From Passions to Drives

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The eighteenth century, having inherited a pessimism from classical anthropology that its own ideology of progress had to absorb,[1] seemed to have invented *le mal de vivre*.[2] Clues to this condition are suggested by the etymology of the term *vacuus*: vacuousness of existence ("Everywhere I find a terrifying emptiness," asserted the hero of a novel around 1769), and "a vague disquiet which permeates everything and finds nothing to calm it," according to the definition of Jacques the Fatalist.[3] *Le mal de vivre* was indeed an invention because, despite a terminology that was inspired by the theory of humors ("hysterical vapors" among women; "hypochondriac melancholy" for men),[4] the philosophers and doctors of the Enlightenment already had envisaged the fatality of an anatomical "limit" for the etiology of "afflictions of the soul." In this way, according to the *Eléments de Physiologie* (Elements of Physiology) of Diderot, the agitation of the imagination actually represented the degree of irritability, or of erethism, of the nervous system: "the dreams of young people in a state of innocence come from *the extremities of the fibres* (meaning the nervous fibres) which are the original carriers of obscure desires, vague disquiet, a *melancholy* whose cause they do not understand."[5] If we believe the article on "delight" (*jouissance*) in the *Encyclopaedia*, a "vague and melancholy disquiet," which is linked in particular with the physiological changes occurring at puberty, constitutes a general and "normal" state of sensation,[6] all "delight" implying by this definition the absence of disquiet in comparison with its external object. Reduced to its vibratile intensities, the "perceiving body" that is deprived of its totalizing metaphor[7] becomes pulverized and fragmented into so many "desiring monads." Like Condillac's statue, it destabilizes itself through the fields of force of the phenomenal world, completely obedient to the energy economy of other bodies that define its external frontier, left to the contradictory universal

laws of attraction and repulsion that govern them: "Here below, each part, through a higher *impulse*, combines toward the central harmony of a whole. We collide with one another and are thrown backward and forward by the force maintaining a general equilibrium and order, in which we participate mechanically."[8]

In this way sensualist theory paradoxically condemns the body to an unlimited drive, which does not find its purpose in itself but in a "general order," an order that is "hypothetical" and never systematized because it is linked to the "vague" game of balances, of homeostases. For sensualist theory, the incompleteness of passion only translates the metonymic status of the individual in relation to an order of disorder.[9] Alone at the time of the Enlightenment, Rousseau denounced this liberal "economy" of the passions to the extent that it was aimed at transforming individual dissatisfaction into a cultural impulse, the impact of which would be globally positive or progressive. All this in the name of an aporia inherent to passion, which the second *Discours* described as both a cause and a consequence of culture: "if human understanding owes much to the passions" since "we only seek to know because we desire to enjoy," conversely, "passions are born from the development of our understanding."[10] (182). In fact, Rousseau would like to maintain passion at the furthest boundary – an absolute moment, outside of history – of the moral consciousness that already was emerging (like an individualized instance) of the "sole instinct" or the "simple impulse of nature"[11] (176), without becoming an "artificial passion" (233) like that "imagination which causes so much damage amongst us" (200), "a distinctive and almost unlimited faculty" which "is the source of all man's misfortunes" (176). From this refusal to make passion the historic moment of a passage toward abstraction or thought,[12] it emerges that the "moral sentiment" for Rousseau cannot – as Kant and above all Hegel wished – rest on the artifice of "law" as an expression of a subjectivity and transcendence of consciousness compared to the emptiness of the world.[13] Far from being inferred from its own misfortune, consciousness exists immediately in its fullness and its uniqueness, rejecting a "perlaboration" that its compromise with the world requires of it, melancholy being at best, according to the expression of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, "a negative happiness" (in the same way as one speaks of a "negative theology") that "Nature, a beautiful woman in tears" still gives us in its bounty through

the veils of misfortune.[14] Rousseau is dreaming of a consciousness that is not "folded" or dissociated through its presence in the world, a consciousness transparent to itself and whose solipsism reconciles it in advance with the univers(al): "at last here I am alone on the earth. . . ."

The Indefiniteness of Passion and the Sense of the Infinite

It was only with romantic epistemology that the artifice of the passions was accorded a truly heuristic status. In her work devoted to "the influence of the passions on the happiness of individuals and nations" (1796), Madame de Staël moved from the division established by Rousseau between Nature and culture in the direction of an internal distinction among the passions themselves: the "natural" passions, which have "a definite goal affecting in more or less the same manner all the characters who experience them" (such as ambition, envy and filial, maternal, and even conjugal affection), versus "amorous" passion, a "sort of fever which always has an imaginary goal which it has to attain by real means"[15] (129 and 240). It was this impulse or aspiration that empirically laid the foundation for the transcendental idealism of thought. In outwitting the "analytic method" (this is the expression that Madame de Staël borrows from physiologists),[16] in ensuring on the contrary that "the analysis of thought [loses] itself in the vagueness of impressions," love fulfills the role of a "synthetic idea," sentiment elevated to the level of presentiment. The amorous obsession – "an uncommon affection" that "brings profound misfortune in its wake" (130), "a unique idea" that fixes in thought "dependence on a single object" – harbors "something solitary and concentrated which inspires in the soul the nobility of philosophy" (134). Transforming the specularity of the imaginary into speculation, the reflexivity of passion into reflection, desire in the search for its object turns itself into "meditation where the faculty of judgement increases the misfortune,"[17] in a word: "reflective melancholy"[18] (154). To the extent that it "causes disquiet, emptiness, to be felt" (241) and places "outside itself the only indefinite delights" (135), the unreality of what is imagined by the passions permits consciousness to conceptualize, in the very space occupied by sensibility, the sense of its own absence: "the idea of death is inseparable from the

picture of love,"[19] concluded Madame de Staël. In this respect, the "vagueness of the passion" (*le "vague des passions"*) corresponds approximately to the "moral instinct" in Kant.[20] From the time of his *Observations on the Meaning of Beauty and the Sublime* (1766), Kant underlined that the "sadness without cause" of the "melancholic" merges, beyond the pathological diagnosis, with the "sense of the sublime" as the categorical imperative of moral reason. "True virtue founded on principle contains within itself something which seems to accord better with the *melancholic* disposition in its most moderate aspect."[21] According to the Kantian terminology adopted by Madame de Staël the "indefiniteness of passion," which transcends rational discourse and serves as its foundation, can scarcely be differentiated from "the sense of infinity."[22]

Here one can measure the extent of the reversal. Misfortune, the inauthenticity of which Rousseu attributed to a fault line in (or failure of) the imaginary, legitimates, with romanticism, a transcendental philosophy working from the structural imbalance between thought and the world. Elevated to the noumenal state ("Love is something *cerebral*. All desire has been an *Idea*"),[23] passion becomes a phenomenology of the spirit. "Ideas are living beings," Villiers de l'Isle-Adam concluded later.[24] Far from reducing itself, through its imaginary and illusory status, to an "ideology,"[25] the indeterminacy of passion postulates, on the contrary, the reality of "philosophical ideas,"[26] the absence of a proper object for sentimental subjectivity inducing, like an imprint, sentiment pregnant with a metaphysical objectivity. The cultural space assigned to passion ("that feeling of melancholy which each people has to develop")[27] is no longer to be decoded as the erosion of reality by an inflationary imaginary, as Rousseau asserted, but as the real progress of consciousness that becomes aware of itself in its absence to the world, as "the march of the human spirit passing from materialist religions to spiritual religions, from nature to divinity," according to the terms used in *De l'Allemagne* (*On Germany*).[28] On the whole, Madame de Staël borrows the concepts of her *Kulturgeschichte* from the article "Tragedy" ("*Tragédie*") inserted by Marmontel in the "Supplement" to the *Encyclopédie*. To the "system of fate" which, in classical tragedy, legitimates the principle of republican equality, there succeeded, in the modern era, the "system of passions" born from a centralizing monarchy that favored the concentration of the

spirit with the turning of passions inward upon themselves.[29] But in this turning inward, consciousness, formerly totally exteriorized in the world,[30] deployed its interiority as a disalienation of the world of objects. Between "an involuntary impulse," "the work of blind, deaf fate which counts the feelings of men as nothing" and "this uneasy reflection" directed toward "an intelligent order which our heart questions and which replies to our heart" (1, 212–213), the appearance in history of the "vagueness of the passions" marks, in brief, the emergence of consciousness tearing itself from the exteriority of the world where it is completely objectivized, in order to discover itself as a critical subjectivity establishing the unconsciousness of passion as promise of an intelligible totality and making, from the interiority and emptiness of a subjectivity "turned inward on itself," the effective location of this totality.

Theory of Passion or Passion for Theory

Like Madame de Staël, Chateaubriand raised the "vagueness of the passions" to the rank of a "metaphysic of feeling." But the interdiction that mortgaged passion in his work obliged subjectivity to identify itself with the aesthetic position of consciousness. Such is the work of the "spirit" or the "poetic" of Christianity, that the "closed nature of the passions which act only on themselves, without an aim or an object," the "bitterness of suffocated passions which ferment together," now act like a shadow cast by thought on the world, a devalorizing projection which, on the rebound, "colors" the creations of the imagination. "The imagination is rich, abundant and wonderful. Existence poor, arid, and disenchanted." In "emptying" the dregs of reality of all interest or desire ("One lives, with a full heart, in an empty world"), the indeterminacy of passion underlined the break between the "prosaic" destiny of the world and the ideal, poetic instance of the spirit. It is in this sense that, for Chateaubriand, the Christian ethic is essentially an aesthetic. In persuading man that "the world is not the object of his desires" or that "this object will soon escape him," in "offering (him) unceasingly the double-sided picture of the sufferings of the world and the joys of heaven" which "makes in the heart a source of present evils and distant hopes," the "character" of the Christian religion encourages the

"inexhaustible dreams" of a consciousness that meets in the imaginary the site of a true perfection, of the sole objective beauty. Chateaubriand wished that this aesthetic discrepancy, which benefited spiritual reality at the expense of real perception, should be irremediable. Also in order to explain the traumatic effect of a reified reality such as that which the "vagueness of the passions" represented for the spirit, he invented "primitive scene" of unsatisfied desire, the projection into the past of the revolutionary terror of 1789.[31] In overthrowing earlier cultural structures, the "Barbarian invasion" accentuated "this distaste for the things of this life," communicating enduringly to "the human spirit . . . an impression of *sadness*, and perhaps even a slight taint of *misanthropy*, which was never completely effaced."[32] From being a consequence of history, the accidental tumult of the passions became, from that time on, through an inversion appropriate to the imaginary, the internal causality and teleology of this history, the trauma of the event fixing consciousness into a sort of "permanent revolution."[33] From this comes the vicious circle – observed with astonishment in *Le Génie du christianisme* (*The Spirit of Christianity*) – which wishes that melancholy should exist from its own vacuum. "The fruit of the monastic life, into which those unfortunate people who had been deceived by the world retreated, was a prodigious melancholy, but at the same time, through an extraordinary effect, the very *vagueness* into which *melancholy* plunged its feelings was what brought about its rebirth."[34]

This fictional and aesthetic transfiguration of passion could only be demonstrated by means of a novel. As everyone knows, *René* was initially conceived to illustrate the thesis of the "vagueness of the passions" expounded in *Le Génie du Christianisme*, which, once the novel was published separately, comprehended a significant "void." Offered as an "example" of "an admirable drama" which "modern writers" could draw from "this indeterminate state of passions," from "this unusual position of the soul," the novelistic narration legitimates itself to the extent that the "vague" passion of the hero generates a theoretical point of view in which it objectivizes an idea. "It is so to speak only a *thought* . . . without any element of adventure," recalls the preface to *René*, the hero himself announcing that it will be less the story of his life than the "history of his thoughts" (142), of his "melancholy philosophy"[35] (148). Let us note that the choice of an "idea" (in this case the theory of the "vagueness of the passions")

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in the unprecedented role of a novelistic instance proclaims a new conception of the novel as an ideal totalization to be realized through the indeterminate future of the passions. In the continuation of the "philosophical stories" of the eighteenth century, Madame de Staël considered one of her stories, *Zulma*, to be an integral part of a *Traité sur la Passion* (*A Treatise on Passion*), in which the theory was experimentally verified. In the same way, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre deduced the narration of *Paul et Virginie* from the postulates put forward in the *Études de la nature*. "At bottom this little work is nothing but my application of its *laws* to the happiness of two unfortunate families."[36] After *René*, the theoretical status of the novel was emphasized even more in the direction of a "history of the spirit," which objectivized itself through the absence or imperfection engendered by a novelistic consciousness. From Balzac's *La Comédie humaine* (*The Human Comedy*) to Zola's *Rougon-Macquart* cycle, all forms of narrative recounted the genesis of the ideal finality that underlay the various episodes of passion.[37] Devoid of meaning, the "vagueness of the passions" as the consequence of an unfortunate consciousness is, at the same time, the *horizon of expectation* of an unconscious sense which would be realized in history. (The romantic theory of the "fragment" rests also on the existence of a void in consciousness situated at the origin of totalizing ideality, of the idea of totality itself. Edmund Burke talked of the infinity of the sketch, Delacroix of "the effect of the *sketch* on the imagination which likes *vagueness*, expands easily and embraces *vast* objects from summary indications."[38])

Incest, the "Beautiful Catastrophe"

The horizon of expectation of a significance that would determine the status of the novel, the imaginary of passion, is materialized in *René* through the thematic of the *secret* to be explained.[39] Indeed, the demonstrative value of passion is akin to the *coup de théâtre* which closes, in the style of detective story,[40] the confession made by the hero to Chactas and to Father Souël. The vague and indeterminate passion which, in the sequence of events of the story, darkened the imagination of the young man is revealed, in the retrospective order of the narrative, to be the consequence of incestuous love. "O my friends, I knew then what

it was to shed tears for an evil which was not imaginary in the least! My passions, which had remained indeterminate for such a long time, fell upon this first prey with fury." Strangely, it is at the very moment when Amélie takes the *veil* that the fatal secret is *unveiled*, a situation that closes René for ever in the paradox of his desire. From that time on, the passionate imagination literally proves to be "without a goal and without an object," not because its object is effectively lacking, but precisely because it can find its object only in the aestheticism of a rite. In the theatricality of a symbolic death (Amélie lies on the flagstones of the church "to die to the world," René hands the "sacrificial" blade to the priest), the Christian ceremony, in short, "plays" the overhanging position of consciousness. The presence of the incestuous object implies, for the consciousness that comprehends it, the occultation of this object, as if vague attraction were only another name for denial.[41]

It is because of this that one must resist the temptation to psychoanalyse René. As the manifestation of an interdiction that explains with hindsight the suffering of René, the idea of incest supplied, in fact, the anthropological parameter[42] which Chateaubriand, and with him the nineteenth century, needed to conceptualize the unbridgeable gap between consciousness and the natural world,[43] a gap which could only be perceived through a "culture" of Christianity and an aesthetic story of guilty passion. "The author would have chosen the subject of *Phaedra*, if it had not been dealt with by Racine" declares the preface to *René* (273). As a preamble to the analysis of the "vagueness of the passions," the critical apparatus of *Le Génie du christianisme* shows, indeed, the superiority of the modern Phaedra over the classic Phaedra, a superiority due in essence to the explicit recognition of incest as a conscious operator in the tragic. "I breathe both incest and deception" (1, 128). This confession of Racine's Phaedra constitutes "the most energetic cry which passion had ever uttered," because – simultaneously a claim and a denial problematizing passion – it offers "a mixture of despair and amorous fury." Anticipating the interpretation of contemporary Greek scholars,[44] Chateaubriand was not far from envisaging, in this respect, the existence of incest in Antiquity like the doings of an "Oedipus without Oedipus," the perception of guilt not intervening until later with the metaphysical sentiment introduced by Christianity. "In the classical world, incest was not so rare

and monstruous as to arouse comparable fears in the heart of the guilty. If Tertullian is to be believed, the misfortunes of Oedipus only brought forth the jokes of spectators among the Macedonians," (1, 289). Without doubt, this was remembered from Rousseau who compared the Classics' innocent representations of *Phaedra* and *Oedipus* (their national antiquities with the "terrifying (modern) spectacles (an allusion to Racine's *Phaedra)* "where one soils the imagination with crimes which makes nature shudder."[45] However, at the point where the *Lettre à d'Alembert* (*Letter to d'Alembert*) denounced in the consciousness of incest the degradation of natural sentiment that perverted, in the modern setting, the dangerous supplement of a "vague" imaginary, Chateaubriand, on the contrary, attributed to this same consciousness the positive progress of the arts based on "this science of sorrow, of transport of the soul of which Antiquity knew nothing" (1, 290). In revealing incest as the root of the "vague passions," Christianity had, according to *Le Génie*, "sanctified this catastrophe" which Antiquity had not known how to recognize as the deep motive force of the tragic sentiment.

The "Terrible Manuscript" of *Les Natchez*

If, in *René*, the ontogenesis of incest repeats the phylogenesis of the interdiction as expounded in *Le Génie*, this is really because, before belonging to the Christian "tribe," René belonged to another more primitive tribe from which consciousness emerged as consciousness of incest. To a considerable extent, Chateaubriand's work, indeed, seems to be built up from the debris of an obscure and inhibited continent, the cycle of the Natchez, an Indian tribe of which Chactas is the only survivor. "Fragments saved from the Revolution," the *Essai sur les révolutions* (*Essay on Revolutions*), *Atala*, *René*, the numerous descriptions of nature in *Le Génie* as well as later ones in *Le Voyage en Amérique* (*Voyage to America*) and of course the revised version of *Les Natchez* are all "extracts" from the "terrible manuscript of *Les Natchez*."[46] Moreover, the history of "this quite primitive manuscript" reproduces all the strategy of the "vagueness of the passions," made up of desire and denial. Hardly had the text been brought back from America than it was concealed in a chest in London, then lost during the Revolution, eventually to be found

during the Restoration, but without its integral content, which presumably we will never know.[47] Significantly, in the creation of the work, the breakdown of the original unity coincided with the new awareness of incest as though, along with the world of *Les Natchez*, an innocence of the passions had disappeared which had already become problematic with the arrival of Christian guilt.

It should be said that Natchez society, through its endogamous system, practiced incest without knowing it. Did not René marry Céluta, the sister of his brother by adoption, through the exchange of blood according to the Indian custom? It is even more curious that, paradoxically, it was at the very moment when Chactas and Atala discovered by chance that they were both the "children of Lopez" that they gave in to their passion, as though the force of their passion only arose from congenital similarity. "The *fraternal friendship* which came to visit us and join *its love to our love* was too much for our hearts. From that time on, the struggles of Atala became useless. . . ."[48] (82). Moreover, the sumptuous descriptions of Florida bear witness to, in the moment of peril, the objective complicity of nature, which exploits incest to its own ends of reproduction: "superb forests whose lianas and crowns shook like the curtains and canopy of the marriage bed," "blazing pines which formed flaming torches to the hymen." "Hideous and sublime nature" is, as Chactas found to his astonishment, "only a device prepared to deceive" (83) the lovers about the finality of their desires. Certainly, as we know, a hermit's bell providentially interrupted the involuntary consummation of the incest. Yet the interdiction was never absorbed by the conscience of the protagonists who only saw, in Christian censure, the impact of an imported ideology. "May the God who goes against nature perish" blasphemed Chactas, condemned, even in *René*, to remain the eternal Oedipus as presented in the opening of *Atala*: "A young girl accompanied him as Antigone accompanied Oedipus" (44). Later, it was in no way through religious conviction, still less awareness of incest, that Atala refused Chactas, but simply through faithfulness to a "superstitious" vow extracted at the bedside of a dying mother. Of all the (pre)romantic heroines, from Julie in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (*The New Heloïse*) to Madame de Mortsauf in *Le Lys dans la vallée* (*The Lily in the Valley*), Atala is, without doubt, the only one who in this respect openly asserts, even on her death bed, the irreducibly "natural" character of her

passion, to the great scandal of Father Aubry. "I would have wished the annihilation of the Christian divinity if only I could have rolled, locked in your arms, from abyss to abyss with the ruins of God and the world" (103).

Critics have been correct to see in *Les Natchez* a survival of the "frenetic" novel which developed in France after 1750. Necrophily, infanticide and murderous violence[49] were all natural forms of behavior among the Amerindian peoples and were in conformity with de Sade's philosophy of nature.[50] In this way the justification of Chactas and Atala's passion by blood links came directly from *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (*Philosophy in the Boudoir*), where incest provided the model of all the specularity at work in amorous passion. "If love is born of resemblance, where can it be more perfect than between brother and sister, than between father and daughter?"[51] Re-reading *Les Natchez* in the light of *Le Génie du christianisme* thus sets up, after the event, a test for Rousseau's concept of nature, a concept which de Sade pushed to its ultimate consequences. In the "Elysée" of Clarens, as in the island paradise of *Paul et Virginie*, in de Sade's castles as in "the American new Eden" (as formulated in *Les Natchez*), passion had no other goal than to make up the androgynous image of the couple under the fallacious pretext of "sister souls." The dream that René pursued in the New World was "to love an Eve drawn from oneself." But in giving a name to the "vagueness of the passions," in retrospectively denouncing the will to identify or to fuse with the Other like the expression of incest which does not recognize itself, the anamnesis performed by the hero with *Le Génie du christianisme* deconstructs the myth of the "beautiful soul," inherited from Leibniz via the eighteenth century, which still rested on belief in a "correct usage" and in "an honest use of the passions." Already for Kant, the "beautiful soul" was no longer defined by the "good" but by the orientation of life toward the "intelligible," something that was only possible through the aesthetic experience of nature and art.[52] Hegel pushed the Kantian opposition *Pflicht/Neigung* (duty/nature) even further since "moral consciousness" went as far as to enclose itself in its pure interiority and emptiness (*"in seiner Leere"*), in its consciousness of its misfortune (*"die unglückliche sogennante schöne Seele (die) in sich verglimmt"*)[53] in order to transform its lack of action on the world.[54] Through the unfortunate consciousness which, from then on, revealed the ugliness of the world, the

humours transformed themselves into *humor* or irony of the spirit, which discovered the imbalance of the real and the ideal. "Furthermore, I am not at all, like Rousseau, an enthusiast for savages," the preface to the "new *René*" acknowledges. "I do not believe in the slightest that pure nature is the most beautiful thing in the world. Wherever I have had the occasion to see it, I have found it extremely ugly" (261). The exploding of the innocent world of *Les Natchez* with the coming of *Le Génie du christianisme* thus ushered in, through passing on the consciousness of incest, the era of the critical "spirit" which followed the time of innocent nature. The same preface concluded: "Far from being of the opinion that the man who thinks is a depraved beast, it is my belief that it is thought which makes man what he is."[55] In discovering incest as its cause, the "vagueness of the passions" acted as a cleavage in critical consciousness which irremediably opposed bestial nature and transcendental subjectivity.[56]

It is in this sense that *Le Génie du christianisme* can affirm that the classical world "did not have any descriptive poetry properly so-called" and misunderstood the objective reality of nature. "They depicted customs, we depict things. For them, nature was nothing more than a rapidly produced background to the picture. But, unlike us, they never directly represented rivers, mountains, and forests" (2, 497). The numerous descriptions of American nature, the observations of natural history in *Les Natchez* or *Le Génie* have convinced us that, in defining the world as the inadequate object of desire, the vagueness of the passions set up the world as an object separate from consciousness which contemplates or observes it, designating it as the space, no longer of the identification of desire, but of its alienation or of its otherness. "The traveller sits on a tree trunk; he looks, one after the other, at the starry sky, the shades of night, the river; he feels uneasy, agitated and as though he is waiting for something unknown." The feeling of otherness or alienation perhaps underpins the dream of a positive science of nature that the nineteenth century liked to imagine in the form of a disinvestment of desire which no longer projects itself into its object, an empty object destined to die.[57]

Therefore, in giving itself the new name of incest, the "vagueness of the passions" introduced a radical break between *Les Natchez* and *Génie du christianisme*. Moreover, the "rebirth" of "René" in the spiritual universe of Christianity was accompanied by a new "christening" of the name: *Le Génie* bore the signature

of "François-Auguste" and no longer that of "François-René" which name had been "abjured." Furthermore, exact comparisons would show the way in which, in the dialectic that opposes and re-unites the "side" of *Les Natchez* and the "side" of *Le Génie*, the "vagueness of the passions" guides a symmetrical process of exteriorization and interiorization. For instance, did the Natchez Indians know about death (it is during the "Festival of the Dead" that Chactas meets Atala)? Yet it is the "man of passions," as the Indians called René, who, as a new Hamlet taught the superstitious Mila, in the cavern of the dead which she does not dare enter, how to meditate on the meaning of death as consciousness of the alienation of the universe of passions, of the "estrangement" (*Entfremdung*) of desire. René himself only became aware of the symbolic value of death in *Le Génie du christianisme*. The discovery of incest taught him the necessity of doing without the whole of reality – which was transformed into a vast funeral museum of the spirit,[58] like the ruins of Greece or of Rome, which he had visited. The strange pyramids that Chateaubriand, contrary to all ethnographic truth, situated in Ohio[59] fulfill the same function. Like the Egyptian tombs with which Hegel opened the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, they defined, in their empty monumentality, the exteriority of a truth about death which Christianity later revealed as the progressive interiorization of the spirit. "The idolater's monument tells only of the past," confirmed *Le Génie* in connection with the Egyptian pyramids, "that of the Christian speaks only of the future"[60] (2, 94). The present considered as the past of a future that has to come about and materialize as the unique reality of the spirit – such is, perhaps, for Chateaubriand, the meaning of the "vagueness of the passions" to which parallel to the evolution leading from the innocence of *Les Natchez* to the critical aesthetic of *Le Génie*, the whole corpus of the writer's work bears witness, a corpus which unfolds in its creation. like a re-reading of earlier episodes that are always called into question. Where, for Stendhal, it was the appeal to the virtual tribunal of a reader taking on in the future the complete understanding of the *Souvenirs d'égotisme (Memories of Egoism)*, so for Chateaubriand, individual passion always spoke of the "life beyond." It has its origin in the future of history.

Passion: A Phenomenology of the Spirit?

Earlier we alluded to Hegel. As a movement of the "humours" transformed into "humor," or irony of consciousness affirming its transcendence in relation to the world of phenomena, the interpretation of the "vagueness of the passions" as a stage in the awakening of consciousness and in the necessary perlaboration of the spirit in the historic future, brings to mind Hegel's definition of "romantic art." Also, it is the Hegelian analysis of melancholy, rather than that of Kant mentioned above, that corresponds better to the "suffering of René." Whereas Kant tended to directly equate hypochondria with the "moral instinct," for Hegel it was the "misanthropic" symptom that bore witness to the difficulty of acceding to the "age of reason" through the renunciation of the shapeless desires of adolescence, and gave direction to the painful work of dialectical negativity which has to allow the emptiness of consciousness to objectivize itself in the future of the world. Whoever does not renounce the naïve desire to transform the world, whoever persists in innocently projecting his desire onto the world, is exposed to the melancholy that strikes those who are reluctant to adapt to the world's misfortune. Accepting the "reason of reality," the adult individual will, after the event, be reconciled with the "hard and compact mass of the world," which consciousness has just objectivized. For Hegel, man effectively ceased to be a simple natural being from the moment he started to think. "He is aware of this separation," Hegel comments in *Reason in History*, "and that is why he suppresses his desires and interposes thought, the ideal, between the surge of desire and its satisfaction." Hegel summarized this obligation in a lapidary phrase: "There is no self-consciousness in desire (*Trieb*)." That is why, for Hegel as for Chateaubriand, the frustration of passion experienced by an individual consciousness, miserable because of its "vagueness," expresses more generally the movement of reason, which searches obscurely to realize itself in history. "Individuals seek out their own good (*das Ihrige*), but, at the same time, they are the means and instruments of something higher and greater which they unconsciously accomplish." In brief, the "vagueness of the passions" is nothing but one of the names given to the "stratagems of reason." "This immense mass of indeterminate desires constitutes the instruments and means which the spirit of the

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world (*der Weltgeist*) uses to attain its end, to raise itself to the level of, and to materialize, consciousness."[61]

As a result, when in 1828 Chateaubriand became directly aware of the thought of Hegel, whom he saw as the "leader of the philosophical-historical party,"[62] he proceeded without difficulty to an "Hegelian" re-reading of the "vagueness of the passions." Compared to the natural religions that preceded it, Christianity, as the most elaborate stage of the phenomenology of the spirit, marked the moment of absolute truth which "reflexively" thinks itself. "The Christian *idea* in society" (note the *Etudes historiques)* is a "proof of the progress of civilization"; it is "a *thought* of the future," that of "the human race marching to freedom."[63] This progress, this freedom of consciousness that tore itself from events in the reflection of history, accounts for the rest of the "Hegelian" organization of Chateaubriand's work on the aesthetic level, the integration of *Les Natchez* and *Le Génie du christianisme* confirming, in effect, the dialectical passage from an epic mode of writing to a new novelistic mode. In his various prefaces, Chateaubriand several times underlined that, in belonging to a natural universe, *Atala* was still a classical *epic,* emphasized by its subdivision into "prologue," "main text," "epilogue" etc., whereas a more introspective and "complex" intrigue rechristens the *René* of *Le Génie du christianisme* into a *novel.*[64] The 1830 revision of *Les Natchez* structurally re-worked the dialectical opposition. The first part formed an epic divided into twelve books and the second part (entitled *Suite des Natchez [The Natchez, volume 2])* belongs in its continuous writing to an explicitly novelistic form, the whole thing reproducing, after the event, the evolutionary plan of Hegel's symbolic forms.[65] One knows that, for the author of *l'Esthétique (Aesthetics),* the epic constituted the privileged mode of expression of the classical world, a mode in which the spirit had not become conscious of its own truth which was only revealed in the novel, the genre appropriate to the modernity of romanticism.[66] "As opposed to the epic and the story, the novel is an epic genre characterized by the insurmountable break between the hero and the world," as Lukacs summed it up later.[67] Signifying the emergence of the problematic individual, the "vagueness of the passions" opens artistic forms distributed on either side of a stylistic fracture brought about by *Le Génie du christianisme,* simultaneously to aesthetic complexity and to growing problematization.

Passion "Decorative Motif and Not the Goal of History"

Finally, let us examine the later history of *René*. Chateaubriand was quick to express regret that the separate publication of his novel had altered its perspective, bringing into existence, by a perverse effect, "various kinds of solitary men, both passionate and philosophical, who took hatred of men for loftiness of spirit and plunged themselves more and more into a proud misanthropy which led them to madness or death" (273). But had he not himself encouraged this involuntary drift of the "vagueness of the passions"? No longer belonging to the past of *Les Natchez* nor to the future of *Le Génie du christianisme* (in both works, a meaningful blank locates his absence), *René* is itself a text adrift, which reflects no more than its absence, a text definitively set in the caesura of history. An expression of consciousness as an instance of negation and separation, the "vagueness of the passions" thus designates the always painfully gaping fault where the spirit hopelessly pursues its attempt at reflexivity. The individual, in order to evade the trap through which consciousness closes him in its own "empty" project, can only kill within himself this "mad desire to live," as the "Letter" of René to Céluta described passion in *Les Natchez* (279). In brief, there is no resort but the suicide of consciousness. What actually happens to the prospective uncertainty or emptiness of passion when the perspective of *Le Génie du christianisme* no longer legitimates it, when it is no longer decoded as a stratagem which the spirit borrows to mark out is distance from matter and affirm its own autonomy? In the progressive and civilizing movement of Christianity, René played the part of a cultural myth, bringing out a key to the spirit – as the small clauses of the novel indicate: "They say . . . that *[René]* returned to his wife. . . . He perished not long after. . . . They still point out the rock where he used to sit at sunset" (182). Deprived of its demonstrative value, the "vagueness of the passions" no longer revealed anything more than the fault line of a consciousness forever separated from the future of the world. The obsession with a negative phase, no longer provisional as in Hegel but now definitive, which the "vagueness of the passions" expressed, only ends up as an assertion of that "hollow immanence" mentioned by Jean-Pierre Richard in connection with *René*. Thus, with Musset the "indefiniteness of the passions" becomes the sign of an infinite grief, an impossible

grief. Linked to the setback of the Restoration, an "aborted" return to a society that had disappeared, the "evil of the age"[68] bore witness from then on to an historical regression, to a falsification of power which had become a parody, a simulacrum of itself. This time, society as a whole, and not just the individual, found itself condemned to bear the sign of an irremediable lack. "This is a dreadful symbol of human reason which itself wears mourning for its illusions," *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle (Confessions of a Child of the Century)* remarks on the black clothing worn by the men of the nineteenth century (11–12).[69] Would the spirit be totally objectivized in the momentary widowhood of history, thus killing History? "They (the children of the century) were left with the *present*, the *spirit* of the century. Anguish and death entered into their souls at the sight of this ghost, half mummy and half foetus" (7–8). One finds in Stendhal, perhaps, the same *termination* of the *finality* of history formerly attributed to the "vagueness of the passions." *Armance*, a novel whose "subject is a lack,"[70] does indeed resort, in the preliminary chapter, to an historical explanation of the evil of the age, but the novelistic interest of the text lies in the fact that historical causality no longer explains anything. The "secret" of Olivier's fate comes from an unconscious which, despite the marginal preciseness of Stendhal (a *pathologia sexualis!*), belongs only to its own unconscious instance, which signs the death warrant of "positive negativity." The jumble of cultures in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* and the lumber-room of religious ideologies in *La Tentation de saint Antoine (The Temptation of Saint Anthony)* form, from that time on, a vast graveyard of the spirit shaken by the jolts of a desire become absolute in history.[71] Still, in the past a "stratagem of reason," had not the "vagueness of the passions" become, in the final analysis, the "derisory stratagem of an unreason"?

Hegel had already pondered the problems of post-romanticism. What would become of the unconscious in history and of history itself if consciousness were to be totally objectivized in it? As everyone knows, Kierkegaard found, in the ontological fault line which passions opened in a history to be lived from then on as pure present, the possibility for a new existential project for consciousness. "History," he said, "begins with the *present*." But this is to jump ahead. In fact, it was to Hegel's critic, Schopenhauer, that the responsibility of writing the last chapter on the "vagueness of the passions" fell, Chateaubriand having opened

the file. The melancholy indeterminacy of passion no longer marked out the movement of the spirit in search of itself but, on the contrary, came to denounce nature's will to live, its implacable wish to perpetuate the presence of the species through the trap of the individual's unconscious.[72] Other than a complete refusal of all sexuality or the solution of suicide, the only way for the individual to escape from this dispossession of his own desire consisted in the absolute aesthetization of passion, since, in the world of "pure representation," in the world of the pure Idea devoid of all passion, "things seem to us to be unconnected with all the prestige of hope, like objects of disinterested contemplation rather than covetousness,"[73] as Schopenhauer said. We should note that Malthusian thought, which lasted the whole century and which had its counterpart in Schopenhauerian "ascetism" and "chastity," was rooted in the fear of sexual desire which, with respect to the species, took on the appearance of the death instinct.[74] Finally, the lineage of René was destined to be embodied in the form of "Pierrot de la Lune" who wore, with the pretense of make-up, the "white" mourning of passion. Susceptible to women but, at the same time, aware of the falsity at the heart of all desire, Laforgue's "Pierrot" knew, as a good reader of Schopenhauer and Hartmann,[75] that passion, "a decorative motif[76] and not the goal of history," "an average flirt objectivizing itself in each of us, a substratum without gratuities" is nothing

> Qu'un des mille coups de dés
> Du jeu que l'Idée et l'Amour
> Afin sans doute de connaître
> Aussi leur propre raison d'être
> Ont jugé bon de mettre à jour.[77]

(but one of the thousand throws of the dice / in the game which the Idea and Love / without doubt in order to know / also their own *raison d'être* / have deemed it good to bring to light).

A game of dice loaded by desire, the unconscious in the philosophy of history as Hegel conceived it, gave way, from then on, to another definition of the unconscious. The "vagueness of the passions" bore witness to the species will to survive, which required the death of the individual, as Schopenhauer had shown, and whose stratagem was no longer one of reason but of nature deploying its seductions in order to trap the individual in the

monotonous and funereal ritual of infinite reproduction. Altogether, the "vagueness of passion," which is nothing more than the *life instinct* of the species, paradoxically makes death impossible, since the individual is locked in the cycle of "avatars" of nature, condemned to the eternal return[78] of the survival instinct which, as far as the individual is concerned, shows itself to be, in reality, the death instinct. The anguish at not being able to die, expressed by Baudelaire in the "Squelette laboureur"[79] ("The Skeleton Ploughman") or the terror of a whole era haunted by the "living dead" – buried alive[80] or vampires[81] – who could never find their eternal rest, condemned as they were, like slaves to life and desire, to "be reborn" unceasingly at the fateful hour – here are so many obsessions which clearly delineate this subjection of the individual to the irrepressible drive of the species, to the vampirism of nature "thirsting" for blood, which turns individual passion into no more than an instrument, the puppet of a blind and generic goal.

Death in This Conservatory: From René to Renée

The philosophy of the eternal return found its natural territory in the fantastic tale. Let us think in particular, with Gautier, about the tales of "vampires" like "The Amorous Corpse," "Avatars," or "Arria Marcella, a souvenir of Pompeii." In this last short story, the bizarre resurrection of the dead city (like the Egypt of *Roman de la momie [Story of the Mummy]*)[82] bears witness to the fury of ancient civilizations to live and to survive, of the refusal of the "phantom-cultures" to die. The impression of the "breast" of a woman in the lava of Pompeii acts, for Octavius, like a fetish which, by metonymy, restores the urge to live, the irrepressible desire of nature which still lingers in the ruins of the stricken town.[83] It is then the "morose religion" of Christianity which, in the person of Arrius the Nazarene,[84] rejects Arria Marcella in whom "two thousand years of death had not calmed" the desire to live "in the limbo of paganism."[85] As in Chateaubriand's *René*, Christianity came "to render palpable and visible the nothingness"[86] which, in reality, as far as the individual is concerned, is the same as the "fascinating" but frustrating drive of nature. We find again the role played by Christianity in the awakening of consciousness and the denunciation of the

manipulation of the individual by the species in Zola's *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret (Father Mouret's Indiscretion)*. In the center of Paradou, where Albine leads Serge, in this place of fatal reproduction (44)[87] and of "incest"[88] accomplished by the desire of man and woman in the first moments of humanity's existence; in this paradise where flowers and luxuriant vegetation seduce and fascinate, but also "stink of death" (the same applies to the "black columbines of the sorrow of mourning," to the "nightshades" secreting the "poison of suicide," to the "sadnesses" or other "cares" ("marigolds") which throng "the middle of the field of *melancholy*" (85–86),[89] so much that the mechanism of desire[90] "forces them always to search for something" (97); in the "virgin forest" where Serge is condemned to "be reborn" (78) with Atala-Albine beneath the giant tree of Genesis; it is thus at the heart of this Paradou that the "melancholy passion" is to reveal the "monstrousness" of universal "coupling" (114).[91] From then on, having transposed his "passion" into "the passion for Christ" (145) and desire for the woman into the cult of the Virgin, Father Mouret wishes to will "the death of the species" (65) in choosing absolute chastity.[92]

What we call "decadence" is, in brief, the refusal, as in Schopenhauer's anti-Hegelian critique, to accept that the grief of the world can be reduced, (to use Adorno's term), to a simple dialectics.[93] The only alternative to willing the world is, as we have said, suicide.[94] Whereas the "vagueness of the passions" originally signalled the dawn of the world of the spirit, it now signifies death, decadence and the end of the world worn out and entirely externalized in its spirit.[95] But Schopenhauer also puts forward the aesthetic solution, recourse to "representation" which collapses life into artificiality in order to denounce its artifice. What is "Pierrot de la Lune" in brief if not nature become artificial, if not vital spontaneity returned to his puppet theatre?[96] The excessive artificiality of the dandy has no other reason to exist. He was the first to understand that the erotic is nothing but nature's lure for using the death of the individual for the ends of the species.[97] As a result, he asserts the independence of the subjective consciousness in pushing nature's artifice to excess, in eroticizing his game which remains only a disguised incest, a repetition of the same for as long as otherness of consciousness does not come to denounce its alienation. A rewriting of Chateaubriand's famous novel, Zola's *La Curée (The*

Quarry) marks out very well the aesthetic neutralization of desire. That which Chactas and René had not dared to accomplish with Atala and Amélie in the forest of the New World, Renée – the "new Phaedra" – (230)[98] and "the incestuous woman of the new age" (332) – accomplishes with Maxime in the artificial location of the conservatory of her mansion, another avatar of Paradou but, this time, presented in all its artificiality as though only art represented the "truth" of nature which precisely is to be artifice, falsity and deception.[99] Indeed, in this decor reconstituting the "virgin forest," this "cultivated" vegetation – a prey to an "immense rutting," to a "nervous erethism" and giving off the "odor of an amorous woman" (319) – no longer hides the fact that all its beauties and shapes have no other goal but reproduction, that its metaphors indicate no more than the flirtatiousness of crude desire. "Water lilies which opened at the surface of the water (or of the skin?), like the corsage of a virgin," "tornelias let their brushwood hang down like the hair of swooning water-nymphs" (319), "hibiscus flowers" become the "sensual mouths of women" or orchids like "wonderful slipper(s)" (253),[100] all express the fierce will of nature to seduce its victim. Like the Saccard Mansion itself become, through its "astonishing decoration" (240), a flower ("the mansion bloomed even more"), the vegetation of the conservatory turned itself into comfortable art, furniture for desire, imitating the artifice of men for leading them to their ends. With its dwarf ferns lending their "thick carpet" (252); palms offering the use of "their fans" (252); ravenalas serving as "immense Chinese screens" (252); alsophias mimicking "some gigantic sideboard" (252); "lianas" interlaced "into curtains" or "into tassels on rich drapes" (253); or even banana plants unfolding their leaves "where two lovers can lie at their ease pressing against one another" as though in "velvet cradles" (252);[101] the conservatory of Renée did the same as the Christianity of René, it exposed the nakedness of nature as a drive of concealed desire[102] and thus as the death instinct, namely the unconscious itself which consciousness finally came around to identifying with nothingness.[103]

But is in Huysmans even more than in Zola, that the aesthetic returns nature to its artificiality, that as in Schopenhauer, "representation" annihilates nature's "will to live."[104] "Brought down by hypochondria, crushed by spleen" (82);[105] having recognized in the artificial beauty of caladium the very image of syphilis,

"the virus of ancient times," "passed on since the beginning of the world, from fathers to sons," "the inexhaustible heritage" of a life which is re-born from its decomposition (137); having discovered that, with flowers, all their interiority is exhibited on the surface, that their seductive spirals only open on the emptiness of pretence; having assisted at the unwinding of the floral organs which only conceal nothingness;[106] having buried "a virility momentarily dead"(71) during a funeral supper; Floressas Des Esseintes went to shut himself in the totally artificial world of his laboratory, in this interiority itself become complete exteriority[107] where he trapped nature in its own trap, catching it "the wrong way around." Likewise for the tortoise with the gem-encrusted shell thought up to improve the aesthetic effect of an Oriental carpet, the hybrid monster at once flower, animal and precious stone, making a sort of living art: "It would be good to place on the carpet something which would cause a stir and whose dark tone would enliven the brightness of its colors" (95). Similarly the perfumes, the "essences" or "quintessences" of flowers which, with the (al)chemical science of Des "Esseintes," are supposed to be more true than nature and deceive nature itself. As a result of playing the game of pretense, it is really the void of consciousness, "representation," which gets the better of nature's "pettiness of the shopkeeper," affirming the superiority of willed artifice over the blind artifice of desire.[108] Moreover, *A rebours (In Reverse)* unfolds, itself, like Flaubert's *La Tentation de saint Antoine*, like a catalogue or the "fall" – the descriptive substituting for narrative, like nomenclature for action – of History become lumber-room or pandemonium of stratagems of "reason" reduced to the aspect of mummies, of pure pretense.

The Postmodernity of Passion

But what becomes of the "finality" of history when, after such an "emptying" of passion, the spirit finds itself totally exteriorized in the world like pure representation and void of consciousness? Whereas at the dawn of the nineteenth century, the "vagueness of the passions" announced the painful birth of the future Spirit in the World, the foreseeable identification of the Spirit with itself – an identification which led to its own "mummification"[109] – detached passion from consciousness in order to hand it over to the unconscious understood as the game of intrinsic

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and blind forces. This passage from passion to the entropic drive can be seen quite easily, around 1883, in Zola's two anti-Schopenhauerian novels. In *La Joie de vivre (The Joy of Life)*, which already announced the theme of *Fécondité (Fertility)*, the "vagueness of puberty" (266)[110] did not, as it had done in the past, lead to the "conclusion that life is stupid and melancholic," but "on the contrary ... that its birth is powerful and joyful ... in an age of action and conquest" (10–11). To the "skeptical boredom" of the "hyponchondriac" Lazare – which was no longer "the romantic boredom of Werther and René weeping with sorrow for ancient beliefs, but the boredom of new heroes of doubt," "talking about killing the will to live in order to put an end to this savage and imbecile parade of life, which the master force of the world puts on as a show with an aim of unknown egoism" and "dreaming of a general suicide of a sudden, total disappearance consented to by the universality of living beings" (366–67) – to this Schopenhauerian boredom, Pauline's unshakable and (pre-)religious faith in life and creation thus opposes itself.[111] Certainly "this novel of a young girl"[112] ends paradoxically "with the melancholic renunciation" (237) of the heroine, obliged to content herself with a "sisterly" relationship. Yet incest proves itself to be fertile since Pauline achieves motherhood by proxy in giving back life to the child of Lazare and Louise (389). Still hesitant in *La Joie de vivre*,[113] the new philosophy of Creation found itself announced, with *Au bonheur des dames (To the Happiness of Ladies)*, in the context of an emerging capitalism and in the process of being born to its "enjoyment." This time, the "eternal feminine" is no longer a source of anguish, but being itself "trapped," "exploited" (55), women's desire becomes the motor of productivity.[114] To "Paul's boredom of pessimism" (143), Denise – the "Nietzschean" heroine[115] – quickly prefers the "will, action and creativeness" (50) of Octave[116] whose "single passion" is "to conquer women" (132) in his new "temple" (132). Her "unconscious"[117] (129) impels her to give in with "happiness" and without remorse to the passion[118] of "the machine," to the force of the "colossal"[119] (109). Freed from that time on, desire has killed death. "In burying the dead ... and the corpse of the old commerce" (196), "all life was there ... the embryo of the twentieth century"[120] (187). The vagueness of the passions which mortgaged time as the future of history led to the *end* of passion become the unconscious finality of the individual: enjoyment.

After the phenomenology of the spirit, the twentieth century was thus ready to renew acquaintance with a phenomenology which was not simply an autobiography of the spirit, but the presence and availability of the world and of things to their own "being": – decadence with its notions of the sacred[121] or of phenomenal "intelligence"[122] which authorized a "symbolism of forms" as such; Kierkegaard through the discovery of the *instant* which inspired the existentialist philosophers; Rimbaud with his eulogy of "engineering,"[123] which a "catholicity" of productivity and conquering colonialism was to make its own;[124] Nietzsche and all the philosophies of action[125] in their eulogy of the desire for power of vitalism, in their eulogy of the superman or "cult of the ego";[126] Freud in tearing the unconscious from the fatality of the species in order to make it a way for the individual to live;[127] more naïvely surrealism which was convinced of being able to keep the generic unconscious "under Blue Beard's nose"; more dramatically the Kafkaesque idea of the "absurd"; but also Husserl giving back to consciousness a fresh vision of the world in its very illusion and making with the horizon of things a mode of absolute presence in the same way as Bergson had refused Hegelian temporality in order to make of "creation" "a fact of experience" an "immediate datum of consciousness";[128] finally deconstruction which consecrates the heterogeneity and non-contemporaneousness of concepts.[129] In short, the chapter of the "vagueness of the passions" which, in the name of the phenomenology of the spirit, had led the *modernity* of the nineteenth century toward the realms of Thanatos closes with the *postmodernist* acceptance of the "drive" as the triumph of Eros.

Notes

1. Thus, Voltaire wavers between trust in the "Enlightenment philosophers" (the end of the *Lettres anglaises* refuting the tragic vision of Pascal's *Pensées)* and the perplexity of *Candide.* It is of some significance that the complementary couple, *optimism* (1737) and *pessimism* (1757), appeared in the middle of the eighteenth century.

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2. Maupertuis, quoted by Mauzi, "Les maladies de l'âme au XVIIIe siècle," *Revue des sciences historiques*, 1960, p. 461.
3. See M. Delon, "Du vague des passions à la passion du vague," *Le Préromantisme*, a symposium held at Clermont-Ferrand, ed. P. Villaneix, Klincksieck, 1975, p. 490.
4. On the theoretical difficulty of reconciling the old temperament system of vapors and the new conception of "nervous illnesses," see Mauzi, "Les maladies de l'âme au XVIIIe siècle" (see note 2), section "La mélancolie des vapeurs," p. 467.
5. Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes*. Club français du Livre, 1972, vol. 13, pp. 795–796.
6. See also Diderot in the article "Mélancolie" in the *Encyclopédie:* "It is the *usual* sentiment of our imperfection . . . *most often* the effect of the weakness of the soul and of the organs."
7. See O. Pot, "La figuration de la totalité in *Candide*," *Littératures*, 23, 1990, pp. 69–88.
8. La Morlière, *Le Fatalisme pour prouver l'influence du sort sur l'histoire du coeur humain*, 1769; see Mauzi, "Les maladies de l'âme au XVIIIe siècle," p. 476, which analyses the cosmic idea of a "vocation of misfortune" which has, without doubt, a Leibnizian origin ("Disquiet is essential to the felicity of living beings, a felicity which is never achieved through perfect possession," Leibniz, in A. Cuvillier, *Vocabulaire philosophique*, Armand Colin, 1956, *sub verbo* "Inquiétude"). On this "clash," an anticipation of the "Luna Park" world whose savagery was later revealed through urban sociology according to the analysis of Benjamin on Baudelaire, see O. Pot, "La figuration de la totalité dans *Candide*" (see footnote 7).
9. "Everything changes, everything passes. Only the Whole remains (. . . .) What do you really mean with your individuals? . . . There aren't any. No, there is only one, single, great individual, which is the whole. In this whole, as in a machine or in any kind of animal, you will give such and such a name; but when you give the name of individual to this part of the whole, it is through a conception which is as wrong as if, in a bird, you were to give an individual name to the wing . . . ." (Diderot, quoted by F. Schalk, "Der Artikel 'Melancholie' in der diderotschen Enzyclopädie," *Studien zur Französischen Aufklärung*, Frankfurt, 2, Klostermann, 1977).
10. Rousseau, *Discours sur L'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, quoted from the 1984 Flammarion edition. The following numbers indicate pages from this edition.
11. It is true that the "savage" has no "imagination"; "his soul, which is stirred by nothing, abandons itself to the single sentiment of his current existence, without any idea of the future" (183). However, "pity" or "compassion" constitutes a threshold of "generic" rupture

in so far as the individual – as such – "identifies himself" morally – but not yet culturally – with the "other" (197).

12. For Rousseau, passion indeed "draws forth" language, a sort of "abstract" of nature (the cry), but this language degenerates as soon as it loses its primary relationship with the movement of passion and becomes pure "abstraction."
13. In Rousseau, passion still remains linked to the expression of the "sensitive" and unique individual, whereas in Hegel it has a dialectical relationship with the spirit, which it serves as an instrument in a phenomenology of transformation of the nature of man history through the use of technical and cultural tools. See Zygmunt Jedryka, "Rousseau entre Hegel et Saint-Simon," *Le Préromantisme* (see footnote 3), pp. 259–277.
14. Rousseau, *Etudes de la nature*, "Le sentiment moral" (in connection with Rousseau), ed. Firmin Didot, 1843, p. 432 and, in particular, the chapter "Du sentiment de la Mélancolie" (On the Usefulness of Melancholy), p. 407.
15. This quotation is taken from the 1979 Ramsay edition. According to G. Poulet, *Adolphe* by B. Constant opposes the (French-style) libertine love to the (German-style) "metaphysical" or "serious" love. In *Les Malheurs de l'insconstance*, Dorat, 1772, a young man lectures an "old libertine," a symbol of an out-of-date world: "Pleasures only leave a faint trace in the soul, whereas heart-rending sensations go deeper" (p. 57). According to E. Leiter, *La Passion du bonheur. Conscience puritaine et sexualité moderne*, (Paris, Gallimard, 1988) puritanism, whose aim was, traditionally, to integrate sexuality with a form of vitalism, works, on the contrary, from the beginning of the eighteenth century, in the direction of the opposition *morality* versus *sexuality*.
16. See R. de Luppé, *Les idées littéraires de Mme de Staël et l'héritage des Lumières (1795–1800)*, Vrin, 1969, p. 49.
17. R. de Luppé, ibid., p. 52.
18. A novel of the end of the eighteenth century entitled *Les Réflexions d'un jeune homme* by Feucher was already talking of a "*voluntary* melancholy" where the sick consciousness "multiplies itself, grows . . . and seems so well made for suffering that it even seeks reasons for *eternalizing* it, for anticipating it." Grief would then be an exclusive mode of being of the soul: "Could it be true that the soul only has one way of feeling and is grief its sole attribute? Everything seems to prove it": Mauzi, "Les maladies de L'âme au XVIIIe siècle" (see footnote 2), pp. 479–480.
19. Indeed, the individual in love intuitively understands that "all that which follows love is nothingness, that nothing can replace what one feels . . . a conviction which leads one to think of death in the happiest moments of love" (130).

20. See also in the article "Vertu" in the *Encyclopédie* "the moral instinct so sure and so faithful." Leibniz was also talking of the "instinct of theory," *Nouveaux essais*, 1, 2, 3.
21. See Klibansky, Panofsky, Saxl, *Saturne et la Mélancolie*, French translation, Gallimard, 1989, p. 197; W. Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, Frankfurt, Suhrkampf, 1928, p. 141. On this "passage to the limit," see Agamben, *Stanze*, French translation, C. Bourgeois, 1981, chapter I, 1. This amounted to a throwing over into a real positivity of the pathological diagnosis traditionally associated with melancholic idealization such as can still be found, for example, in the article "Mélancolie" in the *Encyclopédie:* "(Melancholy) is also the effect of *ideas of a certain perfection* which cannot be found either in oneself or in others, or in the objects of one's pleasures, or in nature . . . ." On "sublime melancholy" before Kant, see Shaftesbury, *A Letter concerning Enthusiasm*, 1707.
22. Madame de Staël, *De l'Allemagne*, Flammarion, 1968, vol. 2, p. 136. "Is not infinity the secret of the great melancholies?" asked Balzac in *Le Médecin de campagne*. According to *La Cousine Bette*, "libertines" are "treasure hunters": see P. Barberis, *Balzac et le mal du siècle . . .*, 1970, passim.
23. Michelet, *L'amour, Oeuvres complètes*, Flammarion, 1985, vol. 18, p. 217. In the demoniac hysteria that releases phantasms and idle dreams, Michelet sees a "violent moral chemistry where *individual* passions turn into *generalizations*, and where *generalizations* become *passions*," *La Sorcière*, Flammarion, 1966, p. 21.
24. Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, *Contes cruels*, Folio, Gallimard, 1983, p. 66. Unlike "sentimentality," true passion "identifies us with the very essence of Joy! with the intense idea of Grief!" It lifts "instinct" to the "eternal" (186–90). This phenomenology of the spirit had already been formulated, before Mallarmé, by Vigny: *Journal d'un poète*, Gallimard, Pléiade, 1850, pp. 1053 and 1144: "As history lays its evidence at the feet of the idea, the idea reigns." For Rémy de Gourmont (*La Culture des idées*, 10/18, Union générale d'éditions, 1983, p. 8), "abstract passion" is, in short, "unconsciousness" which "plays such an important part in the intellectual process – I even think that it plays the highest part, that of queen-empress!"
25. The word appeared in les *Eléments d'idéologie* by Destutt de Tracy (in 1801) which Madame de Staël refuted.
26. Quoted by R. de Luppé, *Les idées littéraires de Mae de Staël et l'héritage des Lumières (1795–1800)* (see 16), p. 152.
27. R. de Luppé, ibid.
28. Madame de Staël, *De l'Allemagne* (see note 22), vol. 1, p. 212, "De la poésie classique et de la poésie romantique."
29. Here again, it is the argument of the *Lettre sur les spectacles* that finds itself "turned upside down": romanticism is prepared to do

without classical theater, which Rousseau retained as a nostalgic ideal.

30. "At that time, men were *identified with nature*. . . . As they were doing little thinking (and) as they were always carrying the action of (their) soul to the *outside*, (they) had, so to speak, a *corporeal soul*" (Madame de Staël, *De l'Allemagne* [see note 2], 1, 212).
31. On the relation established by Hegel between action based on the pure interiority of consciousness and revolutionary "terror" as a trauma of history, see H. M. Enzensberger, *Politik und Verbrechen. Neun Beitrage*, Frankfurt, Suhrkampf, 1964, pp. 325–360.
32. This "primitive" scene is very different from that which Rousseau placed at the origin of "passions" in the *Essai sur l'origine des langues*. It no longer introduces a regression of history since the beginning but rather, as if in the center of this history, a break, a "void" which is like its eschatologic projection, its teleological (pro)pulsion.
33. At the origin of revolutions, there is "A certain something, hidden I don't know where, disquiet, specific to our heart which makes us take a dislike to happiness as well as to unhappiness and will hurl us from revolution to revolution until the final century" (Chateaubriand, *Essai sur les révolutions*, quoted by Delon [see footnote 3], pp. 489–490).
34. Chateaubriand, *Le Génie du christianisme*, II, 3, chapter 9, "Du vague des passions."
35. According to a different version dated 1801. *René* is quoted from the 1984 Folio Edition.
36. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie*, Flammarion, 1966, p. 27.
37. In this way, the magnum opus becomes the "mental theater of the Idea," see Evelyn Gould, *Virtual Theater, from Diderot to Mallarmé*, Baltimore/London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.
38. For Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, and Delacroix, *Journal*, see W. A. Guentner, "Rhéthorique et énergie: l'esquisse," *Romantisme*, 46, 1984 (issue devoted to "energy"), pp. 27–36.
39. In *L'Amour fou*, Breton quotes Hegel: "objects appeal to us only in so far as they still contain something mysterious which has not yet been revealed." On the analogy between the "secret" of the first romantic novels (*Adolphe*, *René*, etc.) and the Kantian philosophy of the *Oeffentlichkeit*, or the Hegelian dramaturgy of the "*sich bilden*," see G. Benrekassa, "L'énigme, le secret, l'oubli," *Romantisme*, 56, 1987, pp. 21–28.
40. It would be appropriate to examine the coincidence: theory of the "vagueness of the passions" / birth of the "detective novel" (as in Poe, etc.). According to J. C. Vareille, "Préhistoire du roman policier," *Romantisme*, 53, 1986, pp. 23–36, the "gothic novel" (which is what

René is) "implies the raising of a question, its solution and, in particular, the delay taken over this solution. . . . The enigma becomes one of the motors of the action." Moreover, the predecessor of the "police officer" is the "bloodhound" or the "tracker" of the "far-west" (*Les Natchez* anticipates F. Cooper's novels, p. 27).

41. Amélie's death, as a denial of nature by Christianity, re-writes Mademoiselle de Saint-Yves' death who, in Voltaire's *L'Ingénu*, also died without revealing her guilty secret.
42. See Bertrand d'Astorg, *Variations sur l'interdit majeur. Littérature et inceste en Occident*, Gallimard, 1990 (from Chateaubriand to Musil).
43. On the "Electra complex" as consciousness of the opposition between *law* and *nature* in romantic philosophy, particularly in Hegel, see G. Steiner, *Les Antigones*, Gallimard, 1984, pp. 13, 34, et seq.
44. For instance, J. P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Œdipe et ses mythes*, Brussels, Complexe, 1988.
45. Rousseau, *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles*, Flammarion, 1967, pp. 91–92.
46. Quoted by C. A. Porter, *Chateaubriand, Composition, Imagination and Poetry*, Anima Libri, 1978, p. 82.
47. See M. Butor, "Chateaubriand et l'Ancienne Amérique," *Répertoire II*, Editions de Minuit, 1964, pp. 152–192.
48. The references are to the Folio Edition, Gallimard, 1984.
49. Examples: "You drink the broth of the flesh of the dead out of the skull of the warrior"; "Mila took in her hand the skull which René had put back with the others. She saw some ants coming out of it. . . ."
50. A. Goldschläger, "Sade et Chateaubriand," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, II, 1/2, 1973–1974, pp. 1–12.
51. Gallimard, Folio, 1976, p. 106. According to Catherine Cusset ("La passion selon Juliette," *L'Infini*, No. 31, 1990, pp. 17–26), the aporia of libertinage can, as at the end of *Juliette*, go beyond itself by means of female homosexuality (as in the stoic *amicitia*, the only "generous" and disinterested love is formed from the Same).
52. *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 1787, quoted by U. Franke, "Das richtige Leben und die Kunst: Die schöne Seele im Horizont von Leibniz's Philosophie," MLN, 103, 3, 1988, pp. 504–518. See also the article "Grandeur" in the *Encyclopédie*: "Good feelings are, . . . at one and the same time, good and great." "To the loftiness of feelings," The "great man" "adds a vast, luminous and profound spirit."
53. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, quoted by U. Franke, ibid., p. 515.
54. According to Hegel, Hamlet is a "beautiful soul" but his failure stems from the fact that he is unable to turn "the melancholy and sadness which weigh him down" into carefully thought out action on the world, into phenomenology of the spirit: "Where he should

only act after careful thought, he acts on impulse; where circumstances require active intervention, he remains turned in upon himself and lets events and chance decide without him and outside him," *Esthétique*, translated by S. Jankélévitch, Aubier, 1944, vol. 2, p. 314.

55. *Essai sur les révolutions* was written immediately after Chateaubraind's return from America and was still imbued with the conviction, born of the revolutionary cataclysm, that ideological Christianity had failed in its task. For this reason, it posed the question of a "post-Christianity" that would constitute a natural religion without worship and purified of all ceremonial. *Les Natchez* was added to the second part of the *Essai* in an attempt to achieve this. But the "spirit of Christianity" unexpectedly came to transform the ideological status of Christianity in the direction of true religion, the Christian cult manifesting the spiritual dimension of all natural religious experience in a poetic and ideal way. For this "beheading" of America, see M. Butor, "Chateaubriand et l'Ancienne Amérique" (see note 47).
56. In the preface to *Cromwell*, Hugo also attributed the origin of the "aesthetic" sentiment to the intrusion of the "vagueness of the passions" into modernity: "Under the influence of this spirit of Christian melancholy and philosophical criticism, poetry took a great step forward which changed the whole face of the intellectual world. It began to distinguish the grotesque from the sublime, the animal from the spirit" following on from Christianity, which "put an abyss between the soul and the body."
57. According to Claude Bernard's *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale*," Champs, Flammarion, 1984, p. 125, the "dead body" is better known than the "living body" (sixteenth-century anatomies, such as Vesalius's, were still presenting the skeleton as an allegory of the "living").
58. The ancestor cult of the Natchez never arrived at the point of forming an idea of death as the structural mourning of the "existing." Their collective behavior did not individualize death nor problematize it in the slightest (151).
59. See R. Switzer, "Chateaubriand and the Welsh Indians," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 3, 1–2, 1974–1975, pp. 6–17.
60. In brief, the "spirit" of Christianity came to give an explicit and conscious content, "noumenal" as Hegel puts it to a reality which "the spirits of the forest" or "the Great Spirit Manitou" of the Natchez could only make known in a phenomenological and implicit manner. The same applies to descriptions of nature that, transferred from *Les Natchez* to *The Spirit of Christianity*, comply with their interior and personalized truth. The solitude of the New World ("the world is a vast desert") anticipates the solitude of Christian hermits who radicalize its virtualities. The windings of the serpent observed in

the American forest reveal their diabolic nature in *Le Génie* in the same way as the spectable of the migrating birds on the banks of the Meschacebe unveils to the Christian René the existence of "a secret instinct" of the absolute (1,159). Let us remind ourselves of the involuntary gesture of Mila who, in *Les Natchez*, seized the decomposing head of a corpse. It was Rancé – this René who had repented and converted – who gave the finishing touch to this accidental gesture and gave it a religious sense by carrying the macabre relic of his lover to La Trappe. In brief, in the same way that Gothic architectural efflorescences extended the forms of the primitive forest in an ideal fashion, so the decorative ceremonial of Christianity stylizes the natural practices of cultures just as it restrospectively "sanctifies" the incestuous nature of all passion, already present in the naïve relationships of the Natchez.

61. Hegel, *La Raison dans l'histoire*, 10/18, Union générale d'éditions, 1965, pp. 77 and 110.
62. In an article in the *Revue française*. To the approach of Niebuhr, the leader of the "historic party" whom he reproached for not having constructed his "History of Rome" "around an Idea," Chateaubriand opposes the great historical syntheses (Vico, Herder) already known to him through Michelet or Quinet, and, above all, the Hegelian encyclopaedia, which made explicit the diverse modes or principles "by which the universal soul manifests itself in Humanity" and "the human spirit creates the fact." See M. Schumann, "Chateaubriand et Hegel," *Revue des travaux de l'Académie des sciences morales et politiques*, 130, 1977, pp. 647–663.
63. M. Schumann, ibid., pp. 658 and 654. Chateaubriand's Hegelianism thus retrospectively permitted the march of the spirit to be seen in the "vagueness of the passions" and the death of civilizations: " 'savage words,' 'atrocious acts' thus become the envelope of a truth, in any case of a political or moral fact, which survives the gallows and the charnel-house. . . . On societies which constantly die, one society constantly lives."
64. "Treated everywhere as a *novelistic* mind . . . disgusted more and more by things and more and more by people, I took the option of withdrawing" (155).
65. See the note expressly inserted between the two parts of *Les Natchez*: "It is at this point that the first part of *Les Natchez* stops, the part which can be called their epic. What follows is only a mere story for which the author abandons the epic form and adopts the narrative form," Editions Hachette, 1863, p. 321.
66. In his article "Tragédie," Marmontel opposed the "system of fate," an exclusively extrinsic instance in the classical world, to the "system of passions," a radically interiorized causality, in modern tragedy. Schiller associated a calm and olympian view of the world with

the epic and a dramatic and destabilized vision of the universe with modern "tragedy." (Auerbach, *Mimesis*, French translation, Gallimard, 1968, pp. 13 and 19).

67. Quoted by P. Barberis, *René de Chateaubriand. Un nouveau roman*, Larousse, 1973, p. 209.
68. For a sociology of the "evil of the age," see Michael J. Call, *Back to the Garden, Chateaubriand, Senancour and Constant*, Anima Libri, 1988; and R. Chambers, *Mélancolie et opposition. Les débuts du modernisme en France*, José Corti, 1987.
69. This quotation is taken from the Edition Garnier, 1960. See also Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, Gallimard, Pléiade, 1961, p. 950: "Isn't black clothing the necessary clothing of our age, suffering and wearing on its black skinny shoulders the *symbol of perpetual mourning*?."
70. Shoshanna Felman, *La Folie dans l'oeuvre romanesque de Stendhal*, José Corti, 1971, pp. 163, et seq.
71. On the "bric-a-brac mania" of the fin de siècle, see Rémy G. Saisselin, *Le Bourgeois et le bibelot*, Albin Michel, 1990, who analyzed the transition from the "collection" to the "consumption" of objects. Death, as the exhaustion of desire in things, was announced, at the beginning of Balzac's *La Peau de Chagrin*, by the lumber-room of the antiquarian where Rodolphe found the fatal talisman.
72. "Im ganzen und allgemeinen jedoch beruht die dem Genie beigegebene Melancholie darauf, dass der Wille zum Leben, von je hellerem Intellekt er sich beleuchtet findet, desto deutlicher das Elend seines zustandes wahrnimmt," *Sämtliche Werke*, Darmstadt, 1968, vol. 2, p. 494.
73. Schopenhauer, *Métaphysique de l'amour*, 10/18, Union générale d'éditions, 1980, pp. 16–17.
74. In a certainly more dynamic sense, Balzac already saw in passion a "chagrin" ("peau de chagrin"), the indestructible power of which fed on the suicidal will of desiring individuals.
75. See Daniel Grojnowski, "Laforgue, lecteur de Schopenhauer et de Hartmann," *De l'ordre et de l'aventure, Mélanges offerts à P.O. Walzer*, La Baconnière, 1985, pp. 61–73, and, from a broader point of view, the special issue of *Romantisme*, 61, 1988; "Pessimisme(s) (with many references to Schopenhauer).
76. This Schopenhauerian terminology is taken from *Métaphysique de la mort*, 10/18, Union générale d'éditions, 1980, p. 114: "Our intellect is only intended to provide our will with *motives*."
77. Laforgue, *L'Imitation de Notre-Dame la Lune*, Poésie/Gallimard, 1979, pp. 61 and 32.
78. The discovery of "Buddhist" philosophies of oblivion which permitted an escape from the "eternal return" had a great influence at the end of the century, in particular on Schopenhauer.
79. See J. E. Jackson, *La Mort Baudelaire*, La Baconnière, 1982. The nine-

teenth-century emblem of the "wandering Jew" picked up the tradition of the "melancholic" who, since Dante, was "the one who had no hope of dying" (*Inferno*, chapter III) or who, in the words of Saint Teresa of Avila, "is dying from not being able to die."

80. One finds an anticipation of this in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, when the peasants believe that Julie has been resurrected and refuse to allow her to be buried. On the late eighteenth-century fear of being buried alive, see M. Vovelle, *Piété baroque et déchristianisation*, Plon, 1973; chapter IV (pp. 78–85 in particular), and above all Claudio Milanesi, *Mort apparente, mort imparfaite. Médecine et mentalités au XVIIIe siècle*, French translation, Payot, 1991. In addition, the article "Mort" in the *Encyclopédie* linked this fantasy with Dom Calmet's theories on the existence of vampires (see below, note 81).
81. See Bela Köpeczi, "Un scandale des Lumières: les Vampires," *Thèmes et Figures du Siècle des Lumières*, Droz, 1980, pp. 123–136.
82. For this "archeology of death," see Chantal Grelle, "Les Voyageurs à Herculanum," et Boussif Onasti, "La description de l'Egypte," *Dix-huitième siècle*, 22, 1990, pp. 73–94.
83. In "the mummy's foot," it is the foot, another sexual symbol, which marks out this obsessional reminder of life.
84. Another incarnation of the hermit who, in *Atala*, prevents incest between the two lovers.
85. Gautier, *La morte amoureuse, Avatars et autres récits fantastiques*, Edition Folio, Gallimard, 1981, p. 200. Warned by this experience, Octave falls into "a gloomy melancholy" (204) which prevents him, from then on, from believing in love.
86. Ibid., p. 202.
87. Page numbers in parentheses refer to the text of the Complete Edition, Le Seuil, 1985, vol. 2.
88. "With the fierce vitality of grass. . ., the Arthauds married amongst themselves with shameless promiscuity" (24).
89. This poisonous "datura" which reveals the lethal design of the species at the heart of desire can be found in another Paradise, that of the park of the Orotava in Breton's *L'Amour fou*.
90. Thus, "pansies" (*pensées*) appear as human beings, as "puppets" (85), the anthropomorphization of nature indicating the individual's dependence upon it.
91. In this way, the reason for the unconscious sense of unease, aroused in Serge and Albine by the scenes of "minor love affairs" painted in the bedroom where the future lovers meet reveals itself *a posteriori* (a reminder of the parental scene which the two heroes reenact by putting on the wedding clothes of their elders as in Nerval's *Sylvie*). Let us note that, as in *Atala*, the sound of a bell comes to reveal "death in this garden": "I hear bells and that is what wearies me," murmurs Serge "with an air of boredom" (69). (This bell is

transformed into a funereal "whistle" in *La Bête humaine:* see R. M. Viti, "The cave, the clock and the railway: primitive and modern time in *La Bête humaine*," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 19, 1, 1990).

92. The interest in the cult of the Virgin at the end of the nineteenth century, when the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed (Zola then wrote *Lourdes*), can be explained by this Schopenhauerian desire to escape from nature.
93. Th.W. Adorno, *La Dialectique négative*, French translation, Gallimard, 1978.
94. See for example the eulogy of Schopenhauer in Maupassant's *Auprès d'un mort.*
95. The death of civilizations obsessed the "decadents" and filled them with joy: the end of Carthage in *Salammbô*, of the Roman Empire in *Hérodiade* (Flaubert, Mallarmé), of "rotting" antiquity (Huysmans). See, in general, G. Sagnes, *L'Ennui dans la littérature française de Flaubert à Laforgue (1848–84)*, Armand Colin, 1968.
96. It is already the "lunar" and evanescent atmosphere of Verlaine's *Les Fêtes galantes.*
97. In Barbey d'Aurevilly, the insensitivity of the "dandy" arises from a situation where, as in the stories of vampires, love simultaneously reveals death. Thus in "Le Rideau cramoisi," the *primitive scene* of the dandy is made from the "diabolic" shock caused by the death of the woman at the very moment of the amorous embrace.
98. The references are to the text of the Complete Edition, Le Seuil, 1980, vol. 1.
99. Whereas the Paradou of Father Mouret is still "a natural conservatory" (91), the husband of Renée Aristide Saccard "had proposed without laughing to put Paris under an immense cloche, in order to change it into a *hot house* and grow pineapples and sugar cane" (285). According to the *Grand Larousse du XIXe siècle*, 1875, a *conservatory* is a "collection of artificial means producing a fictitious result which is against nature": "in the conservatory" there reigns "a very hot and very humid atmosphere which is unhealthy for people but necessary for orchids." (Was Larousse aware that the *orchid* which "suffocated" Des Esseintes "to death" in *A Rebours* etymologically means "small testicle"?). Among the famous conservatories that symbolized the artificiality of seductive nature, we can cite in addition: The chamber of *Fanfarlo* in which the "air, filled with strange vapors made one want to die slowly as in a hot house" (Baudelaire, Gallimard, Pléiade, 1975, p. 576); "the overheated atmosphere of a church" where an incestuous Salomé, "brought up in 'imples' conservatories," danced (*A Rebours*, chapter 5); and the . . . *Hot houses* of Maeterlinck. On this theme, see Suzanne Braun, *Quand la fleur se fait chair. Etude du motif floral dans*

A rebours de J.-K. Huysmans, Geneva, M.A. Dissertation, 1990.

100. I pass over in silence the heavily suggestive names of flowers in Huysmans's *A Rebours* (chapter 8) such as the "amorphophallus" or the "nidularium" with "scratched and gaping fundaments" which "under the thighs, in the open, was yawning at the sabre blades while bleeding."
101. It was already the exotic forest which served as "the nuptial bed chamber" for Chactas and Atala, but whereas in Chateaubriand the priest's bell interrupted this scene of natural seduction, the conservatory of the decadents pushed the artifice of nature to the point of artificiality, which brought about the triumph of consciousness in "Représentation." In the park of the Orotava in *L'Amour fou*, the "bread tree," the "soap tree," etc. play the same role except that, this time, – despite a brief allusion to "poison" – the seductiveness of nature is accepted as a gift for man, a delight which he can conquer "from under Blue Beard's nose" (the surrealist unconscious pretends in effect to exploit "automatically" the sexual unconscious – that is to say without danger, under the form of a "white" sexuality. Hence Freud's mistrust of Breton).
102. "Ah! Flowers do not sentimentalize, my lady, . . . they make love . . . nothing but love. . . . And they make it all the time through every opening. . . . They think only of that. . . . Perverse? . . . Because they obey a single law of Life, because they satisfy the single need of Life, which is love? . . . Well, take a look then! . . . A flower is nothing but a sexual organ, my lady . . .," Octave Mirbeau, *Le Jardin des supplices*, reédition Gallimard, 1988, p. 214.
103. "The unconsciousness of the plant world is a decidedly too saddening nothingness," Rémy de Gourmont, *Sixtine, roman de la vie cérébrale*, 10/18, Union générale d'éditions, 1982, p. 59.
104. See A. Roger, "Huysmans et Schopenhauer," *Huysmans. Une esthétique de la décadence*, Geneva, Slatkine, 1987. The preface to *A Rebours* reproaches Zola for his "characters stripped of soul, simply governed by impulses and instincts."
105. References to *A Rebours* all refer to the Flammarion edition, 1978.
106. See A. Buisine, "Le taxidermiste," *Revue des Sciences humaines*, 170–171. April-Sept. 1978, p. 67: "There is no longer anything internal in the simulacrum . . . all the interior is going to tire itself out in surface representation."
107. Des Esseintes has "the walls (of his study)" bound "like books, with morocco . . ., lustred by strong plates of steel under a powerful press" (74). Since the room looks like a book turned inside out of which the interior forms the "cover," the Duke finds himself "in" the book which he is writing.
108. "Nature has had its day . . . There is not a single one of its inventions which is acknowledged to be so subtle or so grandiose

that it cannot be created by human ingenuity: no moonlight which cannot be produced by scenery flooded with electric spotlights; there is no waterfall that hydraulics cannot imitate to the point of being taken for the real thing; no rock which cannot be simulated by papier mâché" (80).

109. Just as at the end of Flaubert's *Un coeur simple*, the (Holy) Spirit is nothing but a "stuffed parrot."
110. The references are to the pagination of vol. 4 of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, Complete Edition, Le Seuil, 1970.
111. Besides *Fécondité, La Joie de vivre* also announces *Quatre Evangiles:* "All things considered, if one is not a *pessimist*, there is nothing for it but to be Christian or anarchist," Huysmans wrote to Zola on the subject of *Pauline* (237). A Van Gogh still life of (1885) places *La Joie de vivre* beside a bible open at a verse of Isaiah.
112. As Edmond de Goncourt maliciously recalled, this theme is plagiarized from one of his own novels (236).
113. To the initial title *Le Mal de vivre* borrowed from Schopenhauer and his translator, Bourdeu, that of *La Joie de vivre* was substituted in extremis (232–233).
114. Even before *Fécondité, Au bonheur* realized a "liturgy" of (re)production. Exceptionally, Zola indicated these landmarks in the festive calendar: "Begun on Whit Sunday, 28 May 1882 . . ." (11).
115. Should one see in "Denise" the feminine Dionysos, the occult force of life?
116. "He believed in the all powerfulness of his will . . . [t]hat is where action finds its recompense" (173).
117. The term qualifies the "cruelty" and the "fury" of Denise when she reveals to Colomban a desire which he was not aware of.
118. "I would rather die of passion than die of boredom" (173).
119. Lazare dreamed in vain of writing "dramas peopled with colossal figures" and of departing for Oceania, toward the life of a savage (the "colossal" and the "savage" also form the ideal aesthetic of Claude in *L'Oeuvre*) (372).
120. This capitalism was nuanced in *Germinal* and in *L'Argent* but it remained – as in Marx – the "universal value," the leading "idea" replacing the unproductive spirit of Hegel.
121. As Schuré, Pelladan, etc. See M. Bury, "Les écrivains décadents de la fin du XIXe siècle et le sacré," *Bulletin de l'association Guillaume Budé*, 1990, 3, pp. 308–317.
122. Maeterlinck's work on "the intelligence of flowers" and of "bees" anticipated the work of Caillois (inspired by crystallography) on the phenomenological structure of the world.
123. See A. Raybaud, *La Fabrique des Illuminations*, Le Seuil, 1989.
124. Like Claudel in *Connaissance de l'Est*. Before Claudel, Schopen-

hauerian pessimism had already led the author of A *Rebours* to be converted ("After such a book, there is nothing for the author to do but choose between the mouth of a pistol or the foot of the Cross," wrote Barbey d'Aurevilly to Huysmans). In "the preface written twenty years after the novel," Huysmans noted that "the observations of Schopenhauer lead to nothing" while "the Church explains the origins and the causes, indicates the goals, offers the remedies" (49). Having recognized "that nervous illnesses and neuroses open fissures in the soul by which the Spirit of Evil can enter" and that the "word hysteria resolves nothing" because "this concupiscent illness" reveals a metaphysical failing ("Preface, 20 years after") (51), he shows that his own itinerary leads to the "Grace" which has become the unconscious cause of all the actions of the converted, Providence, of course, here replacing the unconscious (57).

125. From Walt Whitman to Maurice Blondel, *L'Action*, 1893.
126. On the condemnation of "sorrow" in Barrès, see *Le Culte du moi*, 1887, "Un homme libre," chapter 7: "*Acedia*. Séparation dans le monastère."
127. Not without having hesitated between phylogenesis and ontogenesis, see J. Laplanche et J.B. Pontalis, *Fantasme originaire. Fantasmes des origines. Origine du fantasme*, Hachette, 1985, pp. 9 and 18–19 (on the way to phenomenology).
128. *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 1889.
129. On the coexistence between "modernity" and "archaism," already asserted by E. Bloch against Hegelian Marxism, see W. Moser, "Le travail du non-contemporain. Historiophagie ou historiographie," *Etudes littéraires*, 22, 2, 1989.