a veritable conducting word, a conducting motif, that is to say not an apparatus, an exterior applique, but a word, a really central, really, deeply interior movement which comes back whenever it is really necessary. This word is everywhere in Racine, always so just, so central, so justly applied, so interior, so really necessary. It is in Racine almost a technical word, certainly a ritual word, the very word of the revelation of the heart. So our literary historians and our critics taught us that it was a word borrowed from the jargon of the time, from the jargon of love. Historians are very valuable.

§ 41. — This word is such a leading word that in the two quotations from *Bérénice* which we have given, it begins, in the same place, two *couplets* which follow each other immediately. These two uses of the word, these two words are not only in the same scene, on the same page; they set the tone for two lines which immediately follow each other. They are parallel, parallelly employed. In a relationship with. They go from one to the other. They invoke, they are like two invocations on the threshold of two couplets, a double invocation on the threshold of a double couplet.

§ 42. — Everything is adversary, everything is enemy to the characters of Racine; with men and with gods; their mistress, their lover, their own heart.

§ 43. — Nowhere more than in Racine does the poignant, cruel problem of the innocence or the pretended innocence of the child appear.

§ 44. Cruelty still forgives. Charity does not forgive. It is she who is unforgivable.

¹⁴⁰ Racine, *Bérénice*, Act IV, sc. v, v. 1043, 1044, 1062, 1103, 1147, 1154.

§ 45. — The saint is infinitely more the prey of charity than the cruel of cruelty.

§ 46. — Neither order is order, nor disorder is disorder. Neither ordering makes order nor disordering makes disorder.

§ 47. — The arrangement [l'ordonnance] reigns above all in detail. Order reigns in the body itself.

§ 48. — The arrangement covers. Order reigns.

§ 49. — It is more natural to place, it is more convenient to place order in the detail than in the work itself, in the work than in life. It is a downward progression from detail to work, from work to life. The order on the contrary follows the contrary progression. It comes from life itself. It goes, it descends from life towards the work, from the work towards all the detail, from the body of the work towards all the detail of the work. It is in life for the work and in the work for the detail, in the body of the work for the detail of the work that order takes its strength and its origin, its point of strength and its point of origin.

§ 50. — The arrangement is a dresser. Order is sovereign. There may be a fashion in the order. In order there can only be one order.

§ 51. — It must also be said that this dazzling (organic) disorder of art in *Phèdre* translates admirably into art, on the register of art, this incredible (organic) disorder of life.

§ 52. — One tragedy per year, except for this extraordinary *Phèdre*, which already left too many of the series, took three years to incubate.

§ 53. — All of Racine's tragedies are crowned in themselves. They are separate queens. Jealous sisters? Cinderella's sisters? Ignoring grace, he ignores, they totally ignore communion. On the contrary, Corneille's three tragedies in one and the same and triple gesture like caryatids crown each other in *Polyeucte*.

§ 54. — On the same model, on the same plan, artfully, laboriously varied, he would have produced a tragedy a year, all his life, a masterpiece a year. Like a convict. Nothing is sad in this respect and nothing is a lesson, nothing is sorry, nothing smells of condemnation, habit, resignation to work, habit of work like this prose plan that we have by his hand from the first act of *Iphigénie en Tauride*. So he stopped.

§ 55. He would have made one tragedy as well as another, a masterpiece as well as another.

§ 56. - All the life. Twenty masterpieces without novelty, without institution; as from *Andromaque*, once *Andromaque* given, he had done five, six, he was going to do seven without novelty, without a new institution.

Nothing gives an impression of arbitrariness, gratuitousness, like this plan in prose of *Iphigénie en Tauride*; a painful impression; duty; a spot. Iphigenia does this; the prince does this; the confidante does this; the people do this; Iphigenia says this; the people do this. They are all at the end of each other. He didn't feel the need to go any further. He did not have health like a Hugo. That cynical courage we've talked about sometimes. To do anything, as long as we do. He felt that this time he was going to do the same thing again.

§ 57. — He constantly varied the data, as if to give himself another problem each time. But it was the same.

The illusion of another problem.

§ 58. — When one reads this plan *in prose* of his first act of an *Iphigénie en Tauride*, it is clear that for him this expression of the *magic of verse*, when applied to him, is no longer literary jargon or jargon of literary history, but it expresses reality itself. It was really, really, literally a magic, a charm; and more black magic than white magic.

When the verse is missing, everything is missing. The charm.

§ 59. — The event was always the same. It always ended badly. By incidents of the same form we were always led to catastrophes of the same

form; to the same disasters; the event itself was impure; the very event was unfortunate, was disgraced.

§ 60. — Corneille's force of grace, on the contrary, is such that it invades the event itself. A Corneille tragedy always ends well. Heroism, clemency, forgiveness, martyrdom, it always ends with a coronation. The ascending temporal palms in the first three are completed, promoted, crowned in *Polyeucte* in eternal palms. The event itself is pure in a tragedy by Corneille, in the tragedies of Corneille; the event itself is holy, the event itself is happy, the event itself is full of grace.

§ 61. — He varied not only the number (of the characters) and the reciprocal situations, arithmetic and geography, arithmetic and geometry, but he doubled his game, he doubled the number of his combinations by playing, according to whether he brought into play what must be called irreversibility or reversibility. He thus had two registers, a double register. That is to say according to whether two terms, whether two characters love each other or whether each one loves who does not love him and loves another. In the first case we have, we obtain a closed pair. In the second case are born what must be called the circuits, which are so familiar to him, each term referring to the other. At the start, from *Andromaque*, the poet presents us with the most perfect example, the *maximum* case of the longest unclosed circuit (if these two words can go together), of the unclosed circuit of the greatest number of terms. And at the same time of the pure circuit, I mean of the circuit without closed couple, if not at the last term, of the circuit where no closed couple is intercalated. From then on he had only to degrade. And from then on, a sort of quadruple, or quintuple balancing, which is tiring to follow, is produced thereby.

§ 62. — Every tragedy of Racine rests on a plan, on a line; and that too quickly becomes tiring.

§ 63. — This cruelty that there is in *les Plaideurs*. It is in the comedy that it is seen well. Precisely because it is less under arms. And this grace, on the contrary, this nobility that there is in *le Menteur* and in the *Suite du Menteur*. In *Les Plaideurs* the cruelty is even sarcastic and already has a modern resonance.

§ 64. — The draping is not the framework and the articulation.

§ 65. — The force of (the) grace of Corneille is such that it does not only carry out this famous purgation of the passions which the ancients said, which the ancients wanted; this purging of characters and morals. But it goes so far that it performs the purging of the event itself.

§ 66. — This three-year delay of *Phèdre*, this spacing, this first spacing was the first indication that something had changed, something broken, that the rhythm, annual, was broken; and this warning itself was numerical, chronological. One could understand afterwards that it had marked a first relaxation, the penultimate relaxation, the beginning, the first blow of the rupture of the rhythm; that he had signified that after this warning the work itself was going to break. That the last release would be rupture itself.

§ 67. — Racine's tragedies are separated sisters lined up that resemble each other. Corneille's four tragedies are a linked family.

§ 68. — From a tragedy by Racine one can make a map. Of a tragedy by Corneille one can only give a *schema*, like those which one sees in books of natural history.

§ 69. — *On the lines of intercession in Polyeucte.* — All the verses of intercession that we have marked, that we have retained in *Polyeucte*, which announce, which introduce, which represent, which manifest, which declare, which publicly proclaim, which technically define the intervention, so to speak, the intercession of saints; general intercession of saints for sinners; applications so to speak, particular intercessions of Néarque for Polyeucte and of Polyeucte for Félix and of Néarque and Polyeucte together for Pauline and the others if there are any only introduce, only present, even when they are after, this great Polyeucte's prayer for Pauline in the presence of Pauline which is already properly a prayer of intercession.

It is one of the greatest beauties of *Polyeucte* that this constant figuration, everywhere present, which enlarges, which enlarges still more, if possible, which perpetually penetrates, which incessantly overflows the text. The figuration, which is one of the essential mechanisms of the sacred, is

perpetually present in this sacred tragedy, it is also one of its essential mechanisms.

§ 70. — It's one of those marvelous inner chords, one of those marvelous essential chords with which this tragedy is full, with which it seems to be nourished.

§ 71. — A firm and precise text, perfectly (de)limited, perfectly drawn, with a firm and clean outline, without a hint of false shadow, without a hint of the use of the stump, all in hatching, a text of the very first greatness, perfectly classical, and which nevertheless one knows not how without any degradation bathes in a bath of surpassing of its own greatness, in one does not know what expansion, what infinite overflow, is completely penetrated by it, completely infiltrated in its very fabric, without however, to lose in it the tenacity of a single grain, without dissolving in it a single one of its grains, is a fate, to speak like him, which has perhaps been given only to him. Because it is not even necessary to say that it is a fate which was given only to very rare works; and to very rare men, to very rare poets. It is a fate which no doubt was given to him alone, which makes *Polyeucte* a unique work. The others lean to one side or the other. Either the enlargements and the obscurities of the extratext advance on the purity, on the hardness of the text, gaining, blurring, biting into it, gnawing away at some grain. And these are, as Hugo would say, conquests of the night. Either the hardness of the text stops, prohibits, at least on some point, the enlargements of the extratext. Either the romantic (at any time whatsoever), (which is of all time) invades the classic, or else the classic is a little poor. What makes, of twenty causes, *Polyeucte* a unique success, the work of all eminent, is this perfect balance. The sharpness is perfect, and the size, the enlargement is no less infinite. The size of the text is perfect and total and the size of the extratext is not, however, limited by it. Inside. No impediment. The purity, the hardness of the text does not allow itself to be undermined in any way. It does not allow itself to be eaten away by a grain, dissolved by a grain. The line is just as pure, the stone is just as clear, just as hard, just as exact; also hard under the nail; as perfectly, as exactly hard. And the text and the work are nonetheless bathed in darkness, in shadows, in infinite lights.

All this classic, all this measure, without slanting a line, without retreating a line, without allowing itself to be cut into, gnawed at, reached by a line, nevertheless bathes in an ocean of excess, of excess, of extrameasurement.

This is the unique achievement.

§ 72. — Such a thin outline; at the same time, together as firm; without a crush; in no way degraded.

§ 73. — But we will have to come back to it, otherwise, somewhere other than in these poor notes. This communion, that communication from all parts of the text with the extratext without appearing at any point of the contour or betraying itself by some wavering, by some loss. And this communion, this communication which is all the more perfect, all the more total.

§ 74. — That said, it is certain that immediately after *Phèdre* presents us with the second success, (but in the order of the pagan, and we will perhaps show that it is in particular because it is of the order of the pagan that it is only the second), the prodigy (no longer the miracle), of this envelopment, of this penetration of the text by an extratext.

§ 75. — This food, which for Corneille is never a (romantic) contamination of the text by the extratext, by an extratext.

§ 76. — If one wanted to speak their jargon, one would say that figuration is precisely one of the factors, an important factor of this communion, of this communication; of this food; of this enlargement without loss; of this food without dissolution. Now it can operate precisely only in the Christian; in the sacred. Now it is very lacking in *Athalie*, although obviously it is not completely absent.

§ 77. — Intercessions of saints for sinners and for saints (before), communion of saints and sinners, communion of saints and saints, efficacy of prayers and merits, reversibility of prayers and merits, in a sense reversibility of graces the intercessions of *Polyeucte*, the general theory, if I may say so, of intercession, several times presented, at least once expressly

and as *ex professo*, and even several times, all these particular intercessions are not themselves, are still only the degrees, than the preparations, than the introductions (when even they are later), than the stools of this great anticipated intercession of Polyeucte for Pauline presents; this one, this supreme intercession gathers all the others; all the others announce it, and culminate in it. What makes the proper value of this intercession, its eminent value, its proper value and its value of representation, its proper value and its value of command, what goes beyond it itself, what goes beyond and enlarges the text, it is that it is itself and that it is more than itself, it is an ordinary prayer and at the same time, together it is already like an extraordinary prayer; it is a prayer of the earth, an ordinary prayer of the earth and at the same time it is already no longer a prayer of the earth, it is a prayer of the earth and already it is a prayer of heaven. She intervenes, she intercedes at the very heart of this tragic debate:

I am odious to you after having given myself!

POLYEUCT

Alas!

Pauline

*How hard it is to get out of this, alas!
Even if he began a happy repentance,
That, forced as it is, I would find charms in it!
But courage, he is moved; I see tears flowing.*

POLYEUCTE

*I pour it out, and would to God that by dint of pouring it out
This too hardened heart could at last be pierced!
The deplorable state in which I abandon you
Is well worthy of the tears that my love gives you;
And, if one can in heaven feel some pain.
I will weep there for you the excess of your misfortunes;
But if, in this abode of glory and light,
This just and good God can suffer my prayer,
If he deigns to listen to a conjugal love,
On your blindness he will spread the Day.
Lord, from your bounties I must obtain it;
She has too many virtues not to be a Christian:
With too much merit it pleased you to form her,
Not to know you and not to love you,
To live in hell as an unfortunate slave,
And under their sad Yoke- die as she is born.*

PAULINE

What are you saying, unfortunate? what dare you wish?

POLYEUCTE

What with all my blood I would like to buy.

Pauline

That rather

POLYEUCTE

*It is in vain to put oneself on the defensive;
This God touches hearts when least thought of.
This happy moment has not yet come;
He will come, but the time is not known to me.*

PAULINE

*Leave this chimera, and love me.*¹⁴¹

It takes courage, and a great deal of barbarity, and decision, and taking upon oneself, and making a harsh repression to oneself, and resolving to form, to give to oneself a very sad opinion of himself to cut here, to thus arbitrarily break off this scene most closely linked to the theatre, if one is permitted to speak here of theatre; (and why wouldn't we talk about it, if it was Corneille's art, and if it is true that a great artist, a great writer does not despise, does not neglect the organic conditions and the profession of his art, but on the contrary gives them the greatest consideration); of an entirely indissoluble inner bond. We will be forgiven that these are only notes. What makes this prayer and this intercession great, what makes it

¹⁴¹ Corneille, *Polyeuchte*, Act IV, sc. III, v. 1252 -1279.

remote, and at the same time exact, severe, harsh exactness, is that in the foreground it is first of all literally an ordinary prayer, a prayer of the earth, a prayer of a man, as we can, as we all must, the prayer of a Christian husband for his unfaithful wife. And together in the second level, in the second degree it is inside, it is already a prayer of intercession properly so called. By a secret, by an ardent interior anticipation, by a secret anterior taking possession of his palms, humble, Christian, secret, but so evident, for all, for himself, by a secret anterior taking of command, by a secret prior seizure of his future, of his next authority of beatitude he speaks, he is already praying for his wife as a martyr in heaven prays for his wife who has remained on earth. Like all those who left, like all those who arrived pray for all those who remained. This is what gives this prayer its fullness, this fullness, this advance, so much accuracy, total accuracy and together this eternal advance. It's already, it's inside, it's in advance a prayer, a ritual intercession. This is the office of Saint Polyeucte. It is already the triumphant Church. As the whole Church Triumphant prays for the whole Church Militant. And for the suffering Church. And so much strength and so much beauty comes from the fact that it's everywhere inside, from the fact that it's not said anywhere. When Polyeucte speaks of his blood,

What with all my blood I would like to buy.

he is so secretly sure that it is more than a prayer and more than a wish, (I am not just saying more than a word and more than a dream), (which is out of the question, because this would be so gross and so thin and so impious), that it is a covenant, that it is a promise, that it is already done; that it is a reality; the grasping of the hand of an eternal reality; that his martyrdom is already a thing understood; that he has open credit, a mystical credit; (barely) anticipated; that his blood is available; that he will begin to use it;

All your blood is little for such sweet happiness!

*But **to dispose of it**, is this blood yours?*

that it is acquired; and as he says himself, that *it is done*.¹⁴²

§ 78. — One of Racine's great original vices is this starting point which he generally took in Euripides, who was not equal to him, who was so notably inferior to him. This fulcrum, this origin. Not only this point of origin of the subjects, but this point of origin of a certain tone. Euripides's subtleties, avocasseries, discussions, his poor tricks, his already modern impieties are very sensibly inferior to Racine. There is infinitely more religion, I say Greek, pagan, in *Phèdre*, more ancient and worship and rite and piety, Greek, ancient, pagan, than in the subtleties, in the malice, in the perpetual trials of Euripides. It is in many senses Euripides who is the most modern.

§ 79. — From the second part, to vary his tragedies. Racine varied the more external conditions, the situations, the historical and geographical conditions. He had made antique ones. The first was ancient. It contained, it was all the others. He made Roman, Imperial Roman, he made Asian, he made Turkish; singular concern for change, for variation; of renewal from the outside, by historical and geographical topographies, by climatic conditions; singular concern and which betrays almost tragically, tragic concern and which betrays this fear, in itself, this impression, this certainty of always doing the same thing. One could even say, one could add: he made two Hebrews. He was secretly tormented by this idea, this view, this knowledge he had of himself. —

Some readers may be surprised ([second] preface) — that anyone has dared to put on the stage such a recent story. But I saw nothing in the rules of the dramatic poem that should have diverted me from my enterprise. In truth, I would not advise an author to take as the subject of a tragedy an action as modern as this, if it had taken place in the country where he wants to have his tragedy represented, nor to put heroes on the stage who would have been known to most spectators. Tragic characters should be looked at with a different eye than we ordinarily look at the characters we have seen so closely. It can be said that the respect we have for the heroes increases as they

*move away from us: major e longinquo reverentia.*¹⁴³

There would be so much to say about this maxim. But these notes must be stopped. It is not by any distance, it is by a rapprochement on the contrary that the Cornelians receive this dignity.

The remoteness of the countries compensates in a way for the too close proximity of times. For the people scarcely distinguish between what is, if I may so speak, a thousand years away from them, and what is a thousand leagues away. This is why, for example, Turkish characters, however modern they may be, have dignity in our theatre. They are looked upon early as old. These are very different manners and customs. We have so little commerce with the princes and other people who live in the Serrail, that we consider them, so to speak, as people who live in another century than ours.

He is right and we are with him. But more at bottom, in the second degree, of depth, there are already, under these words of *different*, others, this restlessness, this concern, this preoccupation with differentiation.

It was almost in this way that the Persians were formerly considered Athenians. Also the poet Aeschylus made no difficulty in introducing into a tragedy the mother of Xerxes, who was perhaps still alive, and in having represented on the theater of Athens the desolation of the court of Persia after the rout of this prince.

We see, moreover, how much there would be to say about this generally ill-founded comparison of French tragedy with Greek tragedy.

¹⁴³ The Second Preface of Bajazet, *Oeuvres de Jean Racine*, 2:491-493.

However, this same Aeschylus was found in person at the battle of Salamis, where Xerxes had been vanquished. And he had again found himself at the defeat of the lieutenants of Darius, father of Xerxes, in the plain of Marathon. For Aeschylus was a man of war, and he was the brother of that famous Cynegira of whom so much is said in antiquity, and who died so bravely attacking one of the ships of the king of Persia.

Cynegire would have said to you: We are two equals! ¹⁴⁴ In this disarming prose of Racine, so modest, so in its place, like everything that is from our seventeenth century, so deaf one feels constantly running, or rather under this prose, a rear, a sub-concern to obtain differentiations, to obtain, through an annual journey, a differentiation, a new annual difference. At least I feel this constant, this perpetually resurgent concern.

§ **80.** — This text, like so many texts and without our realizing it, runs on two levels. Expressly, on a first level, it speaks of estrangement only to justify its dignity, the dignity of this new tragedy. Below, on a second level, this text betrays a concern for novelty itself, for differentiation.

It is this taste, this need for novelty for differentiation, for renewal which, in the sterility of a Voltaire, will take him on the greatest journeys, will cause him to commit extreme geographical and chronological ramblings, will take him to China, to we don't know which Persia and Babylonia, more or less conventional, rather more than less, and always among the Turks. In all this Orient of the French eighteenth century. In this mushy Muslimania. In this persistent Turquerie. The taste of the Turk is always a very bad sign for the French classic. It is good only in Molière. And the beginning of the (tragic) journey is all the same in *Bajazet*.

§ **81.** — So when he himself stopped the company, it was never more than a series that he stopped. It was not a work, organic, a being, as a whole, that he decapitated or that he uncrowned, a work that he incapacitated

¹⁴⁴ Hugo, *L'Année terrible*, "Juin", xi, v. 34.

or that he uncrowned. They were links that would be missing from a chain, not at all a head that would be missing from a body, a crown from a head. The first link had been *Andromaque*. He was, he already gave all the others. The last link would be this rather than that; and this one or that one at the end, who could have been, who could be, would not be, never would be. No matter, there would only ever be a broken chain. And links less. All the value of the work is already, is included in each of the links, was in the first, the tone, the taste, the resonance, the characteristic of the work.

What this link is then worth, what it is, of what tone, of what metal, of what proper value, of what taste, of what resonance, of what order of magnitude, it is what I repeat that we cannot review here. All that we were able to say there, and in short, in preliminary, is that everything is already in each link; that the whole work is in each link; that the *complete works* are a chain of these links.

§ 82. — Each of his tragedies is a being apart from itself; and the whole of the work is not a being of the whole, a superior being. It is a ringed body, even more ringed than a ringed body, it is a body without a leader and without a crown.

§ 83. — On the contrary, what does the works of all kinds in the second half of his career matter to Corneille? (Where there are still so many and so many beauties, everywhere, without counting *Nicomède* and this unique *Psyché*). (And that admirable Titus and Bérénice whose trial we will have to revise some day). (And so many others). But for today let's not talk about these beauties. A first career, the greatest, the greatest of all tragic careers, the greatest of all dramatic careers, the greatest certainly of all poetic careers themselves had just ended, crowned itself in *Polyeucte*. Four years, five years had sufficed to found the greatest kingdom, the greatest empire of tragedy and poetry that there had ever been. *Five years had sufficed to found this empire*. It is no longer here an annual rhythm, an annual production. He did not regularly (then) perform his annual tragedy. It was not this regular, arithmetic rhythm; this constant speed; this rhythm regularly maintained, regularly arithmetical. A more secret rhythm animated him. A secret rhythm, less easily grasped, less accountable, a secret organic rhythm, with

unequal triggers, administered his production, a rhythm made the fecundity of his genius beat. Neither does he digital rhythm; a (seemingly) (more) irregular rhythm. If we are willing to think that these four masterpieces are organized among themselves in their chronology in such a way that in the editions, or in editions, we can date *le Cid* from 1636, *Horace* and *Cinna* together from 1639, and *Polyeucte* from 1640 we remain seized by this gathering of final acceleration which starting, which starts from a broad base in a kind of slowness and retardation, (but it was like a calculated slowness, a slowness to (better) gain momentum) , results in the most prodigious rate of production, in the most marvelous acceleration of fecundity, and in the most useful, the most profitable, the fullest fecundity, which has ever been given to the genius of a man. This unique acceleration is however only the translation into rhythm and number of an essential acceleration, a secret acceleration, an interior acceleration, an organic acceleration. We will show, my dear Pesloûan, we will show these three departures, this single arrival; these three beginnings, this end; these three advances, this peak; these three buttresses, this summit.

Polyeucte is not a fourth work which comes after three others. You must not say, you must not count *le Cid*, one; *Horace*, two; *Cinna*, three; *Polyeucte*, four. The first three are between them and on the same plane; they are three bases and all three together and in the same way they culminate in *Polyeucte*. This required the advances of these three buttresses, the foundations of these three advances. And these three advances, these three anticipations, these three promises required this summit, this leader and this crown. At these beginnings, at these origins, this end was needed. *Polyeucte* picks up in itself the first three great tragedies in the same way, and all three together and in the same way they culminate, they come to an end, they crown each other in *Polyeucte*. He is the bouquet of ears of these three sheaves, of this triple sheaf, he is the ax of this triple bundle. This system of four is no longer only, is not an arithmetic, numerical system. It's an organic, three-based, one-headed system.

We will show the triple collection, the collection of this triple beam, the culmination, the completion, the crowning, the triple promotion of these three works in one. We will show it in detail. In what we can continue to call

the mechanism. We will show it *translated* in the very detail and in the mechanism. We have already shown it translated, expressed in a system of verse and at the end of the verse in a system of rhymes. We have shown interesting rhymes, promoted from *Horace* to *Polyeucte*, forming, making a linked system.

We will show, we will follow this triple promotion everywhere. Three works advancing with the same front, on a single front, bringing, offering together their triple nourishment; three works forgetting themselves, large enough nevertheless, which could themselves be capitals and mistresses. All the young heroism of the *Cid*, all the Christian heroism, all the chivalrous heroism, all the youth, all the heroism, all the chivalry of the *Cid* promoted in *Polyeucte*, into eternal youth, into heroism and as it were into the chivalry of holiness. All this temporal youth, all this carnal youth transformed, promoted into eternal youth. All this heroism of war promoted into heroism of martyrdom. All this temporal heroism promoted in heroism of holiness, in eternal heroism, in heroism of martyrdom. All this heroism of (temporal) race promoted into heroism of grace, of eternal race. All this young and knightly generosity promoted, which becomes this young generosity of holiness. Whence this race in grace itself, like this young carnal and temporal race in the same eternal, this separate race of saints, so different, so nearer to us than so many other races of saints; this race of grace, this race of holiness so particular, so chivalrous, so generous, so liberal, so French.

This honor of holiness came, proceeding by promotion of chivalric honor. When so many sanctities were on the contrary rather, naturally, literally sanctities without honor.

And this promotion from *le Cid* to *Polyeucte* marked in the very fabric, in the very stone, in the matter, in the rhythm, by the promotion from the *stanzas* of the *Cid* to the *stanzas* of *Polyeucte*. The *stanzas* of the *Cid* announce, prepare the *stanzas* of *Polyeucte*, the *stanzas* of *Polyeucte* resume, revive the *stanzas* of *le Cid*, raise them, bring them to the supreme degree. This promotion from one to another, this promotion in matter, in the flesh, this material promotion, this carnal promotion, this temporal promotion

only represents in matter and in the flesh the promotion itself, the proper promotion, the entire promotion, total, integral of the two works. From one work to another. Or rather it is the same stanzas which are promoted, transferred, which pass from one register to another, from the heroic register to the sacred register. Who go up. From time to eternity.

On the other hand, from the second, from a second part *Horace* prepares, *Horace* brings, *Horace* no longer announces chivalrous heroism (far from it, and by a lot; everything rests on a ruse of war which results secondly in the massacre of an ordinary wounded and thirdly in the massacre of a gravely wounded; the whole victory, (and the victory of Rome itself), is founded on that; and this ruse of war is very far from be of the same order and form as that which raises Rodrigue against the surprised Moors.

Our profound silence deceiving their minds,

for, among other (reasons), the Moors themselves.

*They no longer dare to doubt that they surprised us ;*¹⁴⁵

so it's a whole other honor); no longer chivalrous and warrior honor, but already a military honor, a military heroism, no longer a warrior, properly im honor, a civic military heroism, an honor, a heroism of civic military war and no longer of war at all chivalrous. Rodrigue would be instantly dishonored if against the Count, in single combat, he employed a ruse of war; if he used them otherwise than against the Moors and in the great war; that would be to defraud the fight of God. This heroism of the city of Horace, of the young Horace and the old, will be promoted in Polyeucte to the heroism of the celestial city. It is the same heroism that is promoted from the register of the fatherland, from the earthly city to the register of the heavenly city. This love, this piety, this religion of the earth, of a land becomes the love, the piety, the religion of heaven. Everything from the city of Rome becomes everything from the city of God. Everything that is of

¹⁴⁵ Corneille, *Le Cid*, Act IV, sc. III, v. 1279 & 1280.

the earthly city, of the temporal city, of the carnal city becomes everything that is of the timeless city, of the spiritual city, of the carnal eternal city. It's a whole proposal, it's a whole register that plays for a second register to play the following year. And by a single choice, which itself represents, in this triple bundle, the greatest vocation, the greatest historical temporal destination, temporal political, this earthly city from which we will then leave is in its origin the city of Rome itself, in one point, at the original swing of its fortune, the city of Rome, origin and germ and point of departure of the Roman Empire itself material foundation, material organism, carnal framework of the Christian world. Material framework (pre)figuring the Christian world.

And this kind of Roman sanctity, of savage sanctity that you have to see that there is already in Horace. In the young. In the old.

Thus all the Romanness of *Polyeucte* is already in germ, in origin in *Horace*, and the Christian is there already doubly, triply announced, promised, by heroism, by the civic, by a sort of anterior holiness, by a rigor, by a roughness (which will be found so tender in *Polyeucte* and which is already so tender in reality in *Horace*, and especially in the old *Horace*); by the Roman, by the Roman temporal, by the temporal destination of Rome. By the origin point of the Empire.

This promotion from *Horace* to *Polyeucte* being marked in matter, in detail notably by this promotion that we have encountered of the linked system, of the two verses, of the two rhymes in art.

From the third part, finally, not only all the Romanness of *Polyeucte*, the Roman force, but all the Roman imperial, the empire, the Roman clemency, the Roman peace, the imperial Roman majesty, *jus atque lex*, the right and the law, administration, Roman law, Roman law, Roman force, all the temporal greatness, all that bears the spiritual and the eternal of *Polyeucte*, the Roman province,

*Son-in-law of the governor of the whole province;*¹⁴⁶

the Asiatic province, (Achaëa), Armenia, Judea, the governor, the Roman interests, the procurator of Judea,¹⁴⁷ the prefecture, (so soon the bishop, the Roman bishop), and also all the philosophical Roman, the philosophical paganism and softened. Sévère, who makes such an important part of *Polyeucte*, that we generally forget, that we misunderstand, Félix, Pauline even and especially in all his previous life are posed first, are prepared, are finally posed for the first time in *Cinna or the clemency of Augustus*. All ready for next year. (And even Roman bad faith, so that there would be some for Felix.)

A triple proposition was made on the proposition tables, a triple showbread was baked.

Such were, my dear Peslouan, our own, our modest anticipations; to ourselves; our long and intense common meditations; such were some of the *labors* which we meditated. They are happy, those who can *work*, who, free from worry, hassle, the jumble of time, in the great silence of the lamps on winter evenings, will be able to work *the authors*.

And now more notes. *Keine ... mehr*.¹⁴⁸ More notes and more paragraphs. 'This rupture, Halévy, would take place in truly tragic circumstances. It would happen, you know better than anyone, at the heart of an uneasy battle. So different in character, so alike in heart, I want to hope, I want to believe, I am sure, of such different character, temperament, society; I want to believe it, with one heart; the more we are different, the more in this same army, in this single army, we are indispensable to each other. We are (like) in an army, we are an army where everyone has the same heart, but where one is the cavalry, the other the engineers, the other the artillery, the other finally the infantry. And again it's you and me together the infantry. We are the *foot soldiers*. But the last square too, it was the foot soldiers. There are different weapons. A single army; several weapons. And it is necessary, for a single army, that there are several weapons. And yet you and I do not

¹⁴⁷ *The Procurator of Judea* was a book by Anatole France.

¹⁴⁸ No...more.

differ so much. We differ even less. We don't even differ from weapon to weapon. We are even in the same weapon, of the same weapon, we serve in the same weapon, we are both in the infantry. We are, we only march in a slightly different infantry. You are of a half-briard¹⁴⁹ regiment. I belong to that excellent republican regiment called the Royal-Beauceron.¹⁵⁰ Only there are days when I would give a lot to go and serve just a little in the Vert-Vendômois.

Will the grenadier quarrel with the vaulter. What a battle we fight, together, as much as anyone you know. We are defeated, it is a point at least where I think we would agree. Where I think we think together. We are victorious defeated. And who don't want to, who can't stay on their defeat, on their victorious defeat, who can't endure their defeat. We fight in the most difficult conditions, in almost impossible conditions. Beaten on all sides, tested on all bets, we are a small troop that will not surrender. We walk like a troop beaten on all sides, not defeated, which will not surrender. Is it time to divide us. Beaten by all the winds, for both of us is it time to separate. Am I going to scratch your name on my copy, make a forgery in short, since it was made for you, since it was *inscribed* for you, since it was addressed to you, since it was *sent* to you. Am I going to put in your place, in your place, a false name, in short, a feigned name, a *pseudonym*. Will you no longer be the one to whom I speak. And you yourself may believe that you have a second reader like me with you. Don't trust it. You will never have a second reader like me.

Beaten by all the winds, the same winds, we are, we are going through a crisis, you know, we find ourselves in tragic circumstances. Everything that was charged, officially charged with maintaining culture, everything that is constituted, everything that has been instituted to maintain culture and the humanities betrays the culture and the humanities. Betrays them officially, formally, and takes glory and honor from them. And profit. Betrays them with a kind of magnitude. And almost invention. And culture and the

¹⁴⁹ Briard is a breed of dog.

¹⁵⁰ Royal-Beauceron is a breed of dog.

humanities are no longer defended except by us, who have not received the mandate, I mean who do not care, who have only received the mandate from ourselves, I mean who don't care, who (n') have received the mandate (only) from our race and our great ancestors. A unique show. A tragic spectacle. Once again, the Sorbonne has fallen into scholasticism. And in the scholasticism of materialism, the worst of all. It is not betraying old friendships, it is not offending anyone to say that this Sorbonne, which we loved so much, having absorbed the École Normale, has become a mistress of lack of culture, and who does not care. boasts, has become a mistress of error and barbarism, this Sorbonne where we completed our studies. These masters whom we loved so much, so filially, what have they become. A singular phenomenon, which proves that barbarism is always watching. When we make our confessions, we will only have to present a welcoming and still cultivated Sorbonne, that of nearly twenty years ago, then it will be that of forty years ago, a friendly, French Sorbonne, masters whom we filially loved. Twenty years pass, barbarism watches. What has all of this become. Around us, Halévy, in our closest entourage, ignorance has supporters. You know it. I'm still not the cause. I don't blame you, you mustn't blame me. In twenty years, a temporal domination in intellectual matters so solidly established, (temporally, in temporal power), that no chair of higher education escapes it. A temporal domination of an intellectual party. A Sorbonne which is talked about too much; outside of education, outside of work. A Sorbonne about which the least we can say is that it is talked about too much, for an honest Sorbonne. A temporal domination of an intellectual party which undoubtedly does not have the heads and the hearts, which does not hold it, (but) which has (all) the chairs, which has the honors, which has the money, who does the weddings, like the (former) Jesuits, and like the (former) rabbis, who has the offices, who has the temporal government, all the temporal powers. Who has the contests and exams. A requirement, an intellectual temporal tyranny, I mean temporal in intellectual matters as never the French of any regime would have supported one, would have supported it. The French of no old regime, of no other regime. Neither from the old royalist regime, nor from the old republican regime. Singular phenomenon, singular contradiction. Singular situation, tragic situation. Men whom we pay fifteen thousand francs a year

to teach, that is to say, I think, to maintain Greek, Latin, French, have betrayed Greek, have betrayed Latin, have betrayed French ; and these three great cultures are no longer defended except by the poor and miserable; like us ; they are no longer maintained except by beggars; like us; by *individualities without mandate*. By poor teachers, I mean poor middle school and high school teachers. And outside the University, or rather jointly with the University, by journalists, (for fortunately we are not the only ones), (and we are more and more numerous every day, and soon we will be legion) , in newspaper and magazine articles. In booklets, in pamphlets, in books. In the notebooks[cahiers]. It may be said that the University today receives much more real help from without than from within. And what is perhaps strongest in all this debate is that the bureaucratic power itself, the offices of the Ministry of Public Instruction, the bureaucratic party, or as we say in polemics *the offices in the rue de Grenelle* have, in short, defended culture much more than the Sorbonne and have often defended it against it. Men who have never done science, who don't know a word about it, who suspect nothing of it, who have never done mathematics, physics, chemistry, or biology (it must also be said , in their defense, that they have not done either, that they have also done neither letters, nor art(s), nor philosophy, nor morals, nor religion, that they do not understand anything about it, that they don't know a word of it, that they suspect nothing of it, since they have never written, put together a novel, or a cost, or a poem, or a short story, neither an essay, nor a chronicle, nor a pamphlet, nor a speech, nor a comedy, nor a fairy tale, nor a tragedy, nor a mystery, nor a sonnet, nor a farce, nor a medieval allegorical farce, nor a morality play, nor a notebook, or confessions, or memoirs, or even a review, and that on the other hand their security as officials puts them precisely at the shelter of terrible worries and moral problems), (nor an *epistle*), want to make us take, at this price, the bladders for lanterns, and the the letters for science. They only succeed thus in creating confusion, a general confusion, which would be joyful, if they were not also profoundly sad. They only succeed in making a scaffolding, external, not a monument, of imitation science, of seeming science, of false science, of pretended, so-called science, of feigned science, of *imitation of science*, more beautiful than life, which is the laughing stock of (real) scholars. Thus they lose letters and do not gain science. They lose letters and do not

gain, do not acquire a science. They lose art, philosophy, morals, religion, and acquire no science, no science, no science. *They lose*, I mean they risk losing themselves, in themselves, for themselves and for others, and they are sure to lose themselves, to have no more; *perdunt atque amittunt; periculo perdunt, re vera sane amittunt.*¹⁵¹ They take their time for that. They take their time precisely when the real scientists, the real mathematicians, the real physicists, the real chemists and biologists come to recognize very happily the capital part, the original part, the primordial part that takes in the very scientific work, in the invention, in the discovery of science the methods of art, the intuition, the intuitions, the supplenesses of art, the docilities of art, the inventions of art. Just talk to a real mathematician, I mean a mathematician who has done math. At the very moment that by an extraordinary parallel movement all the sciences and all the scholars, all the four big sciences, all the four big branches, all the four big trunks come to the suppleness, the docility of art, the realities of art, it is precisely these literary people who want to dispense with it, who want to deprive themselves of it. Let us add that they claim, under the name of scientist, a rigor that the scholars themselves, that the true scholars do not know, that they do not seek, to which they do not claim. All this to build a science that is not one. To build a science that is not one, we have gone beyond. We outraged. Look, here's one, an outrage. We wanted to make one like there's never been one. By means of which, to hold on to this marvelous invention, the whole movement, the whole immense movement of the Renaissance, notably of the French Renaissance, this conquest, this enormous conquest, this enormous acquisition of culture is recklessly, from a heart light, cheerfully exposed. Without us, lost. And we lost both the ancient culture and the Christian culture, the mystery and the humanities, the city and Christianity. Singular science, superscience, suprascientific. Seek information on a monument, on a work, on a text, for a text, for the understanding of a text anywhere other than in the text itself (and it is the same people who pretend to have invented to resort to the text, to go to the texts), (you know, the famous sources), to seek lights on a text, for the understanding of a text, everywhere, provided, on this sole condition that it

¹⁵¹ "They lose and lose; they lose by danger, they really lose."

is not in the text; the same. You know, Halévy, that they hold everything, all the chairs, all the temporal power; and that a man who defends French, Latin, or Greek, or simply intelligence, is a lost man; that there is currently not a single appointment in higher education without the candidate having made his submission, to these gentlemen, without giving pledges, signing the reverse, signing the capitulation and thought, and freedom of thought.

Without having made his devotions to sociology.

Let's say the word, it's a church, secular, radical, which has established itself among us, on us. It is a temporal spiritual power, temporal intellectual, temporal in spiritual matter, temporal in intellectual matter. *The house belongs to me, I will make it known.*¹⁵² It is a scholastic clerical temporal power as there have been so bad, as there has never been worse. They are, they are, you know, a well-organized gang. All the enormous increase, all the enormous acquisition of culture of the Renaissance, in particular of the French Renaissance, this acquisition which one believed acquired, all this treasure, all this defense and illustration, all this eminent dignity, all this enormous acquisition not acquired, badly acquired, (which we thought acquired forever, so much the opposite, only twenty years ago, would have seemed scandalous), all this enormous acquisition called into question, put in danger (without us, lost) by the lowest demagogy, all liberal studies, all studies, all cultures of humanity, for the satisfaction of the caprice, the delirium, the madness, the brutality of a few despots. And even sometimes of their very bestiality. A method (historical (?), scientific (!) (?)) which comes back, which consists in saying, and boasting about it, that to approach a *voluptuous* study of the *Letters Philosophical*, it is necessary to have established twenty books of notes, (that is to say comments, no doubt not foreign to the text, but carefully external to the text A *voluptuous* reading of the *Letters Philosophical*, by the voluptuousness of twenty volumes of notes, the word is M. Rudler's. It seems that he also says a study that soars, or a study in which you soar. I don't know anymore. Neither does he. He may mean a study, a reading in an airplane. Who would have thought, when we knew the honest

¹⁵² Molière, *Tartuffe*, Act IV, sc. vii, v. 1558.

Rudler at the École Normale, whom a generally ungrateful life would reserve for him twenty volumes of deaf pleasures (unfortunately they are not silent.) There are many surprises in the promotions. integral analyses, metaphysical analyses, (metaphysically) exhausting analyzes (of reality) of which the scholars, of whom the true scholars do not care, of which they have nothing to do, of which they do not care, of which they do not need to pursue, to carry on their work, to effect their progress, true scientific progress, I say real scholars, scholars who have done science (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology), it is our new literary people who want them to carry out, obtain, lead to a kind of full completion; it is (therefore) these men who are in no way scholars. Exhausting analyzes (metaphysically) that true scholars do not demand, which they do not talk about, which they do not claim, it is they (also) who talk about them, who want them, *who make them*. Integral analyses, (metaphysically) exhausting analyzes that true scholars do not even seek in scientific matters, which they do not care about, they, being more clever, obtain them for you in human matters, in human matters. These exhausting analyzes that the true scholars do not even seek, do not even propose to carry out, knowing that there are syntheses, they take them away from you in a jiffy (of twenty volumes). Because we mustn't be wanted, we mustn't be frightened, we mustn't be imposed on us with the establishment, with the handling of these twenty volumes. Twenty volumes is a lot for the work, it's heavy to put at arm's length. But for an integral analysis (of human matter, in human matter), that is not much; for an infinite analysis it is infinitely little. For an exhaustive analysis it is nothing.

That is to say that all the tricks, all the scaffolding, all the movements of approach, all the *approaches*, all the *approximations* that scientists have invented, have imagined, have been forced, have been forced to invent in order to go around of reality because they were not inside, to triangulate from afar (from less far away) matter, their own matter, because they were not, as spirits, matter, because they were not were not, as spirits, their matter, because they were not even, as spirits, *in* matter, *in* their matter, they who on the contrary enjoyed in their studies and for their studies this unique privilege of being same order as their matter, as their own matter, to be (put), to be born, to be situated at the heart of their own matter, *to do like the others*, servile imitators, monkey imitators, foolish imitators, proud , proud

imitators, proud, proud of themselves and of their imitation, proud, proud of their models es, (the real scholars), of their so-called models, of their bosses where they understand nothing, glorious imitating monkeys they take all this rubbish on their shoulders, on their poor loins, thin, on their hunched shoulders, (this rubbish which is only a jumble for them, which is not a jumble for the true scholars, or rather which is only a necessary, inevitable, indispensable, congruent jumble for them), they load on their backs all these ladders and all these micrometers and coming out of their house, moving, from their own house, without thinking of returning they go to the house opposite, or, as much as possible, to a much more distant house, to the furthest house, to see if there wouldn't be in this house, the furthest away, a semblance of a skylight, a lost corner, which would give, but from very far, on their house, (abandoned, on their own abandoned house), 'where we could maybe, by pointing a lot of instruments, and then doing be a lot of calculations, to see, between seeing a little of what would happen at home.

Singular scholars, singular science. Instead of appealing at least to a few sciences, to some science which has at least some kinship with them, or rather whose matter has at least some kinship with theirs, instead of relying on, for example to botany, anatomy and plant physiology, as did, for example, at least that poor and tall Brunetière,¹⁵³ to whom, moreover, it must be admitted that it generally succeeded badly; or even instead of relying on, leaning on animal zoology, anatomy and physiology, which is all the same a little close in a certain sense, in many senses, whose subjects are entirely likewise neighbors, finally instead of leaning, leaning on biology, which they do not know (which they are still suspicious of, instinctively, the only instinct they have, the instinct of mistrust, which they suspect is too supple, too complacent, too lively, too artistic), (too much what *they* should be), the guys go straight to chemistry, which they don't know either, to physics, which they don't know, to mathematics, which they then don't know. It is very remarkable that the ignorant always go to mathematics, as to a marvelous science, as to a science more than science, as to all that is

¹⁵³ Ferdinand Brunetière was a French writer and critic. A staunch Dreyfusard, he died in 1906.

most learned, sir. They have this secret assurance, and they take it into account in their conduct, in order to be the most learned, learned to the supreme, to the last degree, to be (the) more learned than everyone else, they have this deaf, this official conviction that mathematics is more scientific than physics, physics more scientific than chemistry, chemistry more scientific than biology. Having heard vaguely about this classification, this classification of sciences, this (famous) classification of Auguste Comte. So justly famous in the baccalaureate. This is all they retained, all they learned, all they understood of Auguste Comte's classification. They are convinced that it thus forms a (purely) linear series, and confusing, (because this very classification of Auguste Comte, of which they have heard, which they know by hearsay, they, the amateurs of sources, the drinkers spring water, this very classification they don't understand anything about it, they don't know it, they only interpret it the wrong way), and thus confusing *the abstract* in this very classification, taken in this very classification, confusing *the abstract* with *the scientific* they are convinced that this means, that this linearity consists in being a *scientific* linearity, that by going up the line, the series, the linear series each stage, each degree is, makes a progress of *scientific*, that the series, that the progression of increasing *abstraction* is in reality (if I may say so) a series, a progression of increasing science, of increasing *scientific*, (I would not be surprised if in their poor *scientific* heads there is still than something greater than *science*, greater, more marked, more honorable, more advanced, more noble, more scientific, more ritual, more taboo, more totem), (finally something more), and they are convinced that the series, that the progression of *increasing complexity is actually conversely, contrary, a regression, a series of decreasing scientific*. That is to say, the further down the sciences become filled with reality, the more they despise them. This is how they interpret Comte's classification in the wrong way. Or more exactly, rather in the wrong direction, in a completely off the mark direction. Quite different. Completely foreign. Not just in reverse. But in a diminished sense. In a coarse, crude sense. So you won't stop them. They won't just be biologists, na. It would be nothing. They will be more scientific, they will be chemists and physicists. They won't just be chemists

and physicists, na.¹⁵⁴ That still wouldn't be scientific enough. They will be even more scientific, supremely scientific. They will be no less than mathematicians. I tell you, all mathematical rigor.

But my friend, (it's this literary man I'm talking about), all these people would like to be like you. As you were born, naturally, natively, as you were born native. They would like to be inside, as you are, as you were, before going out. As you were before leaving it, they would like to be there. Either born there, or introduced there. To have been introduced there. It is to get into it that they have (invented, erected) so many apparatus(es). It is not for anything other than to get in there, little, poorly, cautiously, patiently, as best they can. They would like to be in your place. Believe me, my friend, they would all give their compasses to be able to do without compasses, for finer measurements, for fuller, more delicate, more finely cut accuracy.

They would like to be there. They would like to be like you. They would like, as spirits, the same as spirits, to be matter. They would like to be, as spirit(s), their (own) matter. Then they wouldn't ask for so long. They wouldn't ask for that much. They would not ask their account. They wouldn't ask for their rest. They wouldn't build all those battering rams and all those catapults. They would not arm these very inventions, these very mechanisms, these very machines that you then borrow from them.

You were right (it's always up to this literary man) to mistrust biology. They would have at least taught you prudence, a certain prudence. They have even more than the others, when they are true, if not real, when they are (really, truly) scientific. They would have taught you precautions; but that is what you fear the most. Botany, for example, where is the botanist who would say, and wouldn't we immediately lock up the botanist who would say: Ladies and gentlemen, I am going to push you not a romance but an exhausting analysis of these twenty cubic meters of earth, an analysis so perfectly exhausting that listen to me carefully: it will no longer be a question afterwards, it will no longer be in any way interesting, absolutely in no way, there will no longer be any question, in order to know the story, of

¹⁵⁴ 'na' is not a typo.

the event of the tree which will grow in it, then to know if then we will put in it, if we will drop a chestnut or an acorn. It will no longer have any importance, no kind of importance, an importance mathematically equal to zero. We would lock him up, the botanist. However, this is exactly what our new literary people want, what our new literary people want. They make an exhausting analysis in twenty volumes. Supposedly exhausting. Exhausting of what. Of everything that is not the text. (Naturally). Of everything outside the text. If we could, of everything that is foreign to the text. Then they profess. I mean both that together they teach and together they make a profession. We have done, they say, we have done this exhausting analysis in twenty volumes. We know perfectly everything that is not the text, everything extrinsic, everything extratext; totally, integrally, absolutely; scientifically; they want to say metaphysically, but they don't have the courage; and then they are not forced to speak French; it is the writer who is forced to speak French. What does it matter, they then say, what does it matter that in these twenty volumes, to know the history, to know the event of the man who will grow, what does it matter then that in these twenty cubic meters is found (put) (then) a Molière or a Beaumarchais.

A botanist, a biologist does not dare, will never speak (of) mathematics, of (the) mathematical certainty, of (the) mathematical knowledge, of method, of mathematical exactness, he never speaks, he never thinks of exhaustion. A mathematician, for many reasons, other reasons, contrary reasons, the same reasons, a mathematician speaks of it with caution. Little talk about it. Our proud chaps of litterateurs talk about it boldly, they only talk about accuracy. They don't think, if they knew French they would only speak from exhaustion. They talk, they speak, they write. They talk tirelessly about accuracy. They speak of punctuality ruthlessly. They speak of accuracy imperturbably.

So Halévy we exchanged a pair of witnesses. But to save money we exchanged the same one. Where else would we have found (all) the same, a second pair. Julien Benda, Robert Dreyfus, two trebles. When I say we traded them I mean it. I flatter myself. They traded very well without us. Come on, let's confess, let's tell the truth today. We have devotions around us such that these devotions would go, would not hesitate, so far as to

prevent us, *by force*, from doing stupid things. We have friends who wouldn't let us. They traded very well on their own. It has become so obvious to a number of people, and this very year to opinion, in general, to the great opinion, that our notebooks have (become), constitute more than a single enterprise, a single institution, d 'a unique prize, and in a certain sense a unique achievement that I know well that there is a constant conspiracy, a permanent plot, not perhaps to feed us, but to keep us from falling, and even for us prevent us from exposing ourselves. Our friends, I feel that our friends would not hesitate to go to extreme lengths. A plot, a traced plot runs below, a plot network runs all around us. Let's not be stupid. We are walking on dangerous ground. All our friends conspire for us. Yours, mine, which are sometimes the same. At least mine are still yours. I would like to be certain that yours are always mine. Let's face it. Hardly had the noise spread, like a slight murmur, that we had to guess, suspect, rather than we couldn't hear it, that maybe there was, there was going to be something between us, that immediately, instantly, we felt enveloped in the innumerable paths of this deaf conspiracy. Never have I had so much pleasure in feeling my hands tied. In this Paris, however deserted (it was the beginning of the holidays and everyone had left or was leaving), we felt seized by a thousand supple and fragile, unbreakable ties. On my side Peslouan was ready, like a huge reserve. I saw the hour when Pierre Marcel returned like a telegram from the Saint-Briac Valley. I saw the time we were going to mobilize Taco. In a need they mobilized Marianne. It's a good sign for the Republic, Halévy, when the Prince's councils are so determined to tie his arms. It must be clearly understood, officially, and drawn up in the form of a protocol that I did not want in my notebook to attack your personal courage, nor to offend you, nor, a fortiori, to outrage you, nor to harm your the idea we have of your courage, nor compare, will judge your courage. When I want to outrage, I go about it with another ink. When I want to offend, I know how to do it. I never wanted to outrage you, or even offend you, and not having wanted to, you have to admit that I didn't do it, because otherwise I would be a bad writer, and that would surprise me a lot. I would (then) be an unfit writer. I know that I can be, and often want to be, an unpleasant writer. I know that I am not an unfit writer. It never occurred to me (and therefore I am sure that it could not have occurred to me in pen,

that it could not have come to my page), nor judge your courage, or compare your courage to mine.

I never intended to *judge* your courage, to *judge* your heart. Where would I have taken it, from whom would I have received the mandate. Where would I get my power from? Who would have signed my credentials. Where would I have taken it, from whom would I have the right. I am too Christian[Je suis trop chrétien], Halévy, you know it better than anyone, not to have an invincible horror of *judgment*, a fear, a horror of *judging*, a sort of insurmountable physical horror, so to speak. *Do not judge so that you will not be judged*,¹⁵⁵ it is one of the most dreadful words which have been pronounced, one of those which are present to me everywhere. To tell the truth, she does not leave me. The *judicium* is my enemy, my aversion, my horror. I have such a horror of *judgment* that I would rather condemn a man than judge him. I never intended to compare your courage and mine. I want to believe that we have substantially the same, belonging substantially to the same class of mobilization of the same French army. Compare your courage, compare mine, where would be my standard, where my rule, where the level of our lives. We always speak of war, which is the great measure of courage; I mean the great temporal measurement, perhaps the only one, but neither you nor I have ever done it. We almost did. Several times. In these alerts we made the same countenance. We were raising the same head. In this alert in particular, in this alarm of 1905, we started from the same footing. Already both of us were no longer young men in old regiments, we were old men in young regiments. However. With our air of not touching it, you know that it was the unanimous cry of the Cercottes field¹⁵⁶: *If once the reservists marched, it would be for good*. During all this alarm, as long as the tension lasted, when Germany did not enter, because she did not dare, all the time that she did not enter at the same pace, we were going the same roads; we kept together beautifully trained; in need we fell side by side, as long as the tension lasted, we fell each other, we fell our forty kilometers like a young man. We would be ready to start over. As far as the carcass wants it. Such companies, such

¹⁵⁵ Matthew 7:1, Luke 6:37.

¹⁵⁶ Cercottes field is where Péguy did his military training, it is about 10 kilometers from Orléans.

accompaniments, such preserves; such roads; shouldn't such memories last a lifetime. Shouldn't they mark a lifetime. Must they not count, as sacred. Shouldn't they be valid for a lifetime. Such common memories, in common, picked in common, heaped up, picked up like a common harvest. This harvest of the road. These common steps. Shouldn't such memories engage, in a certain sense, (a whole) life, mark, engage our two lives, count for (all) what remains to us of these two lives, our two, already so already deeply diminished, what is more, so diminishing. Don't such memories illuminate a lifetime, aren't they worth, aren't they counting for a lifetime.

One by the other, Halévy, one towards the other we have known suddenly, both together we have known sin and the state of sin. The philosophers and the philosophies, these coarse ones, (theologies and casuistry, these other coarse ones, these coarse parallels, and the scholastics), the clericals of one and the other law, these coarse ones together, the doctors of the clerical law and anticlerical law, these spouses, the doctors of secular (clerical) law and of clerical (secular) law, these conspirators, all these intellectuals teach together, profess that there are sins, *peccata*, acts that we commit, acts, limited, that we sin. What we commit. That with these sins are born and die, begin and end, our responsibilities are cut out. And everything in the systems of the intellectuals accompanies responsibility and responsibilities, is modeled on responsibilities, follows them blindly: regret, remorse, repentance, penance, contrition. Alas, my friend, if we only had to beware of the sins we commit; we could still see. But sins are like automobiles. They circulate themselves. They are waiting for us, they are watching for us themselves. And they even manage to make it still our fault. You leave home every morning. Things are going well. You cross the Boulevard Saint-Germain thirty or forty times a day *to go to Danton*.¹⁵⁷ Take a lesson in boldness. There is never anything. Your whole organism is already trained, made, unconsciously tense, without fatigue, at least apparent, at least conscious, accustomed to making cars pass in front of you and not above you. It is however on such a day, begun in the same way, begun the same, and which will have seemed identical to you, it is on such a

¹⁵⁷ Rue Danton is a street in the 6th Arrondissement near Péguy's shop on the rue de la Sorbonne.

day that you will wake up in the legs of some *fifty I ninety* and that you will be *drunk* by some Michelin.¹⁵⁸ And what is stronger is that the driver will show you clearly as day that he was going his way and that it was you who laughed, if I may say so, in his hubs. Free. And the strongest thing is that he will be right. It will be true. What was there on that day that hadn't been on the other days? So, *haud secus ac*,¹⁵⁹ totally so, not otherwise of sin. A morning like every morning you leave home. On the same foot. The day will therefore be like every day. Hard and pure. Bad, but pure. One morning like every morning you leave your (pure) home.¹⁶⁰ One morning like all smart people you leave innocent. The pure heart. And when you come home at night. Unconscious, innocent you collect yourself in the evening, during the day you collect yourself having offended, having hurt, having altered a friendship that was dear to you, an old friendship. A friendship among all. You pick yourself up, you *receive* yourself on the ground. You made a break. A crack in the crystal. A crack, a crevice, in the wall. A crack in the stone and in the cement. Man bathes in accident and in sin. What was there that day that hadn't been on the other days. And what is stronger is that your friend would make you see, that he would show (demonstrate) you clear as day, (but he will not do it, since he is your friend), (it is especially on that day that he will refrain from doing it, since you are unhappy, since you are wrong, and to add nothing; to do anything that could aggravate a misfortune, an irreparable accident), (that everyone feels, that both of you feel irreparable), (to do nothing that could increase), in the absence of your friend a witness , the famous impartial witness, would testify, (the famous historical witness), a judge, the judge would judge that it is you who are wrong, that this friendship was going its right way, and that it is you, we do not know by what sudden aberration, by a whim, by what dull rise of instinct, who got in the way, who threw you like a dazed man through the crossbar. But like a stunned man prepared for a long time. It

¹⁵⁸ An advertisement for Michelin tires said "Le pneu Michelin boit l'obstacle," or "the Michelin tire drinks the obstacle."

¹⁵⁹ just like

¹⁶⁰ Julien Benda commented of Péguy, "You bore me, Péguy, I want to write against you a notebook, and i will call it: *Critique de maison pure*[Critique of a Pure Home]... in Jérôme and Jean Thauraud, *Notre cher Péguy*, Plon-Nourrit, 1926, 2:28-29.

was you who got run over. And what's more is that they are right. It is that it is true. And you know very well that there will always be a thread in the crystal, which will be the thread of this crack. And that in the stone and in the wall there will always be a plaster, which we will have redone, which will cover this crack and this crevice. Your friend also knows it, together with you, since he is your friend. And since he is the victim. Everybody knows it. Your friend knows (also) that you know. He knows you know he knows. You know he knows it; and that he knows that you know it. You are, that is why henceforth the same gaze will no longer inhabit your eyes. You are like two wounded beasts, who know, who no longer look the same. And an unknown, worried tenderness comes to you, a new affair, so worried, a compromise, a complicity, to have been victims together. To have suffered together. From the same wound. One by the other. To have been caught in the same trap. In the eternal trap. So we are no longer brave. We are like two prisoners of war, who would have capitulated together, who would have been taken on the same day and who together would have suffered this common humiliation, who with bowed heads would return together from the English pontoons or the German casemates, having suffered a lot, knowing what the others do not know, who together would return to the common country. We are like two prisoners who had dishonored each other a little together. So we became chain mates. It is the state of humiliation, it is the Christian state itself, it is properly the state of sin. Who knows in this state, in this accident of this state, who is the most culpable, the one who sins, or if it would not be the one against whom one sins, *uter gravius peccet, qui peccet, an qui peccatum patiatur; (scilicet is adversus quem, contra quem peccetur)*; which of the two is the more victim, the more unfortunate, the more *offended*. This is the state of sin. It is a state which goes far beyond, which infinitely goes beyond sin itself, *peccatum*, which overflows it on all sides. Which is even other, basically, infinitely other, one can say, which is something else altogether. It is certain that in a prayer of which you are unaware, Halévy, when we say *Ora pro nobis peccatoribus* we give to this word *peccatoribus*, or rather it is not we who give it to him, this word *sinner* has a completely different meaning, infinitely deeper, infinitely graver, and more constitutional, so to speak, than the word *peccatum*, technically a sin; than the idea, than the fact, than the concept of a sin. It's not the same thing at all.

It's quite different. It's not at all that intellectual, historical, cut-out sense. Here it is the state itself and the condition of man, baseness and misery, infirmity. And it is extremely remarkable, Halévy, since we speak of offenses, that in a prayer which you know, what we ask for remission, and which in French we call *nos offenses*, in Latin these are not properly our sins , *peccata nostra*, but exactly these are our debts, *debita nostra*.

§ **84.** - They cannot lead a Christian life, that is to say, cannot be Christians those who are assured of daily bread. I mean temporally assured. And these are the rentiers, the civil servants, the monks.

Only those who can lead a Christian life, that is to say can be Christians, are those who are not assured of daily bread. I mean temporally assured. And these are the players (small and big), the adventurers; the poor and miserable; industrial; traders; (small and large); married men, fathers of families, those great adventurers of the modern world.

Fifty is a less terrible age. We are told this from all sides and I believe that it is not only to reassure us. Forty years is the beginning of the slope, the beginning of the other slope. When I see the seated solidity of a Millerand,¹⁶¹ that square bust, those square shoulders, that square forehead, that square will, that square judgment, seated like a heavy oak table, that almost rough and almost summary energy, those eyes planted, under an enormous arch, under this thicket of gray hairs, this blue look, big, full of strength, I allow myself to believe, I readily believe that it is only a time, that there is a second youth. And when I see our great Laurens, the youngest of us all, I allow myself to count that perhaps it can be given to a man to lead his work perhaps, so to speak, almost to its full completion.

One morning, like every morning, you leave your innocent home innocently. During the day you do nothing. Nothing more. Nothing else. And in the evening it is done. Something irreparable has been committed. It's finish. Everything happened without you. Sin knows its business very

¹⁶¹ Alexandre Millerand was a French politician who was a member of the cabinet of the cabinet of Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau at the turn of the century, and who was later President of France from 1920-1924. He had been an independent socialist in his youth but moved rightward later.

well. It was committed under your name, under your real responsibility, without asking you anything. You are unexpected.

We know what it is to have regret, remorse, remembrance, shame; repentance, penance; contrition without having failed and without having anything to reproach oneself for; from sin without having sinned; and that they are the deepest and most indelible.

Other measures, other courage, other memoirs, you will allow me, Halévy, not to break this seal and not to speak publicly. Since I have known you, I have known you through countless trials, through trials of all kinds. Since you have known me, you have known me beaten by the winds, like you, if not by the same ones, beaten by ordeals, like you, often by the same ones, assailed by miseries of all kinds. You certainly had (many) more hardships than I knew you were in, you were constantly in a lot more hardships than I suspected. It's always like that. And I allow me to tell you, I too have had more than for my rank, I have, at the very moment when this unforeseen debate broke out, I have some which you do not even have, which you can have no idea, no image, no representation. I have some that you do not suspect. Are we going to miserably quarrel which of us suffers the hardest trials. I would grant you, alas, immediately, that you have suffered infinitely more than I have. Unfortunately, I would give you everything. Such trials, as you know, are not measured by time measurements. You support them with a stoic heart, which I admire, which I love. I put up with them, as much as I can, you know, better than anyone, you know, as badly as well, as badly as possible, rather badly than well, certainly worse than you, perhaps much worse as much as I can. I bear them with a Christian heart. Shall we quarrel which of us bears hardships more courageously. I am so unhappy with myself that I will grant you everything. These measures, these magnitudes, as you know, these tests, these resistances are not measured, are not weighed by temporal balances. I have often admired your courage in the ordeal. I never admired mine there. That's all I can publicly tell you. And that may already be too much.

I count, Halévy, that you will not settle these debates by Kantian methods, by Kantian philosophy, by Kantian morality. *Kantianism has pure*

hands, but it has no hands. And we, our calloused hands, our knotty hands, our sinful hands, we sometimes have full hands. *Act*, said Fouillee, *as if you were a legislator at the same time as a subject in the republic of free and reasonable wills.*¹⁶² He was once a civil servant who had genius, of the greatest. But he was a civil servant, once a civil servant; he was single, twice a civil servant; he was a teacher, three times a civil servant; he was a professor of philosophy, four times a civil servant; he was a Prussian functionary, five and seventy times a functionary. He could only have had the (very great) genius of a civil servant. (And single). *Alas legislator at the same time as subject. Alas, the republic of free and reasonable wills.* —*Act in such a way*, continues Fouillee, *act in such a way that the reason for your action can be erected into a universal law.*¹⁶³ Act in such a way that the action of Search can be erected into a universal law. And even Kant's action. So, to begin with, there would be no more children. It would make a great start. Everything becomes so simple, as soon as there are no more children. **Sich zur allgemeinen Gesetzgebung schicken.**¹⁶⁴ Alas how many of our actions can be erected into a universal law. And how much reason for our actions. *Zur allgemeinen Gesetzgebung.* And don't we really care. Isn't that so foreign to us? Don't we have other anxieties, infinitely other depths. Infinitely other worries. Infinitely other distresses. How many of our actions could not be erected, *geschickt*, into a universal law, for which this *sending* does not even present any meaning; and these are the ones we hold dearest, the only ones we hold dear, no doubt; actions of trembling, actions of fever and quivering, in no way Kantian, actions of a mortal uneasiness; our only good deeds perhaps; not at all flat, not at all quiet, not at all calm, not at all horizontal; in no way legislative; by no means calm, self-confident; by no means in security; by no means without remorse, by no means without regrets; actions constantly fought against, constantly inwardly corroded, our only good actions, the least bad finally, the only ones which will perhaps count for our salvation. Our poor good deeds. The only ones, and it will be so small, that we can present in

¹⁶² Alfred Fouillée, *Histoire de la philosophie*, (1891), 411.

¹⁶³ Alfred Fouillée, *Histoire de la philosophie*, (1891), 411.

¹⁶⁴ fitted for universal legislation

the palm of our hand. *Also kann ein vernunftiges Wesen sich seine subjectiv-praktischen Principien, d. i. Maximen, entweder gar nicht zugleich als allgemeine Gesetze denken, oder es niuss annehmen, dass die blosse Form derselben, nach der jene sich zur allgemeinen Gesetzgebung schicken, sie fur sich allein zum praktischen Gesetze mache.* It is far away, the *allgemeine Gesetzgelning*^{165,166}

We must, Halévy, get on well together. Your interest would impel you to it, if you were sensitive to interest. You know that I will become very powerful. It's heard. It's a settled case with Benda. And everything that is heard with Benda always happens. I will finally organize my party. Since the time that one asks me. It will no longer be just that odious *peguyist* party that the intellectual party had pretended to have founded some ten years ago to dispense me from founding it (the only foundation it has ever made), to annoy me, to throw it at my legs. (It didn't take, moreover; are they even capable of throwing out a name, a nickname; *cognomen*, a nickname; we have indeed imposed on them this name of intellectual party, which they carry with a mixed pride (with bitterness) It will be (properly) *the Peguy party* (even). Or rather *the Peguy parties*. Because there will be two of them, one alone is not enough for my greatness.

Of the first of the two, Halévy, you may not easily be. Don't worry, it's the little one. But Mr. Sorel has been there for ten years and more and I have always been there and we are very happy with it. M. Benda sometimes pretends not to be. He goes, he travels to Versailles not to be one. But he hides in Paris to be part of it. It is, it will be *the party of people who do not leave Paris during the summer months*. It will be a bit long to put in our programs. But the big parties now only refer to themselves by their initials. *T.P.O.P.W.D.N.L.P.D.T.S.M* A dream. It is a little shorter than the *S. F. I. O.*¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ General Law.

¹⁶⁶ "Therefore, either a rational being cannot conceive his subjective practical principles, that is, his maxims, as being at the same time universal laws, or he must suppose that their mere form, by which they are fitted for universal legislation, is alone what makes them practical laws." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* 1.1.1.3, trans. by T.K. Abbott (New York: Prometheus Books, 1996), 41.

¹⁶⁷ Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière, or the French Section of the Workers' International

But also it will be more powerful. Even Daviot¹⁶⁸ could not be one. Because of Les Sables d'Olonne. Paris does not only belong to those who get up in the morning. (And who thus prepare, before we get up, the campaign, the battle, the victory of the day, *the day* itself, as they said: *the day* was good, *the day* was bad; *the day* was won, the day has been lost, happy times when the battles were *days*), to those who *mount* the day before sunrise. That's the old game, always good, the first game, the old game, the (old) Balzac. (Always young). Here is the perfection, the second degree, the second game. Paris belongs to those who during the summer months prepare for the winter campaign.

§ 85. — Paris belongs to no one.

It is on the second party that I count. This is the big party. From this second party you will be, not only you, Halévy, but you too, not quite today, I agree, but from this second party some day you too will be, distant friend, dear among all, by friendship itself, and as well by estrangement; you will be, young man, full of blood; who once sergeant of the colonial artillery you were intoxicated by the speed and strength of mounted batteries; who have a sword, *and it is to use it*; who in a glorious house, (in the century), of so much glory have reintroduced the ancient military glory; and also the ancient naval glory, the ancient colonial glory; who in a glorious house of works of peace have reintroduced war and the ancient glory of war; you will be, a young man, young in blood, a man of pure heart; who in a secular house have reintroduced the ancient glory, the first glory, the glory of war; great child, great friend, man with a big heart; you who found camps and found cities; gunner; colonial; you who awaken your old Breton blood, and your old Mediterranean blood, and your old blood of Dutch patience restore to us the ancient valor of the heroisms of the Mauritanian wars; you will be; Latin, Roman, French, you who from all these bloods give us French blood and French heroism; Roman heir to the Numidian wars; French heir

¹⁶⁸ Émile Daviot was a printer from Suresnes who contributed to the printing of *Jeanne d'Arc* in 1897, and so had known Péguy politically for a long time.

to the Jugurthinian Wars;¹⁶⁹ gunner heir to the ancient artillery; Roman ballistics; heir horseman of the ancient cavalries, of the ancient Numidians; heir artilleryman of the Balearic slingers; colonial heir to the Roman colonies; and of the other Greek colonies; founder heir to the latius founders; *sub-lieutenant of colonial artillery, in Moudjéria, Mauritania, by Saint-Louis, West Africa* **French**, Greek heir to the Greek colonies; guardian of our culture, heir, tenfold heir, heir on all sides, you who know what it is to found a city; what was Alexander's trade and Caesar's trade, to found a city where there is nothing; good friend; who have traveled like Ulysses, and known the manners of many men; a man of great sunshine, a man with fresh eyes, a marveling heart; you who know the desert, and the oasis in the desert; and what a country is where there is no one; and what a country is where there is nothing; and I cannot see again without thinking of you this esplanade of the Invalides, of happy memory, and the dome; and I will go and see the inner courtyard, the square courtyard, that military cloister, so severe and so just; with aligned arcades, so regularly austere; officer to Courier,¹⁷⁰ that other artilleryman, who takes French in your canteen; for your campaign library only includes the *Pensées* of Pascal, the *Sermons* of Bossuet, the *Regulations of mountain artillery*, the *table of logarithms* of Dupuy, and a copy of *Servitude et Grandeur Militaires* which you hold dear, *because he composed the only literary baggage of sub-lieutenant of cavalry Violet*, who died in the enemy; *who knew so well how to die at Ksar Teurchane in Adrar*, last year; he was I think your friend, one of you, one of your comrades, brave as you are so much, and you were worthy of each other; and five other small books which I have no right to name;¹⁷¹ you will be of my great party friend with the clear eyes, the military speech, closer to the heart still and closer to the thought by this constant distancing, by this distancing which begins again every two or three years; kept (intact) by this very distancing, by this occlusion, by this reclusion at a distance, by this free reclusion; who during a short stay in Paris, one

¹⁶⁹ A conflict between the Roman Republic and Jugurtha of Numidia from 112 to 106 BC in North Africa.

¹⁷⁰ Paul-Louis Courier was a French hellenist and artillery officer who fought in the Revolutionary wars but left Napoleon's armies after Wagram and turned against Napoleon.

¹⁷¹ Many of these books come from a letter Péguy received from Ernest Psichari in August of 1910.

year, two years, spent like a day, lived like a king, you and your guns, non-commissioned officer lived like a king in our grand palace of the Ecole Militaire, a stone's throw from our great Invalides; and when you were going to the manoeuvre, on the clear mornings of Paris, getting up very early for Parisians, and when you were coming back, at a time when we civilians had not yet gotten off the train, when there was a train, your 75 guns, our slender modern guns, so relevant, a little too heavy for your mounted batteries, for your cavalry batteries, for your flying batteries, and as we say familiarly among ourselves for *the flying*, your 75 cannons, so slender, (in appearance), really so solid and so unbreakable, paraded respectfully in front of *the monstrous cannons*; every morning, before supper, in the coolness of dawn, these little young people with modern cannons, these modern cannons with the bodies of insects, with wheels like spider's legs, tight at the waist, paraded under the mouths of monstrous cannons; our weaklings, our whippersnappers; and those old old men *the monstrous canons crouching at your door*,¹⁷² seated on their backs, in a row of guns, still lined up all along the beautiful embankment, behind the ditch, as if for an eternal parade, seemed to command the parade. They passed the inspection. These old invalid cannons, generally undamaged however, these invalid cannons, brand new, (in appearance), all shiny, all polished. The guns that had a belly, that dared to have a belly. If not perhaps the cannons of Fontenoy¹⁷³ and Denain¹⁷⁴ and Malplaquet¹⁷⁵, at least the cannons and mortars of Vauban, places and camps, (*au camp sous Maëstricht*¹⁷⁶), (howitzers perhaps), the park of a old regime artillery, the king's cannons, the king's artillery, the artillery master, *bellum enim regum ultima ratio*¹⁷⁷: the old bronze cannons, beautiful as bells,

¹⁷² Hugo, *Les Chants du crépuscule*, Napoléon II"

¹⁷³ A French military victory over the French, Dutch, and Austrians in 1745.

¹⁷⁴ A French victory by Marshall Villars against the Dutch and Austrians under Prince Eugene of Savoy in 1712..

¹⁷⁵ An English and Dutch victory, with forces led by the Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene of Savoy over the French in 1709.

¹⁷⁶ A fort on the Meuse taken by the French in 1673 and 1794.

¹⁷⁷ "War is the ultimate solution of kings."

pot-bellied and plump like bells, gilded like brass and brazen they were; golden like old, shaded suns; powerful-voiced, musical-voiced bronzes; booming voice, redundant voice; deep-voiced; and whose streams of voices flowed over the plains and over the ravines, over the escarpment and into the ditch like floods; loud-voiced monsters; who in battles rang like bells; like huge bells; monsters that resounded like the bell of Notre-Dame. Every morning in the rising or born or to be born dawn you watched these conscripts pass by; our mathematical canons, our precise canons, our shrill-voiced canons, our shrill-voiced canons; slender and lean like all teenagers; slender; those blue gray insects; those big blue-grey grasshoppers; those hard modern steels; those spindly rims; these blue gray steels; those big spider legs; those big mower legs; in the fine blue mist rising from the Seine you watched those iron-grey tubes pass by. These bodices. And you didn't growl too much, you didn't seem too displeased with these republican canons.

A fine blue mist of the river, just a mist rises from the banks of the Seine, reaches the valley, occupies the Esplanade. And the old artillery watched the young pass, the royal artillery watched our artillery of the Third Republic pass. The French, my friend, have twice repulsed the barbarians. You certainly remember that. For the first time, cleverly dissimulated under the name of Greeks, they repelled, they drove back the Persian Orient, Persian barbarism, Persian barbarism, oriental barbarism in a little mountain road which was called *Les Portes-Chaudes*¹⁷⁸; it must have been some spa; and in a kind of sloping plain which was called *the plain of Marathon*, where there was a runner; and by their ships near a small island as big as a pocket handkerchief, not very *consequent*, which is called the island of Salamis, and yet this island will be famous and celebrated among all the islands. The second time, bearing the name of Romans, they stopped, they pushed back, they drove back the Punic Orient, the same Orient, the same Eastern invasion, which the better to turn us around had made itself southern, the same Orient which for the better turning had been done at noon. And they went to fetch him home. It is this ancient repression, my

¹⁷⁸ The Battle of Thermopolae

friend, *antiquam illam repulsam*, it is this repression, this repressed, this repelled (and it is this repulsed), notably the second, taken up by the same French around 1830,¹⁷⁹ that you continue, that you pick up, that you transport, that you pursue the heroisms of the Mauritanian wars. Greek, heir to ancient wisdom. Soldier who in the defect of our teachers maintain, defend the culture. French heir to ancient culture and the same French culture. Latin, Roman heir to Roman peace, heir to all parts, heir to all hands, Roman heir to Roman strength, Roman heir to Roman law, Roman heir to Roman law; *jus atque lex*, right and law, administration, Roman law, Roman law; the Roman province; Peacemaker, Builder, Organizer; Codifier, Justifier; heir to nautical curves and circumnavigations, hard heir to flexible journeys. Peacemaker, who makes peace with a saber, the only one that holds, the only one that lasts, the only one that is worthy; the only one basically who is loyal and of proven metal; you who know what. it is only an imposed peace, and to impose a peace, and *the reign of peace*; you who maintain peace by force; you who impose peace by war; *bello pacem qui imposuisti*; and who knows that no peace is solid, worthy only when imposed; than guarded by war; the weapon at the foot; you who make peace by arms, imposed, maintained by force of arms. Latin, Roman, French heir to the Roman road, measurer of the camp, you who know what it's like to clear a road and set up camp. To *build* a road and to *build* a camp. You who know what the desert is, and a camel ride. You who alone among us have heard the silence. In solitudes of three and four months. And who thus kept the purity of your soul. You who still have your first soul. You who, if necessary, would maintain culture by force. And if necessary, as necessary, by force of arms. You who know alone today, alone in these modern times, what silence is, finally, and to listen to silence for long months. You who know what the solitude of the soul is and who alone among us have measured it, have been able to measure its depth; you who alone among us have been able to meditate in real solitudes, in solitary creations; you who contemplate child peoples, first creations; first natures; in no way dull, in no way tired; you who have heard the silence of the soul and who thus have kept your first soul; not dull, not tired; Greek, son of a Greek, Breton, a great Frenchman

¹⁷⁹ The French conquest of Algeria began around 1830.

for whom the Iliad is really a story of wars like *there are*, and the Odyssey a travel story like *there are*; Frenchman who according to the ancient rite, according to the Greek rite, (Hebrew), (French) are named after your father, and named after your grandfather; you by whom French culture and letters figure temporally and at the geographical confines and at the confines of military heroism; you who are making the only historical *inscriptions* which we are sure are being made at this time; you wrote to me recently, (but it takes nearly five weeks for it to come), (here, from there), a man with a pure gaze; and at least you won't be angry with me, my great friend, for thinking of you in these confessions. *You have come, you, to one of the last regions of the world, where we have thought a little about "history"*. You are a shining example of what Barrés said in his *Adieu à Moréas*, on April 2 of that year 1910, at the Père-Lachaise Cemetery, that the romantic and the classical are not necessarily, are not always strangers to each other, but that the romantic can, under certain cultural conditions, perform, end, crown in classic.

You not only forgive me, my friend, for quoting you from Barres; you rejoice in it in your heart. *The separation*, says Halévy admirably in that fine piece of history which is his apology for our past, — the separation took place in an instant. ***Inside the Parisian bourgeoisie***, — (*of the Parisian bourgeoisie, my dear Halévy, our entire debate is there*), — the only one capable of promptly grasping a matter so numerous in its details, subtle in its nuances, each family was in a few days at its post, sure of its maneuvers and entrenched behind its closed doors. **Because Paris has its families as Florence had hers, and its houses not crowned with towers nevertheless shelter warlike factions.** Your house, my child, was against the house of Barrés. Violently against. But ten years later in this short stay you made in Paris, I know how much you love and admire him as a writer, how much you love and admire his work; and during this short stay that you made you experienced by an act, by the awarding of an act, how much he loved your book. *I believe*, said Barrés on April 2 of this year, in this sort of ancient pagan ceremony that there was, *I believe that I have collected the literary testament of Moréas. It was a few days ago, in this room where we have just piously lifted her body. He had asked that we be left alone, and the guard itself moved away. We talked about what was most dear to his heart, literature, and he said to me: "There are no classics and romantics... It's nonsense... I'm sorry to say no." 'Be in no*

better condition to explain to you...' We shall never know what arguments Moréas reserved for himself to give me, but I am of his opinion; I believe that a so-called romantic sentiment, if carried to a higher degree of culture, takes on a classical character. I saw Moréas pass from one aesthetic to the other, as he grew morally ennobled, and I realize that he found his artistic perfections in his chastened heart. ¹⁸⁰

You will often hear, my friend, not of this new aesthetic; it is more than a new aesthetic; it is simply an acknowledgment pushed by a great writer into the depths of eternal aesthetics. Without any dogmatic apparatus, without any professorial exaggeration, you have recognized there one of those profound modest recognitions, one of those cardinal propositions that one finds in a writer, and everything becomes clear; the debates become clearer; suddenly; difficulties fall away; one finds them, one finds these propositions, and one is completely struck by having found them. We had them within, we had always had them, we used them, we lived on them, but we hadn't formulated them. It is one of those few cardinal propositions around which positions revolve.

This good order, continued Barrès, this sovereign economy which reigns in his poems, it is the simplicity which he put in his life so dignified and so clear; his concentrated lyricism is a male modesty; its shortcuts, its energetic style, its beautiful inversions, it is bravery; his proud grace is the loyalty we loved in all his manners. ¹⁸¹

You will often encounter, my friend, this proposal, this distinction, this recognition. You can well imagine that I am not only saying that you will find it in my own thoughts, which you are willing to follow; you will find it again in yours, you will be quite surprised, quite struck to find it in yours. You will see it, it will never leave you. That the difference, that the distance from the classic to the romantic is such that through the culture of the romantic can become classic, progress, work, operate in classic, culminate, end, crown itself in classic. You will find it everywhere in common thought. It is one of those propositions which, once made, is one of those discoveries

¹⁸⁰ Maurice Barrès, *Adieu à Moréas*, Paris (1910), 10-11.

¹⁸¹ Maurice Barrès, *Adieu à Moréas*, Paris (1910), 12.

which, once made, cannot be lost. We can't go back there. Go back to them, to this increase, to this acquisition. They can no longer be removed. It is one of those few simple propositions, one of those few simple discoveries that can properly be called acquisitions. We can not do without. They enter into common thought, into a sort of common treasure over which we all jealously guard, in this *perennis quaedam philosophia*. They enter, they remain, under the guard of all, in this common domain of thought. They don't come out anymore. And we are quite surprised to find them at all the joints. It's one of those proposals that you can't get rid of.

To become classics, gentlemen, continued Barrés, *it is decidedly to hate any overload, it is to attain a delicacy of soul which, rejecting lies, however pleasant they may be, can only taste the truth: it is, in a word, become more honest.* ¹⁸²

When you come back to us, my child, you will ask me for that little yellow pamphlet in which your *adieu* was published. It is impossible for me to represent to you the impression it made on us here. It is a kind of poem of a purity, a power (of evocation) that is undoubtedly inimitable. And also of a power of realization. A very short poem. A kind of elixir of poetry. An anthology prose poem of perfect purity, fidelity, piety, classic, rarity, perfect beauty, and not merely perfectly harmonious order, but of a same order and of an organization, of a perfect regulation. A masterpiece, and a perfectly harmonious work. In these few pages a unique success. It is in the quarries of the fortunate days. I remember it like it was last night. I had not attended the ceremony. I was not, as you know, a friend of Moréas. The men of my generation, alas, already knew him little. I returned in the evening. In the corner of my compartment I began to read *Le Temps*. However much respect we may have for *Le Temps*, you know that a newspaper column is not always what best enhances a poem, a speech; a prayer, a farewell. So you can't say that I was surprised, moved by the typography, by some charm of typography. My eyes were racing. I came across this funeral, this speech. The days were growing, it was April. Instantly everything disappeared. And there was only this ancient purity, this ancient poem, all the ancient, all the

¹⁸² Maurice Barrés, *Adieu à Moréas*, Paris (1910), 10-11.

pagan, all the tragic, all the harmony evoked, present, in perhaps not even a column of this newspaper; today; wet presses; which we have just bought for three sous. A whole elegy. Cœur de Français, listen to this sentence again: *I saw Moréas walking alongside Verlaine. But he was already putting himself in a position to rejoin Ronsard, Villon and Rutebeuf. days.*¹⁸³ All of Homer was there, and the burial and funeral of heroes, and the death of heroes, all of Sophocles, and the death of mortal men and labors and days.

In these two hundred lines of prose, as much and more than in a volume, as much and more than in a book, as much as in verses, as much and more than in a long poem.

By what a marvelous encounter, my child, this is exactly what you are writing to me from the borders of Mauritania. It is that, it is this echo that comes back to us from so far away. But an echo, if I may say, itself originating, an echo that has not left, not launched from here, an autonomous echo. An echo without original voice, without initial voice. That in a romantic matter a classical thought can move, live a classical life, operate a classical work. By a kind of nucleation, of organic polarization. You wrote to me not long ago and I received at the beginning of this week¹⁸⁴: *It seems to me that, for example, the death of Violet (which I will tell you about one day) is worth that of Baudin and that it fulfills the conditions which you quite rightly assign to particularly historic event. — Here is a land which is perfectly romantic and triply romantic: by its nature, its physical aspect, by the character of its inhabitants and by the action which we still exercise there. Stories of brigands, assassinations, epic battles, looting, dark intrigues, all this flourishes here as in its natural terrain.* Thus it is in the heart of romantic nature, in the heart of romantic life, in a romantic land, in a romantic climate that push, that you live, that you concentrate, that you lead a classic thought, that you bring forward, that you complete, that you crown a classic thought, a classic work, this classic work which is a life and a thought. It is in a romantic material that a classical thought comes and takes place, that a work takes place. *And everything conspires to this impression. The*

¹⁸³ Maurice Barrès, *Adieu à Moréas*, Paris (1910), 8.

¹⁸⁴ What follows is a transcription of part of the letter that Péguy received from Daniel Halévy on August 18, 1910.

aspects of the country, which are hardly "pretty", have, however, a beauty which comes to them from a powerful tragedy, a beauty without grace, but bizarre and monstrous like a setting in the second Faust. From the waterless plains of the Agan, crushed by the sun, from the mountainous Tagant and its circles of black rocks, from the endless dunes of the Aouker, from the black Assaba, all life has withdrawn today and there remains a rough mineral skeleton where poor camel hair tents and nomadic herds roam. The Moors of these desolate lands are among the toughest warriors in the world. They have made us feel it more than once, and will probably make us feel it again. This noble and ancient race which is attached to the mystical East (there are here "Shiites" whom the wars of the first century of Islam had nevertheless rejected and confined' in Persia on the banks of the Euphrates) and which ramifies towards the East to beyond Timbuktu (the Kounta of Tagant thus extend to the North of the bend of the Niger) presents an extremely evolved sample of humanity and where however the simplicity of manners has remained great, where the ardor of the primitive blood remained virgin. These people, generally of very cultivated minds, crafty in politics, skillful in discussion, and who, in religion, go as far as the most ardent mysticism (Cheickh el Ghaswâni is currently devouring a treatise on Arab mysticism on "predestination which the Captain commanding the Circle lent him, (Isn't it admirable, my child, this French Captain commanding the Circle lending to Cheickh el Ghaswâni, who devours him, a treatise of Arab mysticism on "predestination". France is a great Muslim power in Africa. What a great power it would be, absolutely, if it were in the world, subsidiary, a certain Christian power. But here, what would one do to the Captain commanding a Circle which would lend to the peoples *internal Consolation* .¹⁸⁵ That would perhaps not help him not to become battalion commander.) *these people, all at the same time, are beggars, live on wars and plunder, are proud as beggars, ardent action, brave and cunning. Youth of heart and old age of mind, that is the general characteristic.*

It is in this harsh country that we have tried to settle by the force of our arms, and it is one of the last where we still do soldier's work, (we have just discovered another one, my friend, a new one, a second, and it was time; it was originally located between Versailles and our Lozère, in the heart of our Hurepoix¹⁸⁶. But very quickly it won. It has spread everywhere. Today it is located almost

¹⁸⁵ This is the title of the third part of *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, an influential work on Péguy and Corneille.

¹⁸⁶ A region southwest of Paris.

everywhere, provided that we take the precaution of first rising at least a few meters above the ground, it is the country of the *Aéroplanie*, this new territory (if I may say so) military) *where one lives militarily. Finally, it is a heroic land, full of noble memories for us, still of yesterday, still warm with French blood. How evident, and abundantly proved, that France, (here, my friend, allow me to complete your sentence), that France, even in her modern age, will perhaps not let this warlike glory be lost, will perhaps not prevent it from becoming a historical reality.*

You wrote to me again: *Even here, we are generally afraid of Eternity. Yet less than elsewhere.*

You wrote to me again: *I had the chance, at the beginning of my stay, to lead the wandering life which pleases my tastes and is adapted to the country. For two months, I've been detaining in a Tériba (you can answer me if it's a Tériba¹⁸⁷) of 100 square meters. And yet the only useful policy in this country is that which is carried out in the bush, with, as auxiliaries, a few good carabiners 92.*

You who know the bush and the *bled*, come on you are good. You will be. One day you will be mature. Military I take you. nest Psicharis my child, you too will be on my side. This is the big party. It is not yet that great party of the *mécontemporains*.

Which Pesloûan founded the first assizes.

It is a more strictly political party. Benda opposed me what we would be put, that this party would be “quarantined”. He always makes objections. He opposes all the time. I have resolved once and for all not to dwell on considerations of this nature. I am going to found the great party of men of forty. Someone recently pushed me back hard into the category, pushed me back into the forty-year-old male class. I take advantage of it. The old politician takes advantage of everything. I founded the party of forty-year-old men. The first point of our program, and which will certainly remain the best, will be that we will never again have triumphant mornings.

¹⁸⁷ A city in Chad.

I founded the party of forty-year-old men. You will be a part of it, Halévy. I am told of registrations from all sides.

I am, I remain your devoted

PÉGUY