

THE VOYAGE TO GOD
ASPECTS OF THE VOYAGE IN THE
THEATRE OF PAUL CLAUDEL

THE VOYAGE TO GOD:
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THEATRE OF PAUL CLAUDEL

by

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University

September, 1976

MASTER OF ARTS (1976)
(Romance Languages)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The voyage to God: Aspects of the Voyage in the
Theatre of Paul Claudel.

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NUMBER OF PAGES: iv, 93.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The purpose of this dissertation will be to examine the theatre of Paul Claudel from the viewpoint of voyage. To illustrate the theme of voyage, both its physical and spiritual significance will be discussed. In our presentation of Claudel's theatre and its expression upon the stage we look specifically at the following plays because of their particular value in terms of the theme of voyage: Le Soulier de Satin, Le Livre de Christophe Colomb, Partage de Midi, L'Annonce Faite à Marie, Tête D'Or, Jeanne D'Arc au Bûcher, and the Trilogy Plays: L'Otage, Le Pain Dur, Le Père Humilié.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to express my appreciation to Dr. B. S. Pocknell for his advice and encouragement in the preparation of this dissertation.

I should also like to thank Dr. A. Whiteside for her guidance and many useful suggestions.

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INTRODUCTION

It was Claudel's career as a world traveller that first caught my interest out of which grew fascination for him as a playwright. That there exists an abundance of scholarly research about Claudel relating to his political career, his personal travels and their influence upon his literary development cannot be disputed, yet little interest has been demonstrated, in the past, with respect to his theatre and the playwright's interest in travel. The plays of Claudel reflect at all times the playwright's passion towards "the voyage" and its purpose to quest after spiritual knowledge and fulfilment.

Claudel's career as a dramatist owes its beginning to the influence and work of Stéphane Mallarmé, a critic of the theatre at that particular time. Paul Fort's Théâtre d'Art and Lugné Poe's Théâtre de l'Oeuvre might also be included here, since both movements in the tradition of French symbolism undoubtedly exposed Claudel to the elements of drama within the confines of mysticism and spiritual awareness.

For the dramatist, to travel throughout the world is a spiritual exercise since "the entire world is related to God, turned towards him, and dependent upon him at every moment of its duration."¹ To explore the universe is to

explore the kingdom of God; and for Claudel it is the duty of every Christian, at sometime in his life, to embark upon such a voyage, to make one's personal, spiritual crusade.

The intention of this dissertation is to examine various major plays of Claudel from the point of view of voyage as it is expressed in terms of the theatre; in other words, to explore the theme of voyage as advanced by way of stage detail, settings, their topographical and symbolic particulars. The theme of voyage will be discussed further beyond its physical context and pursued within the context of its spiritual significance as each of Claudel's characters journeys to find God.

The first chapter will consider major settings in the Claudelian theatre and will analyse their symbolic force to determine how they form symbolically, almost like stepping stones, the spiritual setting through which the Claudelian hero must pass before he reaches God.

Since Claudel's plays are set in different parts of the world this writer will first look at this particular location as a major setting. The discussion will deal mostly with Claudel's Le Soulier de satin since the entire action of the play uses the far reaching dimensions of the globe for its setting.

The next major setting to be examined will be the sea; the sea connects not only the physical parts of the world but also for the playwright, by its very nature, serves to

unite character and plot as each of the characters travels from one destination to another in his quest for spiritual identity.

Still in keeping with the physical detail of Claudel's settings we shall turn our attention to the role of the mountains. In the play Tête D'Or the Caucasian Mountains assume special significance where, for example, the third part is set. The image of the mountains completes the picture of the different main settings since symbolically their spatial dimensions unite Earth with Heaven just as the sea connects the world. Both images bring the physical and spiritual worlds together, at which point the playwright's characters find themselves at the end of their journey.

From this perspective I should like to proceed by focusing attention upon specific ports of call as I look at Spain, Africa, China, The New World, Jerusalem, Rome and France. First to be discussed will be Spain because of its importance as a religious stronghold in the centre of a secular world and because of its spiritual crusades, relative to the theme of this dissertation. The order of the remaining settings is arbitrary; nevertheless, the importance of these particular locations is valuable as they are alluded to by Claudel, not only for spiritual reason, but also for purposes that pertain to the theme of voyage. From this investigation, it is hoped that these settings, when linked together, form a spiritual odyssey with which the traveller in Claudel's

plays is always confronted.

To conclude, the first part of our discussion will limit itself to summarizing the symbolic nature of the theme of voyage and how it is expressed poetically by way of stage decor and stage accessories. In this light we can see how Claudel uses the conventions of the theatre to transform themes and ideas into an imagery that takes the spectator beyond the boundaries of the intellect and into the centre of the senses. The theme of voyage as an "image" is therefore possible to illustrate.

The second chapter will examine the spiritual aspect of the theme of voyage by following the specific spiritual travels of those characters in Claudel's theatre who represent, for the most part, the christian pilgrim in search of the spiritual absolute. Claudel's characters will be examined in a way similar to the description of the specific ports of call in the first chapter; each character will be preceded by a brief summary that will outline his individual spiritual quest. Many of Claudel's critics have discussed the spiritual imagery in his theatre not ever mentioning its physical counterpart. By looking at both these areas, chapters one and two, we will see that Claudel's theatre is an expression of a spiritual sentiment that moves through time and space.

It is hoped that this dissertation will increase the interest in Claudel as a playwright and will illustrate

consequently a kind of theatre whose dramatic powers are rooted in a spiritual base; his theatre represents a manifestation of moral convictions and religious beliefs, revealed in a special way, through the mechanics of the stage.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

- ¹F. Vial. "Symbols and Symbolism in Paul Claudel",
Yale French Studies, IX (1952), 97.

TOPOGRAPHICAL DETAIL AND ITS
 SYMBOLIC FORCE
 IN CLAUDEL'S THEATRE

The theatre of Paul Claudel affords us a glimpse of the individual as he travels throughout the world towards God and divine consciousness. For the playwright, the usual conventions that pertain to the theatrical stage are not always adequate to express his viewpoints pellucidly and realistically. Consequently, Claudel does not limit himself too often to the constrictions of specific spatial and temporal boundaries. For the most part, the settings that one will find in a typical Claudelian play are located geographically in all areas of the world. Let us now consider the symbol of the world and how Claudel will exploit its characteristics to articulate theatrically the theme of voyage and its relationship to God and the spiritual kingdom.

Major Settings 1. The World:
 To Travel the World is to
Understand God and His Ways

In Claudel's most extravagant play, Le Soulier de satin, unity of place as a fundamental dramatic principle is abandoned in favour of a more heterogeneous universal environment. At the outset of the play the reader is reminded of its universal scope.¹ Claudel states himself:

"La scène de ce drame est le monde" (P. Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, Paris: Gallimard, 1948, I, 857).

Through the image of the hanging Jesuit Priest, the physical and symbolic directives that Claudel's characters will later follow are promptly introduced into the fabric of the play. Claudel wastes no time in introducing the spectator to the universality of Don Rodrigue's travels. The outstretched arms of the Jesuit Priest pointing east and west indicate the old and new worlds that will ultimately be joined together by Rodrigue, the explorer. The vertical direction of this particular image allows for a fuller interpretation that is metaphysical in its symbolic nature. The spatial boundaries of earth and sky, east and west suddenly become one:

Et c'est vrai que je suis attaché à
 la croix, mais la
 croix où je suis n'est plus attachée
 à rien. Elle flotte sur
 la mer.
 La mer libre à ce point où la limite
 du ciel connu s'efface
 Et qui est à égale distance de ce
 monde ancien que j'ai
 quitté
 Et de l'autre nouveau. (Claudel Oeuvres
 Complètes, II, 859)

Given certain physical dangers in New World explorations, Claudel sees Don Rodrigue's mission as one of ultimate importance; it is not a mission for man, country or King, but for God.

Like the image of the shipwreck, Claudel's world is

disoriented as each explorer quests for his salvation in a secular universe. The image of the Jesuit Priest reminds us, however, that the possibility of discerning some form of order, however slight, is possible in this chaotic sublunar confinement. It follows naturally then that the chaos and disturbance in Claudel's cosmos are only seemingly qualities of disorder.

The implication to be considered therefore, is that in this "shipwrecked" world there exists a centre - an organizing point around which the world revolves in a paradoxically harmonious and ordered fashion. "Or le chrétien apprend qu'il est appelé à être un homme libéré comme le Christ ressuscité de l'histoire... il est une autre voix... une voix intérieure... dont il faut trouver l'origine!"² One may assume that the hanged Jesuit Priest, through his death, has discovered God's organizing centre:

Seigneur, je vous
remercie de m'avoir ainsi attaché!

.....

Je me suis donné à Dieu et maintenant
le jour du repos
et de la détente est venu et je puis
me confier à ces liens
qui m'attachent.

(Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
II, 859-860)

Just as the Jesuit Priest found the "centre du tout" so too is it typical of the Claudelian quest to imply the cosmos as only superficially disordered; in essence, there is an order in nature - the divine chain of being where our

world forms the ground level between Heaven and the void, the "mutatis mutandis."³

Le Soulier de satin presents an interesting problem. It is divided into four days. The action of the first day takes place in Spain, the setting of day two is generally anchored in Africa; the third day setting is described in the New World and finally the dramatic action of the fourth day centres largely in Spain again. Observing this temporal sequence in a perfunctory fashion, one might assume that Claudel has merely given us a jig-saw - like travelogue. If looked at more closely, however, Claudel's assertion becomes clear; the four day jig-saw pieces fit together in a unity which sees the hero completing a physical journey parallel to which Claudel posits as a definitive spiritual pattern as we shall see in the second chapter. This is emphasized by the symbol of Spain as a point of departure and return and fundamentally as a centre of the Catholic world as envisaged by the playwright. The world outside of Spain is seen as a symbol of disparate locales, a reminder of its secular nature in contrast to Spain, the christian and civilized country. Consequently, the world apart from Spain is an unknown variable that cannot be defined in terms of christian ideology.

The voyages that Christophe Colomb undertakes in Le livre de Christophe Colomb are similar to the journeys of the Hebrews. (Nomadic tribes like the Hebrews saw the

world in the metaphor of a garden from which they had been driven. Following the notion of the Hebraic journey to search and to find the garden, one must be a born explorer.) The act of exploration is facilitated by self discovery through which the searcher finds a continent he did know existed.⁴ If one pursues this thought, one feels that Christophe Colomb in his quest for the New World is identical to the Wandering Jew. Christophe Colomb indicates the parallel for us:

Christophe!
 Christophe! quitte ta patrie! quitte
 la patrie! quitte, quitte,
 quitte ta patrie! comme Abraham que
 Dieu appela hors
 de Ur. (C Claudel Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1064)

Like Abraham and Moses, Colomb assumes messianic dimensions. As did Moses, Colomb leads his people to the frontiers of a New World aware that they have a destiny to fulfil: "Mon affaire n'est pas de refaire le monde, mais de le découvrir." (C Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1096)

Colomb calls himself "l'Ambassadeur de Dieu" whose duty it is to enact the will of God! "car c'est moi qui vais lui enlever ses voiles!" (C Claudel Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1096)

Contrary to the world metaphor used in Le Soulier de satin as a conglomerate of locales, we find, in Christophe Colomb, the world divided into two fundamental halves, both representing Spain and the New World. The challenge of conquering the New World suddenly becomes for Colomb a moral

obligation as it was, for example, with Byron's Childe Harold who "wishes to become a portion of the tempests, of the seas, of the mountains."⁵ The symbol of the world is further expressed by the ring on Colomb's finger; viewing the ring as a symbol of marriage we are told that the explorer will marry the universe: "C'est avec cet anneau que j'épouserai la terre entière." (Claudé Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1070). It would appear from Colomb's statement that a union with the divine has greater meaning than a secular band. Both Byron's Childe Harold and Claudé's Colomb long for such a consummation.

As we have seen both in Le Soulier de satin and Le livre de Christophe Colomb Claudé's characters are in a perpetual state of entry and exit moving within the decor of cosmic and spiritual perspectives. The image of the world appears in Claudé's theatre also as a challenge for the explorer. The vastness of the world, already indicated by the Jesuit Priest, in Le Soulier de satin, is soon forgotten, however, as Claudé's characters search for God and make their journeys from one end of the hemisphere to the other.

The Sea: Separation and Unity

Much like the world, the sea is an important and interesting metaphor in the Claudélian cosmos because of its fluid state which allows for continual change; the world and sea are dynamic rather than static elements; both are in a perpetual state of flux. The sea's "continuous movement and the mobility of that which lies beneath its surface parallel

the universe."⁶ One can draw a parallel with the movement in the sea's fluid patterns and Claudel's characters who also experience transformation. As Don Rodrigue travels in the space of four days to four different physical locations, he reaches a level of greater spiritual maturity. His final destination is ultimately his own death. Sept-Epées, Rodrigue's daughter, remains at the end of Le Soulier de satin in the sea, symbolically suggesting the birth metaphor. Consequently the antithetical poles of life and death suggest the theme of separation and unity. The movement of the sea like the movement of human blood is a life-giving force that indicates a kind of unity and harmony; at the same time, however, because of time's continuum reflected in Claudel's theatre, by the eternal movement of the waters, death and separation are imminent. Each phenomenon is, nevertheless, contingent upon the other. Both life and death are parts of God's own will. Claudel, through the image of the sea, reinforces for the spectator the consciousness of God and the journey of life towards him.

Jacob Revius writes:"Who else can steer the ships of netherlands besides our Admiral?/. He knows the North,/ he knows the deeps and guides the ship to port/ With compass steady, and rudder in his hands."⁷ In this seventeenth century poem we have the nucleus of Christophe Colomb, the explorer and his seafaring tasks as he confronts the sea. Like the unknown admiral Colomb knows the sea-depths and as

the ambassador of God he can guide the ship to port:

Mon nom est l'Ambas
sadeur de Dieu, le Porteur
de Christ! Mon premier nom
est le porteur de Christ! et mon
second nom est tout ce
qui est lumière, tout ce qui est
esprit et tout ce qui a
des ailes! (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
II, 1062).

The Christ-Colomb comparison is shown in the ability of both men to command the sea.⁸ (Just as Jacob Revius' admiral has a steady compass and knows the sea, so does Colomb spiritually understand the voyage quest.) With God's strength aiding Colomb, Claudel sets up his protagonist as a good sailor and therefore a good Christian. The sea permits Colomb to enact his predestined calling. Unlike his crew Colomb realizes that the sea can act as a mirror of God that reflects unity and spiritual happiness. The sea now in other words, the blood of Christ alluded to by Colomb, suggests further both holiness and harmony in view of the tempests that are potentially imminent:

Christophe Colomb I: Et il n'y a plus
de vin ni de
biscuit ni de
boeuf salé?

.....
Il y a du sang! (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
II, 1082)

Like Moses who successfully crosses the Red Sea, Colomb reaches the spiritual crossing point as he discovers the New World. The Atlantic Ocean is no more an

insurmountable obstacle to Colomb than the Red Sea was for Moses, since both follow God and his guidance out of darkness. The risk of possible danger on the sea is forever present; the fear of death, of separation is very real when, for example, the sea is troubled by violent storms. Taken as a whole, however, the sea in Christophe Colomb's is a positive symbol as it brings Colomb a step closer to the divine world. "The nature of the sea is that of the entire created universe and that of the spiritual universe as well: unfathomable, immense."⁹ The sea can be, as it would appear, unpleasant at times, as we have already seen in the tempest scene of Christophe Colomb. Claudel's play Partage de midi clearly elaborates this problem. The Indian Ocean, the setting for the first act of this play like the river of Styx, assumes an ominous character. Unlike the Atlantic Ocean in Christophe Colomb which was essentially the "river of God" the Indian Ocean contains certain unmapped mysteries. Here the waters are not baptismal; they are instead the quarters of Leviathan, the great unknown.

The ominous nature of the sea creates a similar ambiance in the play. The sea also creates a physical uneasiness in contrast to the spiritual assurances that we find in Christophe Colomb:

Mesa: Que c'est beau! Que c'est dur!
 La mer à l'échine resplendissante
 Est comme une vache terrassée que
 l'on marque au fer rouge

.....

Sans forme, sans couleur, pure
 absolue, énorme,
 fulminante,
 Frappée par la lumière elle ne
 renvoie rien d'autre. (C Claudel, Oeuvres
Complètes, I, 914)

The ambiguity of the setting is parallel to the ambiguous symbol of death. Claudel's sea becomes at once a paradox. Just as the symbolic force of the sea is threatening, it is, in the end, beneficial. The waters of the sea assume a purgatorial significance befitting Mesa's ultimate death. In preparation for Mesa's and Ysé's death Claudel stresses spiritual cleansing; the sea, therefore, symbolizes, paradoxically, Mesa's salvation. In spite of the Indian Ocean's destructive forces it will return Mesa to an initial state of christian purity and likewise the soul of Ysé. Mesa, the religious spokesman in the play has no 'port' or 'haven' like that of Colomb; he has only death as an escape from his physical limitations. For Claudel the symbol of death functions on the same level as the visual stage symbol of the sea: The sea separates and unites; death separates and unites. For Mesa and Ysé for Colomb and Rodrigue, death marks the end of their earthly existence but at the same time unites them with the spiritual absolute.

The Mountains: The Ascent to God

In his play Tête d'Or Claudel employs yet another spatial dimension as a physical setting for the odyssey - the vertical imagery of the mountains. It is in the third

act of this play that we are confronted with the expansive and exotic setting of the Caucasian mountains. Mountains as a popular literary symbol often become places where God and man would meet just as Moses climbed Mount Sinai to look at the burning bush. Other classical references to mountains form a continuum from the notion of Prometheus and John Bunyan's Grace Abounding, in which the writer beholds the vision of Mount Sinai, to Keat's Hyperion, where battles of classical Gods take place. A specific reference to Prometheus is made by one of Tête D'Or's commanders in chief:

Et c'est ici que l'antique voleur
de feu fut attaché,
Quand l'aigle, comme une foudre
se cramponnant à lui, lui tirait
le foie hors du corps. (C Claudel, Oeuvres
Complètes, I, 258)

It was a commonly held notion that before the fall of man there had been no mountains; and that the surface of the earth had been a perfect sphere.¹⁰ Toward the end of the seventeenth century this notion changed as writers saw mountains as beautiful symbols, not as evidence of the disorder in the world but of the order of the entire natural universe. It is evident that Claudel uses the latter of these arguments in Tête d'Or since the mountains symbolically suggest the altar of God from which Tête D'Or, as he dies, ascends from the physical to the eternal and natural order of all things.

Still another symbol of the order of God is the

crucified Christ who by his death will save a fallen world. Joseph Chiari sees the crucified Princess as representative of Christ's crucifixion at Calvary reminiscent of the mountain setting in Tête d'Or:

then, in that undefinable apocalyptic setting, we are back again to the image of Christ, brutalized and crucified, represented by the Princess, who insulted by the deserter, endures nobly and rises above the human, imploring God from a situation strongly reminiscent of Calvary. 12

Simon Agnel finding himself on the Caucasian mountains is representative of the sacrificial victim at the mercy of God. Essentially both Calvary and the Caucasian mountains become symbols of a sacrificial altar whose victim is transported out of space and time and placed into eternity:

Ce lieu (le Caucase) est appelé
 "Porte", car c'est ici
 que jadis
 les peuples vagabonds de la
 Plaine, à ce haut passage,
 S'arrêtaient, sacrifiant comme en
 témoignent ces osse-
 ments, offrant aux dieux l'Espace
 le feu,

.....

Nous conquérons l'énorme Autel! (Claudel,
Oeuvres Complètes,
 I, 259)

The world, the sea, and the mountains provide a fundamental setting through which the Claudelian hero has a spiritual function as well as a dramatic one. All of the principal characters who journey throughout the world, or sail on the seas or march across mountains become aware by

the finish of their journey that these major settings are merely temporal representations of a world that transcends their own, that is to say God's spiritual kingdom.

Specific Ports of Call and Their
Symbolic Roles in Claudel's Theatre

Spain: Centre of Spiritual Supremacy

Renaissance Spain for Claudel represents the apotheosis of catholic orthodoxy. It is the major port of call in Le Soulier de satin and an important point in Christophe Colomb although America is in the latter play a more important locality. It is no wonder that Claudel has chosen Spain specifically above all other places as the most important stepping stone towards God since historically Spain allows the propagation of catholic dogma in terms of her explorers and their discoveries both temporal and spiritual:

elle (l'Espagne) réunit à l'église
et à Civilisation les deux Amériques;
elle continue sur les rivages africains
le combat traditionnel contre le vieil
ennemi...Jamais une nation depuis la
France des Croisades, n'a donné pour
la Foi un effort aussi total. 13

The catholic ethos that Spain provides frees Claudel to manipulate plot and character since Spain is the starting point from which his characters depart for the New World to gain self-knowledge.

Not only the characters in this play but also the spectator's self-knowledge is aided by Spain's religious powers as she impresses her influence upon the spectators

subjective spiritual morality.

As well as spiritual influence Spain's economic influence expresses her relative importance along the journey to God. As a colonial power in search of territorial acquisition and religious domination Spain encouraged the voyages of Columbus, Magellan and other explorers.

In Le Soulier de satin the King, for the same reasons, encourages Rodrigue to fight for him, since he possesses all the qualities of the Catholic missionary: "un amant désespéré et plein de rancune que le roi compte trouver en lui l'homme 'jaloux et avide' dont il estime avoir besoin pour dominer le Nouveau Monde."¹⁴ By her international interest in the world's religious priorities, Spain asserts at the same time the Papal influence and its importance outside of its Catholic sphere of influence: "elle (l'Espagne) plante son étendard Catholique au coeur de l'Europe"¹⁵. Since Spain and her interests are of an international scope as she endeavours to develop the catholic world around her Claudel is free to present those locations surrounding the catholic centre in terms of a universal theatre in which the entire world is used to set the stage. Renaissance Spain as she expands her religious boundaries, becomes for the playwright the symbol, par excellence, of the spiritual quest.

America: The Mysteries of the New World

For the Spanish conquistadors America symbolized the New World. The New World meant greater social and economic

powers, yet more importantly it meant greater spiritual awareness. It is this same spiritual perspective that Claudel is conscious of as he exploits the New World image. In Christophe Colomb the quest for foreign horizons is clearly the quest of a greater spiritual identity:

L'Homme Sur La Fenêtre- A l'Ouest
 il n'ya pas la
 mer, mais l'infranchissable
 Volonté de Dieu.

Christophe Colomb I: C'est la
 Volonté de Dieu
 qui m'appelle vers l'Ouest. (Claudel, Oeuvres
 Complètes, II, 1063)

As Colomb will ultimately discover the New World, he will be leaving behind him the classical and mythological misconceptions attributed to it. As the sun sets in the west, so symbolically do traditional myths concerning the western (New World) civilization:

Demi-Choeur - A l'Ouest du monde il
 y a de l'Or! A
 l'Ouest du monde et par delà la tombe
 du vieillard Atlas,
 à l'Ouest du monde et par delà
 Hercule il y a un pays d'or
 et de vin! (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1066)

Because of Colomb's discovery of America, immediate reaction in Spain is that of mistrust and disorientation:

Le Premier Homme Sage- Nous avons
 reçu beau
 coup de plaintes et d'accusations
 contre l'Amiral.

Le Deuxième Homme Sage - Nous avons
 dépensé
 beaucoup d'argent pour Monsieur Notre
 Amiral. (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1089)

When we consider America as a spiritual frontier and keep in mind the court's reaction to Colomb's discovery we see at a symbolic level, the same mistrust concerning God's kingdom. Despite occasional disbelief we learn that "Le Nouveau Monde", nevertheless, has positive qualities as l'Explicateur explains to the chorus: "c'est le Monde Nouveau qui a été pour toi la porte du Monde Eternel!" (C Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1110), The New World emerges in the symbol of a door that opens into the divine and eternal level of consciousness. As was the case with Spain, America has become yet another Christian haven.

Africa (Mogador): Temporal Purgatory

For Dona Prouhèze, Claudel's heroine in Le soulier de satin, Mogador represents a secular purgatory. This locality is "entre le désert et l'Océan, entre l'Islam et la mer"¹⁶ suggesting therefore the cathartic flames that will cleanse those in need of spiritual transformation. For Claudel purification of earthly matter is essential if one is to experience a superior state of being before Prouhèze is transformed into a purer essence she must be cleansed by God, the benefactor of all things: "L'exil (Mogador) est pour elle le moyen d'expier ses fautes, et de se racheter en commençant son purgatoire sur la terre."¹⁷

To express further the theme of voyage, Claudel has introduced Mogador to separate Prouhèze from her lover Don Rodrigue. While Prouhèze is in Africa Rodrigue is in

America; both of these characters are engaged in Christian proselytism: "L'Afrique a déjà été pour Prouhèze une occasion de servir Dieu, dont elle proclamait l'existence en face de Mahomet et de l'hérésie."¹⁸ Rodrigue is kept busy in America fighting battles in the name of God and Spain.

Like other major locales in Claudel's theatre, Mogador's spiritual value is more important than its dramatic value. The island of Mogador is analagous to the city of Jerusalem in L'Annonce faite à Marie. Like Jerusalem Mogador represents an outpost where christian truth and solidarity are still alive. Strategically situated and surrounded by non-christians, Mogador personifies the christian pilgrim whose faith becomes his guiding light showing the way to God.

China: Land of Philosophical Truth and Wisdom

The third act of Partage de midi is set in China in the midst of civil revolution. Symbolically, the reader is caught up in fire and death forecasting the deaths of Ysé and Mesa. Claudel's image of fire recalls the symbol of purification that will be instrumental in the cleansing of Ysé's and Mesa's soul. In addition to the fire which the setting provides, water is suggested by the insular location of the island. Again, on the symbolic level the water image and its refining effect remind the spectator of Claudel's purgative order that is a necessary preparation for the spiritual rebirth of his characters:

D'une part, on aperçoit les deux
bras d'un
fleuve couvert de bateaux... De
temps en temps on entend des
batteries de gongs et
des détonations de pétards et
d'armes à feu. (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
I, 962)

China, the scene where both Ysé and Mesa experience death, is a setting traditionally characterized by philosophical truth and wisdom. The particular location of the death of these two characters is spiritually significant since it defines the question of death in terms of spiritual awareness and enlightenment. Using China as the symbol of a crossroad and as a background for important transformations, Claudel brings together the western (Ysé and Mesa) and eastern mentalities while situating the reality of death in its philosophical and enlightening context. It is in China that Ysé and Mesa reach their crisis of spiritual fulfillment and not in the usual western environment in such countries as Spain, Rome and the port of Mogador; the geographical location of China brings to the Claudelian theatre world-wide dimensions since the eastern locale extends the boundaries of christian belief outside its usual limitations. Mesa seems to articulate this point in the following speech:

Loin de la vieille maison dans la
paille..., ô j'aurais
voulu tout voir, avoir avec appropriation,
Non point avec les yeux seulement, ou
les sens seule
ment, mais avec l'intelligence de
l'esprit. (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
I, 931)

Holy Land (Jerusalem):
The Promised Land; Restoration of Faith

In L'Annonce faite à Marie Claudel chooses Jerusalem to symbolize the quest for spiritual values for the character Anne Vercors. The symbol of the Holy Land is God's very own domain. "The city, whether called Jerusalem or not, is apocalyptically identified with a single building or temple. "¹⁹ Vercors, then, becomes the "architect" who takes over the identity of Pierre de Craon, the temple builder, and who journeys to Jerusalem to restore solidarity within the christian fortress:

Anne Vercors - Qui sait si l'on n'a
 pas nécessité
 de moi ailleurs?
 Tout est en branle, qui sait si je
 ne gêne pas l'ordre
 de Dieu en restant à cette place.
 Où le besoin qui était de moi a
 cessé? (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1232)

Paralleling Colomb, Vercors assumes messianic qualities as he journeys in quest of spiritual truth; his aim is apparent: "Ce que Anne Vercors va essayer de faire, au prix d'un long et périlleux voyage: retrouver le centre, le trou où la croix fut plantée." ²⁰

The Holy Land, apart from purely christian values, also has dramatic value in terms of developing plot and character as we have already seen with other Claudelian locales. Since Vercors must leave France and will therefore no longer function as a family dependent Violaine, Mara and

Jacques Hury are drawn closer in their relationship with each other:

Anne Vercors - C'est toi Jacques
 maintenant qui
 la rendras à ma place. C'est toi
 que j'ai choisi. C'est toi que
 je mets sur Combernon à ma place. (Claudel,
Oeuvres Complètes,
 II, 1237)

Until Vercors returns from his voyage all dramatic attention is focused on Mara and Violaine and how their lives are ethically opposed to each other. Violaine becomes a leper who has healing talents and thus saves Mara's infant from death. Vercors, as he returns from Jerusalem, unifies the plot-line by assuming his family responsibilities. Vercors himself now the fortress symbol of the Holy Land, terminates the play with his divine qualities of love and security. Vercors now reunites his family, so that the spiritual voyage forms a complete circle just as his pilgrimage had done.

The spiritual validity of Jerusalem is presented still further in the play as Pierre de Craon, the leper, journeys there to find physical and moral strength. The rewards found in the Promised Land lead to a justification of the dangers and perils of the pilgrimage.

Rome: Centre of Spiritual Management

For the setting of the last of the Trilogy Plays, Le Père Humilié, the action is anchored in Rome, the eternal city. Of the plays we have examined it is only in this play

that Rome is used as a central image. It is late nineteenth-century Rome that particularly interests the playwright. This would seem to indicate a conscious effort on the part of Claudel to merge the remnants of a less defined spiritual world with the beginnings of a materialistic age. Perhaps it should be remembered that it is this same historical period, when Darwin's The Divine Origin of Species was published, that spiritual beliefs and traditions were undermined. It now "became conceivable to view man as wholly a product of natural history."²¹ Man's place in the universe becomes for Claudel a most important theme and especially in Le Père Humilié.

With Rome as the only setting for his play Claudel asserts his own catholic philosophical beliefs. In contrast to Jerusalem Rome is the residence of the papacy whose spiritual powers transcend the material unorthodoxy of a new society. The symbol of Rome is consequently a refuge for God's pilgrims who still concede to their redeemer's will, rather than to the particular Zeitgeist demands. To Orian, his nephew, the pope explains the relative degradation of the new world and asks him to try and eradicate all its superficial demands and worldly self-indulgence:

Le Pape Pie - Fais-leur comprendre qu'ils
 n'ont d'autre devoir au
 monde que de la joie!
 La joie que Nous connaissons

 n'est pas un mot vague, un insipide

lieu commun de
sacristie

.....

et que tout le reste n'est rien auprès.

(C Claudel, Oeuvres
Complètes, II, 444)

Like Spain, Rome is a generating force within the drama that launches forth its explorers (Orlan) to enlighten the darker corners of the world.

France: The Testing Ground for the Christian Hero

In L'Otage and Le Pain dur Claudel draws upon the French Revolution and its social imperatives to validate what he saw as historical chaos. Claudel believes in the hierarchial order of God, King and man without which one is faced with moral anarchy. Claudel's by now reactionary catholicism creates, therefore, a typically partisan viewpoint which places the temporal world, in this case nineteenth century France, in a specific negative context.

In Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher France serves a parallel function. As in L'Otage, Le Pain dur, the politico-historical machinations of an exploited France deprive the individual of his spiritual rewards. Unlike the other plays there occurs in Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher the dramatic meeting point of Haven and Earth, secular and religious forces. Heaven itself calls to the French maiden with promises of salvation as she, through her death, leaves the temporal world, providing a more optimistic conclusion than that of L'Otage and Le Pain dur:

Le Choeur - Louée soit / notre soeur
 Jeanne / qui est debout / pour
 toujours comme une flamme / au milieu
 de la France.

Voix Dans Le Ciel - Jeanne! Jeanne!
 Jeanne! Fille
 de Dieu! Viens! Viens! Viens!

(Claudel, Oeuvres
 Complètes, II,
 1141-1142)

Even in L'Annonce faite à Marie one can see the historical and the spiritual interests of France. As a backdrop and secondary theme Claudel mentions the historical journey of Jeanne D'Arc parallel to the spiritual one of Anne Vercors to Jerusalem. Here Claudel uses thirteenth century France to elucidate her historical and spiritual turmoil. Anne Vercors, as he leaves, remarks: "Il y a trop de peine en France... Mais tu vois au moins que tout est ému et dérangé de sa place, et chacun recherche éperdument où elle est" (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1229). Not only is there political decay but also physical decay as witnessed by the leprosy within the play. France in this play and also in L'Otage, Le Pain dur and Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher is not a viable spiritual location. It is not like Spain, the New World, Rome, Jerusalem, or even China. Certainly France is not a country with divine absolutes but rather is used by Claudel as a historically dramatic milieu from which his characters journey to find their heavenly identities. France still has to emerge from the dark ages, which for Claudel were not ended by the Renaissance, but

continued into the late nineteenth century. It is clear that only a spiritual awakening can revive France for him. Claudel's France may be viewed as an intolerant Babylon when seen in its complete context.

Claudel's cosmic theatre is a conglomeration of places and settings through which the christian pilgrim and God travel hand in hand. In the image of God, Don Rodrigue, Colomb, Anne Vercors all incarnate pioneers for whom land and sea, countries and mountains serve as unexplored frontiers. Claudel's major settings, as well as the more localized ports of call, function, as we have seen, on a dramatic level as they appear as specific points of reference for the characters whom Claudel consistently transports from place to place and from plot to plot. These same places serve to define more crucially the spiritual boundaries of Everyman. In his metaphysical drama Claudel creates a philosophical and spiritual continuum before the spectator. Claudel's poetic universe becomes a stage on which the fundamental drama is "the human soul engaged in its adventure with eternity."²² The action in the play is constant; the actor's central preoccupation is his voyage to God. The translation of this theme into a physical manifestation for the theatrical stage in terms of stage decor warrants further discussion. This will be elaborated upon in the following section.

Symbolic Value of Claudel's Stage
Properties and Stage Decor as a
Complement to the Theme of Voyage

"Pour les décors, le grand éloge que j'en fais, c'est qu'eux aussi sont conçus comme un élément encore plus dramatique que pictural... Le décor est fonction de l'acte imminent à qui il ouvre ses possibilités."²³ Claudel's theatre is reinforced by symbolic use of stage properties in its exploitation of the theme of spiritual voyage. An examination of isolated and important images shows how they express simultaneously metaphysical and topographical detail.

A common symbol in Claudel's plays is the boat. In both Le Soulier de satin and Christophe Colomb the central images are Rodrigue's and Colomb's boats that travel to the unknown waters to help colonialize and christianize the denizens of the New World. The boat serves to join the unenlightened to the unexpected and spiritually enlightened.

In Partage de midi the boat shares this exact purpose. On board, as the play opens, are Ysé and Mesa who at the beginning of their voyage appear void of any spirituality; by virtue of their boat trip to China these same two individuals are brought to a higher level of consciousness. More dramatically the boat serves as a kind of theatrical stage where characters are brought together to play their respective roles:

Mais il est impossible même à
l'homme le plus solitaire de voyager
longtemps sur un bateau sans lier
connaissance avec les autres passagers,
Tout navire forme une espèce d'univers
provisoire dans lequel les rapports ne
sont pas mêmes qu'à terre. 24

Claudél's "boat" therefore not only defines physical locations but also relationships between characters. It is on board ship for example, that Ysé and Mesa "se contemplant l'étrange et mystérieuse attirance de l'amour."²⁵

Still more specifically Claudel uses features of the boat to express fundamental themes of cosmic topography and spirituality. "Le mât", for example, in Le soulier de satin becomes a crucifix symbol as well as the dividing line linking the antipodes of Heaven and Earth:

Et c'est vrai que je suis attaché à
la croix, mais la
croix où je suis n'est plus attachée à
rien. Elle flotte sur
la mer, La mer libre à ce point où la
limite du ciel connu s'efface
Et qui est à égale distance de ce,
monde ancien que j'ai
quitté
Et de l'autre nouveau. (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
II, 859)

The shipwreck image of the Jesuit Priest in Le Soulier de satin suggests paradoxically the fate of those whose religious credo is in opposition to that of the majority. Although on a physical level such a fate would appear to be abhorrent, yet from the Claudelian metaphysical viewpoint death is, in fact, the priest's salvation.

The metaphor of the shipwreck reveals symbolically the divine will and consequently demonstrates the interdependence of Heaven and Earth as God manoeuvres the destiny of man. The imagery of the Boat is thus an important "decor" in Claudel's drama as part of the concrete expression of a thematic symbolism apparent both on dramatic and religious levels.

Claudel further exploits "maritime imagery" as he develops the role of Saint Jacques in Le Soulier de satin and his counterpart in Christophe Colomb. In both plays the Saint Jacques constellation is dramatically revealed as an omnipresent God-like figure who with his spiritual light guides the voyager to the new land. At the same time the presence of Saint Jacques defines the spatial cosmic dimensions reminding the spectator of the vastness of God's universe and its inexpugnable divine construction:

Saint Jacques - Pèlerin de l'Occident,
longtemps
la mer plus profonde que mon bâton m'a
arrêté sur ce dongon à quatre pans
de terre massive

.....
Et c'est là, sur ce môle à demi englouti,
que j'ai dormi quatorze siècles
avec le Christ

.....
Levez vers moi, les yeux, mes enfants, vers
moi, Le
Grand Apôtre du Firmament, qui existe dans
cet état

de transport. (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II,
926-927)

In Christophe Colomb Saint Jacques is dramatically expressed by means of another "decor". Claudel resorts this time to cinematographic techniques as he utilizes a "screen" and draws from it obvious advantages; Claudel writes:

Pourquoi ne pas utiliser le cinéma?
 Pourquoi ne pas considérer le décor
 comme un simple cadre, comme un
 premier plan derrière lequel un
 chemin est ouvert au rêve, à la
 mémoire et à l'imagination?
 ... Pourquoi ne pas utiliser
 l'écran comme une espèce d'affiche
 et de projection de la pensée, où
 toutes sortes d'ombres et de
 suggestions plus ou moins confuses
 ou dessinées passent, bougent se
 mêlent ou se séparent. 26

On the screen Claudel projects "les éléments du récit de Marco Polo", "l'image gigantesque de Saint Jacques en costume de pèlerin." In her book French Drama of the Inter-War Years 1918-39 Dorothy Knowles rejects Claudel's attempt at "total theatre" as it is demonstrated through the symbol of the screen:

The totality of Claudel's dramas is in the texts and is independent of the use of film strips..., though these "tricks", as Barrault calls them, do help, in a production, to throw the "totality" into relief. 27

Notwithstanding Dr. Knowles' objection, it would seem that Claudel is able to gain from the use of the screen. With the screen Claudel is able to illustrate aesthetically the psychological side of Colomb while at the same time reinforcing

the geographical detail of his experiences. The screen allows "un intérêt psychologique ... car l'écran dédouble l'action pour produire un 'effet d'étrangeté' qui doit choquer le spectateur, aiguillonner sa réflexion." 28

The dramatic action on the screen becomes, in a sense, universal as it represents a collective projection not only of explorers but of humanity generally engaged in a collective spiritual quest; by extension of the voyagers we, the spectators, are dramatically portrayed as members of Colomb's crew in search of the New World. Adjoining the symbolism of the boat and the constellation, the screen for Claudel functions as a kind of compass that situates the spectator and the voyager in God's creation.

Religion for Claudel is an aesthetic and intellectual concept which can be expressed in decor. In L'Otage, Le Pain dur, and L'Annonce faite à Marie the monastery and cathedral represent the home of God. Judging from the plates in Bablet's book Décor au Théâtre the decors of Monsanvierge and the Chevoche forest dominate the stage symbolically creating a mood of mysticism.²⁹ In L'Annonce faite à Marie the cathedral unites the secular world of village life with the divine. It is here where clergy and laity are brought together. In L'Otage the Coûfontaine monastery is a refuge for the Pope and the symbol of order belonging to pre-industrial revolutionary France. A more concrete symbol of these same religious values is represented by the crucifix

on the wall. While it symbolizes the remains of a non-materialistic age in L'Otage it, nevertheless, becomes a "collector's item" in Le Pain dur as it is sold to Ali Habenichts.

In L'Otage the monastery stands for a microcosm of the world; at least the world of religious order and spiritual tangibles. For the most part monasteries are located on elevated planes so that one is brought closer physically and spiritually to God. Although Claudel makes no particular reference to its placement it would certainly seem plausible for a director staging the play to elevate the Monastery mechanically above the stage floor.

The symbol of the cross focuses our attention on the reciprocal image of the "tree". In Tête d'or the Princess is nailed to a tree on a mountain suggesting once again Christ nailed to the cross at Calvary. Here both tree and cross form a metaphorical bridge that joins both Heaven and Earth, the material with the nonmaterial. Both Agnel and the Princess relinquish their corporal being for a "Claudelian metamorphosis;" that is to say for a Christian rebirth. As Agnel pulls out the nails from the tree, one might suggest that on a symbolic level he is performing the role of the heroic lover freeing his beloved from temporal limitations. As he liberates her from temporal chains he is, in a sense, duplicating the role of the pastoral lover, who carves his initials for "eternity's sake" in the bark of a tree:

La Princesse - Que nous nous soyons
rencontrés alors tous deux
rois! ...
Tu m'as délivrée (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
I, 294)

The image of the stake in Jeanne D'Arc au bûcher is yet a further manifestation of the tree symbolism familiar to Claudel; the Maid of Orleans Jeanne D'Arc has been sentenced by the French court to burn at the stake for her political activity.

In a typical manner Claudel fuses religious and dramatic values; the interdependence of Heaven and Earth is stressed again as the image of the stake connects both domains:

Pas plus que le Christ ne peut être
réparé de la croix, il ne fallait
pas que Jeanne D'Arc fût réparée de
l'instrument de sa passion, de son
martyre et de sa sanctification,
c'est-à-dire de son bûcher. 30

The flames of the burning stake serve as a form of purgatory conditioning that cleanses Jeannè's material and temporal sins:

Jeanne - Rouen! Rouen! Tu as brûlé
Jeanne D'Arc
mais je suis plus forte que toi/ et
tu ne m'auras mie
toujours! (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1138)

From tree-symbolism Claudel turns to stone-imagery as he sets the second act of Partage de midi in a cemetery in Hong-Kong. The central decor is the omega-shaped tombstone around which Ysé and Mesa make plans for their future. The death image of the omega symbol is used three times in this

play. The spectator witnesses the first omega symbol in the construction of the boat; the second occurrence of the omega image is the tombstone in the Happy-Valley cemetery; the third manifestation of this specific image is in the throne-like chair found in Ysé's apartment. The setting of the cemetery is adopted by the playwright to remind the spectator of the death voyage. It is interesting that the cemetery is set in Hong-Kong, an island that is surrounded by water. The image of water, when fused with the theme of death recalls the purification rituals to be experienced symbolically by Ysé and Mesa. The eternal quality of death is consequently strengthened by the cemetery location as it overshadows the temporal existence of these two characters. The leitmotif of death is carried on to the third act in the symbol of the omega-shaped chair. Claudel writes: "Je ne garderais qu'un grand siège chinois rouge où peuvent s'asseoir deux personnes (toujours l'oméga)".³¹ Again the eternal quality of death is stressed in comparison to the secular and living world outside of Ysé's apartment.

From the interior of Ysé's apartment we move to the palace interior of Tête d'or. Unlike the monastery interior in L'Otage the palace interior predicates a secular order of death of the King and his court. Symbolically, it is night, void of physical and spiritual light. It is only right, therefore, that the Princess should leave this setting and journey to the Caucasian mountains to an environment more

suited for her redemption. Claudel again draws a parallel between the secular world and the divine.

The "interior decor" is further seen in L'Annonce faite à Marie. For the first two acts the spectator sits opposite the Kitchen. Like other writers Claudel uses the kitchen setting symbolically. The Kitchen or "Hearth" image recalls a soul-chamber symbolism; the confines of love and sentiment:

Finalement pour les décors, je crois
qu'il faudrait abandonner le côté
pictural pour donner toute l'importance
au côté dramatique. Les accessoires
par exemple, une porte, une table,
un escalier, une cheminée, une lampe
sont des personnages passionnants, et en
même temps les instruments de l'action. 32

Like the palace interior, it too is associated with a temporary order since Anne Vercors must leave his home and family to realize his spiritual quest in Jerusalem.

Decor as a particular dramatic expression of character is developed through Anne Vercors and his physical movements. It seems that Claudel draws upon this as an important theatrical requirement:

Il faut que l'acteur se sente toujours
soutenu... il ne cesse jamais d'être
en marche... C'est comme Anne Vercors
qui va à Jerusalem... Chacun de ses
mouvements est un acte qui a un sens. 33

The expression of the continual nature of the voyage to the eternal is demonstrated, as we have seen, by the perpetual movement and gesturing of Anne Vercors.

The apocalyptic setting for the final scene of

Christophe Colomb is qualified by the religious and cosmic symbolism of the decor. As Queen Isabella enters Heaven and prays for Colomb the stage is suddenly turned into a symbol of the firmament as a multitude of stars impregnate the sky. Besides defining their cosmic presence the stars are symbolic of all humanity:

Le Ciel au-dessus de la mer au soleil
couchant... La nuit se fait. Les
étoiles apparaissent. Ce sont toutes
les âmes de ce monde futur, de se monde
que Christophe Colomb a découvert.
Elles supplient pour Christophe Colomb. 34

To complete the eschatological decor a dove is seen flying in the sky. Despite the childish implications which are read into the discoverer's name articulated by Dr. Knowles, Claudel does find the symbol of the bird useful. For the playwright the dove is "le Saint-Esprit qui s'en va à la rencontre de l'âme de Christophe Colomb, elle aussi sous le forme d'une colombe. Toutes deux s'envolent vers le Paradis."³⁵ The symbolism of the dove and of the stars and constellation allow the spectator to interpret fully Colomb's and Claudel's spiritual journey.

For Claudel, decor is not simply an additional ritual belonging to the paraphernalia of the theatre:

Or, les décors n'ont pas un rôle
purement occasionnel. They don't
simply happen. C'est l'action qui
doit avoir l'air de les créer et
ils ne sont là à leur tour que pour
lui prêter contenance et support. 36

Having looked at specific examples of decor such as the maritime and cosmic imagery we see that each image has

its own dramatic value relative to particular character development or plot advancement. In addition to its dramatic function we have also seen how the decor is used as an expression of the playwright's cosmic and spiritual universe. Through the decor of Heaven and Earth the playgoer is forever reminded of the voyager's beginning and ultimate physical, but not spiritual end. For the voyager, the decor represented by the boat, the constellations and the screen is the seaman's compass that situates him and the spectator in the poetic universe of Claudel. Inside his world we see Claudel endeavouring to achieve simultaneity of effect at dramatic and spiritual levels.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

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31. Ibid., p. 214.
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THE SPIRITUAL VOYAGE

Man is for him (C Claudel) at all times equally flesh and spirit, expressing in his duality the mystery of the Incarnation... men in all parts of the world... are all sharing in the same existence and experiencing the drama of an identical destiny. 1

The ultimate destiny of mankind and of Claudel's travellers is manifested within a spiritual framework. The physical voyage in Claudel as discussed in chapter one is the dramatic expression of the spiritual voyage.

Influenced by the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Claudel's Weitanschauung demonstrates a theocentric interpretation of the universe where " tout devient par rapport à Dieu." 2 God is seen as a positive force who is all-powerful and all-loving and who indirectly guides the pilgrim along his travels through the Claudelian cosmos. The physical world is an extension of its creator's goodness and love. As we can judge from Claudel's plays, however, it is not always apparent that goodness and love exist; it is precisely the explorer's duty to discover them; "il n'est plus question de terrasser Dieu, mais de le découvrir." 3 For the traveller and for Claudel the quest is a spiritual one to find the centre and harmony of God's creation. We must all "realize the totality of the universe, to discover the meaning of its drama and pay homage to the Creator." 4

I

Voyage Towards the Perfection of Love

Case I Rodrigue and Prouhèze:
Le Soulier de Satin

In the world of Le Soulier de satin Don Rodrigue and Dona Prouhèze are both engaged in the spiritual quest. On one level both characters represent worldly conquerors subordinated to human demands; yet beyond their physical existence they are both subordinated to spiritual or divine intentions. It is clear that Prouhèze and Rodrigue are in love with each other and it is this same love that is responsible for each of their spiritual voyages. For Claudel there exist two kinds of love; one is eros and the other agape. Eros is the secular, fraternal kind of attraction that individuals feel for one another, similar to that existing between Rodrigue and Prouhèze; whereas agape is the love for God and God alone. From Claudel's thematic symbolism and dramatic expression it appears that the playwright prefers the latter.

Agape, however, is not sufficient to discover God's spiritual kingdom. Before one is admitted into the eternal world one must be cleansed of all earthly matter and be enlightened spiritually. In order to share eternal rewards we must renounce all that is material and physical. Throughout the drama of Claudel the characters are forever experiencing physical, purgatorial rituals as they journey from the earthly to the eternal. Rodrigue and Prouhèze prove to be no exception; this is a definite indication that Claudel is

interested, not in drawing the lovers close together physically, since he pays so little attention to eros, but that he is interested in portraying their individual voyages towards a superior love to be found only in the spiritual macrocosm; aptly described by Wallace Fowlie:

The playwright separates his lovers,
and keeps inventing ways to hold
them apart. Only twice do they
see one another, at the end of the
second day and at the end of the
third day...

The story of love is a drama of
absence, where each of the lovers
accepts the fate of separation,
this wound in the souls of
Prouhèze and Rodrigue is
precisely the place where God is
at work. 5

The fate of separation and death, the signposts along the spiritual journey, is accepted by Prouhèze since she knows the law of God to be just and good. For her not even an earthly union with Rodrigue will be sufficient to induce true happiness; it is only the spiritual union with the eternal that is of any great consequence:

L'Ange Gardien-Les voies directes de
Dieu, le
temps est venu pour lui qu'il
commence à les fouler

Dona Prouhèze-Ah! je remercie Dieu!
Viens, cher
Rodrigue! je suis prête...
Mourir, mourir par toi m'est
doux!

(Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 975)

When Rodrigue and Prouhèze meet for the last time both are conscious only of the spiritual realm that both are

travelling to:

Le Vice-Roi - Le chemin n'est pas
long, que nous avons à faire
ensemble, toi et moi, en cette vie.

Dona Prouhèze - Où me mènes-tu?...

Le Vice-Roi - La croix que j'ai fait
mettre toute nue
à la place du Saint qui a donné son
nous à ce bateau, Saint
Jacques, ce Saint Jacques qui était
appelé le frère du Sei-
gneur

.....
Le Vice-Roi - Cette croix, mon amour,
cette croix
nue... C'est le lit nuptial, toi et moi,
qui nous
était réservé. (C Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
II, 997)

The signpost of death is the last stop in the physical world for the pilgrim as he journeys toward God; he must renounce eros for the ideal spiritual love. The ideal agape is crystallised in the scene that involves "L'Ombre double" since the double shadow is the symbol of the pure being formed by the ideal union of Prouhèze and Rodrigue in Eternity.⁶ For Claudel absolute love is not possible, at least not in terms of secular love. Absolute love is that of God and is possible only through death, expurgation, and salvation.

The journey to greater spiritual awareness is not an easy task. Although there are at end of the voyage certain divine rewards, the actual physical journey can be compared to an obstacle course. To suffer is an intrinsic part of the

Claudelian spiritual journey; Prouhèze is fully cognizant of the physical pain that is inevitable along her pilgrimage to God:

Prouhèze - Oh! que le chemin est long
jusqu'au buisson là-bas!

L'Ange Gardien - Il était plus long
encore jusqu'au
Calvaire! (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 900)

For Prouhèze and other voyagers in Claudel's theatre the pilgrimage to God is the road to Calvary; "De l'amour à la croix et de la croix à la résurrection et à l'accomplissement."⁷

The child, it seems, is the only one of Claudel's personae who is allowed to live, only because a child's love is not yet ready for divine consummation, hence the existence of Sept-Epées, the daughter of Prouhèze. The physical identity of Sept-Epées is defined by the physical environment that surrounds her. She and the sea are almost inseparable. Not only is Sept-Epées confined to the sea, but she is a voyager on the sea:

elle (Sept-Epées) est à la nage dans
la mer jolie! Elle va rejoindre le
désiré de son coeur, Don
Juan d'Autriche, en route vers Lépante!
(Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
II, 1002)

The physical movement of Sept-Epées is comparable to the physical movement of the sea; both are images of inexhaustible energy that suggest symbolically to the spectator the endless crusade to God.

The spiritual voyage of Rodrigue is different in character from that of Prouhèze and even that of Sept-Épées. Although his death is imminent, the ritual of spiritual purification seems to have begun affecting his earthly existence. In the fourth day of the play Rodrigue appears in a more striking religious perspective than we have ever seen before. He is now nothing more than a crippled sea-merchant who occupies his time selling religious relics and other trivia. He is like a Christ figure who, before leaving this world, must endure physical anguish and torment; he must, in other words carry the cross on his shoulders as he travels, for the last time, along the road to Calvary. To suffer becomes an intrinsic part of the Claudelian drama. For the time period preceding the actual moment of death for any of Claudel's characters there exist situations in which the character finds himself defenseless and at the mercy of his fate. As for Rodrigue and Prouhèze they are brought together only once by Claudel. For the major part of the play their love for each other is, at best, intimated; never is their love expressed physically. To illustrate further the pain and discomfort as each of the characters journeys to God Claudel marks symbolically the voyages of Rodrigue and Prouhèze, by the reality of a physical defect. Both characters experience difficulty in walking as a result of being lame. As Prouhèze prays to the Virgin Mary she decides to assume the identity of a cripple:

Je me remets à vous! Vierge mère,
 je vous donne mon
 soulier!...
 Mais quand j'essayerai de m'élancer
 vers le mal, que
 ce soit avec un pied boiteux. (C Claudel, Oeuvres
Complètes, II, 878).

As we have already seen the one-time immortal Rodrigue, now himself a cripple, resembles Prouhèze. In the case of both characters their end and ultimate spiritual journey are designed characteristically to present the christian pilgrim, a humble and feeble being who is prepared, nevertheless, to enter into the kingdom of God. The symbol of the christian voyage is consequently the symbol of a greater force whose intentions are for the benefit of all humanity:

The unity of the physical world foreshadows the unity of mankind with God... Man must explore the abyss within himself and become aware of the emptiness and the barrier which stand between his being and God's grace. 8

To a lesser extent, yet still important, are the travels of Don Pélage and Dona Musique in Le Soulier de satin. Similar to Anne Vercors in L'Annonce faite à Marie Pélage departs on a mission that leads him to a mountain where his cousin lives:⁹

Don Pélage - J'accéderai à l'appel que
 cette tâche blanche là-haut
 m'adresse,
 Cette lettre de la veuve dans la
 montagne, cette lettre de ma
 cousine dans ma main. (C Claudel, Oeuvres
Complètes, II, 863)

Dona Musique, like Pélage, is affected by the need to travel; she journeys to Italy having been swept along by current of the sea:

Dona Musique - Je vous l'ai déjà raconté!
 il n'y avait pas un souffle d'air
, je n'ai eu que
 le temps de sauter à l'eau

.....
 Heureusement que la terre n'était pas
 loin et le courant me poussait. (C Claudel, Oeuvres
Complètes,
 II, 938)

Later on in the second part of the play we are told by the narrator that Dona Musique is in Prague, that Camille and Prouhèze are at Mogador, and that Rodrigue is at Panama. Claudel's Soulier de satin, creates a kaleidoscope through which physical and spiritual evolution is reflected. In the last moments of the play the spectator is once again reminded of the divine presence as it manifests itself in the symbol of the constellation of Saint Jacques, appropriately encompassing the captivity of Don Rodrigue. As the spiritual symbolism of the scene and of the end of the play is brought to a close we are introduced to a sister, who offers moral support and affection to a man, who at one time personified Spain and its Golden Age:

La Religieuse - Emballez tout cela, ma
 soeur. Et
 toi, viens avec moi, mon garçon.
 Fais attention à l'échelle avec ta
 pauvre jambe. (C Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
 II, 1011)

Rodrigue, like Prouhèze, is destined to begin the journey to God in a characteristically Claudelian fashion; the voyage of the traveller is long and difficult as it opens up a new world of joy and eternal life:

Le voyage du Soulier de satin nous révèle cette lutte spirituelle de l'homme, et surtout de l'homme chrétien, pour trouver le lieu de son repos. 10

Case II Ysé and Mesa:
Partage de midi

Claudiel's Partage de midi more than Le Soulier de satin deals with the spiritual journey in a less grandiose way. With fewer intrigues and political imbroglios the division of the spiritual and the carnal sides of both Ysé and Mesa is presented. Both plays, however, have common points of interest. Claudel employs the identical setting, the confinements of a boat, for his two lovers in Partage de midi similar to the location chosen for the rendezvous of Prouhèze and Rodrigue.

The fundamental theme in Partage de midi is the love that exists between Ysé and Mesa. Unlike the relationship between Prouhèze and Rodrigue the liaison between Ysé and Mesa is more physical and consequently more intense. The word Partage for example, suggests immediately the Pascalian division of love; love of the body and love of the soul. The theme of love is expressed by Claudel all the while underlined by the feeling of Angst that haunts both the spiritually

oriented Mesa and the more worldly Ysé. Both characters long for the eternal love for which they sacrifice their lives at the conclusion of the play, yet both are tortured by love's physical demands. As Midi would indicate the crisis of these two people manifests itself in the struggle between the interests of the flesh and the interests of the soul and intellect. The physical voyage to China is simultaneously the journey toward greater spiritual awareness that will ultimately affect Ysé and Mesa.

As the boat sails from its starting point it is symbolically leaving the past times and past places. The new spatial context of the present and future is the sky and the sea; what is forever present now is the setting of the spiritual odyssey. The presence of the divine purpose will be strongly impressionistic. The sea and sky, although directly opposed to each other in a physical sense are nevertheless united in their spiritual relationship. On the symbolic level, the sea becomes a mirror that reflects the external image of the sky, as it unfolds the ubiquitous nature of God. As they journey out of the world of darkness and ignorance, Ysé and Mesa find themselves confronted by a reality that has been ordained by their creator. We are forewarned of this reality by the symbol of the sunset that closes the first act and also by the dinner bell or the death knell which is heard. Although it is night, through the darkness, God's light becomes more and more a reality:

Mesa, à demi-voix -Voici le soleil qui
 se couche,
 Voici la mer qui fait un mouvement
 Voici le coeur coupable un moment
 Qui frémit sous le soupir du ciel

.....
 Elle (la mer) ne s'empare point comme
 l'oeil de la lumière, ses
 eaux comme d'une autre source.

(C Claudel, Oeuvres
Complètes, I,
 941-942)

The setting of the cemetery in Act Two is yet a further pointer to the spiritual journey as it will inevitably use death as a means through which Ysé and Mesa may enter into the world of the divine. The death symbolism in the cemetery image also suggests the eternal quality of Ysé and Mesa's love since its true significance will only be completely understood in its eternal context.

The dramatic action of Act Three centres around Mesa's famous canticle of faith. Although still situated in the physical world, Mesa through his own words, almost transfigures himself into a spiritual essence as he journeys intellectually toward a purer state of being. In an 'examination of conscience', Mesa becomes involved "in a progressive movement from the material universe to the inner, spiritual world."¹¹

In the first part of his speech Mesa outlines his earthly position in the face of the greater spiritual cosmology:

Mesa -Me voici couché sur la Terre,
 prêt à mourir, comme sur un
 catafalque solennel,
 Au plus profond de l'univers et dans
 le milieu même de cette
 bulle d'étoiles et de l'essaim et du
 culte

.....
 Et j'ai au-dessus de moi le Pôle et à
 mes côtés la tranche, et
 l'Equateur des animaux fourmillants de
 l'étendue. (C Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
 I, 977-978)

Similar to the Jesuit Priest in Le soulier de satin, Mesa finds himself almost suspended in a world of cosmic dimensions. "Mesa, the individual, moreover, now becomes a universalized particular, representative of all rational mortals on the threshold of death." ¹² As we see in Mesa's testimony of faith there is a double movement "from center to circumference and back to center" ¹³ in which both Mesa and God are inextricably involved. At one point we find Mesa alone, however, not for long, since he finally realizes the feeling of solitude without the divine presence. Then, in a more supernatural dimension Mesa imagines the Lamb of the Apocalypse and Heaven's Host running to meet him. ¹⁴

Mesa -Salut, étoiles! Me voici seul!...
 Mais déjà les portes du Ciel
 Se rompent et l'armée de tous les Saints,
 portant des flam
 beaux dans leurs mains,
 S'avancent à ma rencontre, entourant
 l'Agneau
 terrible! (C Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, I, 978)

Not unlike other Claudelian heroes Mesa, resembling

Rodrigue, cannot relate to eros and agape without confusing the two. Mesa's cantique, as it discusses the rationale behind these two loves is, at the same, a testimonial to a possible rapprochement with Christ.¹⁵ His love for Christ and his love for Ysé cause him to evaluate his worth as a veritable Christian. "The movement from one pole to the other of these two loves is along the axis of suffering, which is the test and gauge of love."¹⁶ As Mesa concludes his fervent prayer he insists on his own death so that he may embrace the infinite and consequently annihilate the finite temporal world of sin and confusion:

Mesa - Mourons donc et sortons de ce
corps misérable!
Sortons, mon âme, et d'un seul coup
éclatons cette détestable
carcasse!

.....

C'est pourquoi reprenez
cachez-moi, ô Père, en votre
giron!

(C Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, I, 979-980)

Mesa and Ysé experience the Claudelian spiritual journey on multiple levels. The voyage to China in the boat provides the fundamental framework in which the deaths of Mesa and Ysé assume definite spiritual dimensions. Mesa's canticle of faith provides yet another framework for Mesa's psychological journey as he vacillates between Heaven and Earth. The journey to Heaven is given dramatically more significance as Claudel has Ysé return to Mesa so that she may die as well, after having realized the divine purpose and

its subsequent grace and enlightenment. For Ysé the union with the Divine is dependent upon voyage into death; not only will she find union with God at the end of her travel but also union with Mesa. She relinquishes her physical self to become eternally metamorphosed into a purer essence of the Divine will. Mesa's sképticism is also tamed by humility and submission to the Divine father:

Ysé - Grand Dieu! me voici, riante,
roulante, déracinée...
O Mesa, voici le partage de minuit!

Mesa - Mais, tous voiles dissipés, moi-
même, la forte flamme
fulminante, le grand mâle dans la
gloire de Dieu. (C Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
I, 989-990)

The journey to God is simultaneously a journey into the self. Both Mesa and Ysé have come a long way since their first point of contact on the boat sailing for China. As they resign themselves for the final voyage they are no longer insecure and wary of God's intentions; both of the characters have journeyed from point midi to point minuit as Ysé has said herself. In his final speech Mesa takes up this point again to reiterate the importance of his and Ysé's voyage from the state of insensibility to the state of awareness:

Mesa - L'homme dans la splendeur de
l'août, L'Esprit vain
queur dans la transfiguration de Midi!

(C Claudel,
Oeuvres
Complètes,
I, 990)

Like Prouhèze and Rodrigue, Mesa and Ysé are destined to celebrate a marriage of souls in a world that is designed especially for lovers whose love has been purified. To be a sinner does not exclude one's right to eternal salvation, in fact, it is always the sinner, at least in the theatre of Claudel, who, when ready, is guaranteed a place within the confines of the spiritual realm. It is with these people "les autres... lourdement chargés de matière et de péchés"¹⁷ that Mesa and Ysé have so much in common.

II

Explorers of Secular and Spiritual Frontiers (i) The Missionary-Christophe Colomb.

In Le livre de Christophe Colomb, written before the playwright left for Washington in 1927, "Claudel résume et rappelle les thèmes et les images du passé: la vocation, le départ, l'exil, la patrie, la mer, le globe, et tout ce qui à rapport aux voyages."¹⁸ The world of Christophe Colomb is somewhat reminiscent of the world of Don Rodrigue as we have seen in Chapter One. This time, however, only Spain and the New World are of any importance. Like Rodrigue Christophe Colomb incarnates the voyageur par excellence. As Colomb crosses the sea to find new territories he is taking part in a spiritual conquest so that he may find God's sacred frontier and eternal salvation: "Je n'ai soif que de la mer et je n'ai faim que de la Volonté de Dieu." (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1085). This play is not one in which human emotions and fears are mixed, but rather a simple

declaration of faith.

Physical and spiritual love are not an important metaphor as it is in Partage de midi; what is essential is Colomb's involvement with God. From the beginning Colomb is filled with a sense of Divine purpose:

Christophe Colomb II - Mon nom est l'Ambas-
sadeur de Dieu, le Porteur de Christ!
Mon premier nom
est le porteur de Christ! et mon second
nom est tout ce
qui est lumière, tout ce qui est esprit
et tout ce qui a des
ailes! (C Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1062)

Although present to a degree, Christian eschatology does not assume an overtly significant role in Le livre de Christophe Colomb as it obviously does in Claudel's other plays. Colomb is not like Mesa or Simon Agnel whose faith in Christian principles must be won. He is the archetypal Christ figure who must spread the gospel of God throughout the non-Christian countries. Colomb appears not only as a Christ-figure but as a "dove" image. Like a dove flying from boat to shore as it is sent out to discover vegetable life, so too the explorer embarks upon new lands bringing with him symbols of hope and promise as he endeavours to explore new horizons:

Christophe Colomb - C'est moi qui suis
la colombe porteuse du Christ.

Christophe Colomb I - Je suis la colombe
dans sa
main. Qu'il ouvre la main et je partirai
et du rivage
inconnu là-bas c'est moi qui lui rapporterai

un rameau
vert. (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1070-1071)

In keeping with tradition, however, like other Claudelian heroes, Colomb is seen at the finish of the play ready to enter the kingdom of God. Much like the setting in Mesa's canticle, the stage in Christophe Colomb becomes apocalyptic in character. It is interesting that just as each character is ready to leave the physical world for the Divine each experiences a final vision of the past.¹⁹ Mesa, Ysé, and Violaine all experience this, while Rodrigue seems to anticipate it.²⁰ Colomb is no exception. By way of Christophe Colomb I and Christophe Colomb II we may see the past and future simultaneously:

Christophe Colomb I - Il n'y a plus de
Christophe
Colomb! Il n'y a plus qu'un pauvre homme
Sur sa litière
de paille,

Christophe Colomb II - Je te rejoins!
je viens vers
toi! (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1105)

The voyages of Colomb are at the same time christian pilgrimages along which the Christian wanders in quest of religious values and absolutes. To conquer an unexplored frontier is an act of liberation and spiritual union, at least in terms of Claudelian philosophy. As the explorer conquers the unknown he brings to the vanquished land a sense of enlightened freedom that owes its manifestations to God. The New Land also adds a further dimension to the

explorer's identity as it creates challenges and hidden secrets to be unearthed finally by him. In the case of Christophe Colomb he brings to the New World his faith and belief in the Divine. The New World, or spiritual realm, offers in return the challenge of eternal life and the everlasting love of God. Most important of all, however, is the voyage itself. The dramatic symbol of the Claudelian voyage reaches its maximum intensity in Le livre de Christophe Colomb wherein the voyage becomes the physical transmission of christian orthodoxy. Colomb's voyages result in universal testimonies of the Divine essence while building up various networks of spiritual communication throughout the physical world.

(ii) The Convert - Simon Agnel

A conqueror of sorts, yet void of spiritual intensity, is Simon Agnel in Claudel's Tête D'Or. Agnel shares the explorer's quest for the unknown, however, unlike Colomb, Agnel is not directly ordained with christian indoctrination. Agnel's journeys, nevertheless, are expressions of the spiritual quest. It is not until the end of the play that the spectator is aware of the spiritual implications throughout the play, when on a superficial level the play seems to exclude anything religious. Tête D'Or does function, therefore, within a spiritual context where Agnel's quest becomes a spiritual quest and not only a personally self-indulgent one.

Viewed in this light, the play takes on a new interest.

"Il est intéressant de constater que cette pièce commence au moment où le futur Tête d'Or revient de son premier voyage."²¹ At the outset of the play we see Agnel as a traveller who has just returned from journeying abroad:

Agnel - Je me rappelle un esprit
farouche, la honte,

.....

J'ai erré.
J'ai vu d'autres chemins, d'autres
cultures, d'autres
villes. (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, I, 173)

The theme of voyage is the underlying motif that begins the play and which concludes it. The character of Tête D'Or is established immediately as the perfect traveller whose nature has been stimulated by foreign attractions. Simon Agnel's passion for travel is very much in the tradition of Baudelaire and of Rimbaud. From the beginning we see Agnel, fated to become a mighty conqueror and hero like Tamalane, soon to be crowned Tête D'Or. Cébès, on the other hand, is a character less adventurous but more philosophical as he is forever trying to define himself and his position in the universe. Almost like the dual personalities of Christophe I and Christophe II Cébès and Agnel seem to be one and the same person as the critic Harold Watson points out:

In the one is found great physical strength and courage... all characteristic of the active, masculine mentality. Cébès, on the other hand, typifies the receptive, feminine principle... Each one is incomplete and needs the other for fulfillment. 22

If we may assume that this be possible and agree with Watson, then the dramatic action is focused upon only two principal characters in this drama, namely Tête D'Or in both aspects of Agnel and Cébés and the Princess. Since Agnel's personality is composed of two essential characters it is easier to understand his change of temperament at the close of the play. What we see here is the personality of Cébés speaking with the Princess and not the arrogant self-willed personality of Tête D'Or. Still keeping in mind the dual personality of Tête D'Or, that is to say the feminine nature of Cébés and the masculine nature of Agnel one can see, perhaps, a parallel to the characters of both Prouhèze and Rodrigue. Like Cébés, Prouhèze dies earlier on in the drama, preparing the spiritual voyage for Rodrigue, and in a sense, Cébés prepares too the spiritual circumstances that will ultimately lead Tête D'Or to his death. The concepts of Anima and Animus are brought into perspective as both masculine and feminine counterparts unite and succeed in generating the theme of separation and travel towards death into the texture of the drama; when Cébés dies the part of Tête D'Or's weaker character is subsequently destroyed leaving Agnel to his more aggressive and warrior-like personality in pursuit of self-realization.

As the passage of time manifests itself in the symbols of night and day, for example, Agnel with the passing of time emerges as a warrior and conqueror and is no longer the simple

traveller in the second part of the play that he was in the first. Agnel has developed into an Alexander the Great figure whose immediate concerns are conquests of kingdom and territories; the palace of King David, for example, becomes one of Tête D'Or's acquisitions. The palace of King David is like the castle in Macbeth, when at one time it is watched by the slumbering guards;²³ not only does there exist darkness but also the sentiment of imminent death and the spiritual journeys of those characters soon to die. The image of the nightingale can be heard as it suggests appropriately a bird of flight and a bird of death, encompassing, for the spectator, the symbolism of the journey toward death:

Le Roi - Le rossignol chante et toute la
 nuit il ne contient
 point son coeur. Toute la nuit le petit
 oiseau chante
 les merveilles de Dieu.
 Et vous, ne pouviez-vous veiller? (Claudel,
 Oeuvres Complètes,
 I, 193).

As Agnel journeys throughout the play he moves in darkness until, near the finish of the play becoming the spiritual traveller he seems to recognise God's mighty power and not his own. The third part of Tête D'Or is the symbolic setting of Calvary where he meets the Princess nailed to the tree recalling the crucifixion of Christ. On a symbolic level, the third part of the drama is the most significant section of the whole play since it represents the spiritual transformation of Tête D'Or. Unaware to himself the spectator

sées what Agnel fails to recognise: the hero emerges throughout the play as a messianic leader, and consequently it is no surprise that the end of the play should finish in the spiritual way as it does. Soon after Tête D'Or is crowned he labels himself in christian terms:²⁴

Tête D'Or - Par les plaines et par
le théâtre des monts,
Sera appelé Roi. Père,
Tige de justice, Siège de Prudence!

(C Claudel,
Oeuvres
Complètes,
I, 251)

To complete the symbolism of death in terms of the spiritual journey there is a final setting of the sun; it should be remembered, however, that the sinking sun is not a negative image, at least not at this point in the play. With the sunset there exists the reality of Agnel's and the Princess's death; there is, for example, the light of hope that accompanies the dying sun. In the stage directions Claudel indicates: "Le soleil près de se coucher emplit d'une immense rougeur toute la scène." (C Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, I, 295). Agnel remarks:

Le Roi - O Soleil! Toi, mon
Seul amour!...
Porte! Or! or! Absorbe-moi, Colère!

(C Claudel,
Oeuvres Complètes,
I, 295)

As the sun journeys to the west so do Tête D'Or and the Princess as they prepare to enter the kingdom of glory. Death for Agnel has become a reality; he can no longer escape

from its unyielding power. Agnel has reached the point where all his physical travels have succeeded in bringing him to his final voyage which now has its roots in Heaven. The spiritual voyage for Tête D'Or, just as it is for other Claudelian heroes, is a reward. It is only a reward because the pilgrim has suffered along the way. Agnel has suffered too; the death of his wife seems to liberate him at the beginning of act one, however, the demise of his friend Cébès proves to be too much to bear even for this mighty conqueror. Despite these sad events Agnel continues his explorations throughout the Kingdom.

As he travels from setting to setting Agnel is questing for self-definition; by the close of the play we see that his quest for personal identity is intrinsically the quest for spiritual awareness and knowledge. Tête D'Or's conquests are motivated from the world beyond, from the Divine source. The final journey into death is one voyage that cannot be rerouted or cancelled, not even by Tête D'Or, the greatest of explorers.

In Claudel's miracle play L'Annonce faite à Marie the theme of voyage appears again as the fundamental dramatic technique around which the play unfolds. As a result of the theme of voyage the spectator is reminded of its underlying spiritual counterpart affecting the lives of each of the characters. This play is perhaps the most religiously contrived of all of Claudel's dramas. To reinforce the religiosity and the symbolism of the spiritual journey in the

play Claudel sets his drama in the fifteenth century, a medieval setting of cathedrals, religious wars, crusades and voyages. Behind the medieval fresco of the secular and religious looms death which will equalize both worlds and open up the eternal kingdom of God. Like the dramas we have discussed up to this point L'Annonce faite à Marie is another variation on the Claudelian themes of love, separation, and death, all of which are elements belonging to the spiritual journey, a particular theme that obsessed the playwright until his very own experience with his final spiritual excursion.

Already in the preface to the drama we see the theme of love and separation that will eventually generate Violaine's spiritual voyage. Confronting her for the first time within the space of a year Pierre de Craon, the architect, warns Violaine of the dreaded disease that has afflicted him since the time he tried to ravish her. Deliberately oblivious to Pierre's revelations Violaine kisses him and consequently catches his leprosy. Already in the prologue, death, this time masked behind physical disease, introduces the themes of suffering, love and spiritual voyage into the organization of the play:

In the Claudelian conception of drama, the relationship between man and woman, and between man and God, is an eternal relationship. If salvation is the goal of each human existence, love is the means for reaching this goal. 25

As a result of the kiss Violaine contacts the same disease while filling unconsciously her sister Mara with scorn and contempt.²⁶ The rest of the play follows as a dramatic and spiritual expression of these two consequences taking Violaine to the forest at Chevoche from which she emerges only to leave the physical world for the next:

A Kiss usually binds two lovers, but the Kiss which Pierre gives to Violaine... is the sign of separation. 27

(iii) The Crusader - Anne Vercors

As well as Violaine, Anne Vercors, her father, is vested with high moral qualities and grave responsibilities. We learn from the conversation with his wife that he will soon be leaving France so he may travel to Jerusalem where he will try, as a good Christian should, to reestablish the solidarity of Christendom:

Anne Vercors - Tel à été le mal du
monde, que
chacun a voulu jouir de ses biens,
comme s'ils avaient
été créés pour lui

.....

Eh bien, je vais dire aux gens de
venir. Les hommes les femmes les
enfants, je vais sonner
la cloche. Il faut que tout le
monde soit là, j'ai quelque
chose à leur dire. (C Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
II, 1231-1232)

Vercors' journey to Jerusalem is in the spirit of Christ's attempt to bring a moral order to a confused and chaotic state of events. Vercors is, in a sense, one of

God's administrators who benefits all of humanity. Instead of staying in the Holy Land until his death Vercors comes back to France and acts as a priest figure who administers to his daughter her last rites before she journeys into the eternal. His presence is a spiritual reassurance for Violaine as she is about to meet the eternal father.

The world of Chevoche is fused with the realm of the supernatural as well as the spiritual. Violaine assumes not only messianic but also paranatural powers. Because of her sickness she is forced to leave her home in Monsanvierge and take up living quarters in the forest at Chevoche. Violaine's retreat to the leper colony, where she is destined to suffer is once again a reminder of the path that leads to Calvary. Although she does not die here, her dramatic function is analagous to the role of Christ as she saves Mara's infant Aubaine from death. It is especially interesting that Violaine's healing powers are effective on Christmas Eve. The child resembles Violaine now symbolically recalling the Virgin birth. With the resurrection of Aubaine one is reminded of Christ's nativity. The ringing of the Angelus supplements the spiritual atmosphere of the scene.

Violaine's spiritual journey is set in motion when she kisses Pierre de Craon, and it reaches its climax as she is transported by Anne Vercors for the last time to her home where she finally expires. Like Christ, Violaine suffers physical and moral torment and consequently dies. Having

opened the play, in a sense, the theme of separation resulting from Violaine's kiss comes to its full circle in Violaine's death. The Kiss, however, as intimated by Violaine will enable Pierre de Craon to build a church, so it becomes consecrated and permanent, going beyond the physical death.

In addition to Violaine, Anne Vercors, comes home from his journey, bringing with him news of political stability and security:

Anne Vercors - Et rien n'est perdu, et la
France n'est pas perdue, ...
Le Pape est à Rome et le Roi est sur
son trône. (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
II, 1287-1288)

We also learn from him that Pierre de Craon has journeyed to Jeruslaem and has since been cured of his sickness. Violaine, however, remains a leper till the very end and looks forward to her final journey:

Violaine - Ah!
Que c'est beau une grande moisson! ...
Qui, même maintenant je me souviens
et je trouve que
c'est beau! ...
Que c'est beau de vivre! ...
Mais que c'est bon aussi
De mourir alors que c'est bien fini
et que s'étend sur nous peu à peu
L'obscurcissement comme d'un ombrage
très obscur. (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
II, 1293-1294)

In the earlier plays, and likewise in L'Annonce faite à Maire, one of the functions of the voyage is instrumental in revealing character and plot structure, yet its primordial function is rooted in a spiritual basis that outweighs all other human limitations.

III

The Conflict of Secular and Spiritual Powers:
The Trilogy Plays

(i) L'Otage

As we have seen in chapter one the setting of the first two dramas in Claudel's celebrated trilogy is France where the politico-historical metaphor is mixed with the spiritual. The theme of spiritual voyage is again exploited by Claudel as he centres the dramatic action of L'Otage around the captivity of Pope Pius in the monastery of Coûfontaine. Because of political unrest the Pope has had to flee from Rome and it is only in Sygne de Coûfontaine's old abbey that he can find temporary security. As she tries to maintain the values of the 'ancien régime' she provides the Pope with refuge. In this play Claudel is concerned about Sygne de Coûfontaine's spiritual voyage, as well as that of the Pope. In fact, the spiritual voyage of Sygne de Coûfontaine seems to be more important than that of her hostage; the circumstances of the Pope serve to provide the framework for her own exit from the physical world.

Like Prouhèze and Violaine, Sygne de Coûfontaine is the symbol of spiritual truth and she, like them, must experience suffering and anguish before her salvation through death. Sygne is obliged to sacrifice her love for Toussaint Turelure who is a revolutionary and supporter of the new régime. The dramatic action of the play oscillates between the

temporal and spiritual polarities, since our attention is focused upon the religious Sygne de Coûfontaine and the politically motivated Turelure.

It is the experience of murder, symbolic of the death of the old régime, as it was in Tête d'Or, that prepares Sygne de Coûfontaine for her voyage to God. Again death brings with it a reward; in the case of Sygne she is at last liberated from the torment of her husband. During the final moments of her death there exists, nevertheless, a note of ambiguity that concerns the state of Sygne's soul. As her cousin demands that she allow God to enter her heart she replies repeating a single phrase "Tout est épuisé."²⁸ It would seem from her reply that she has lost her faith in God or that she has resigned herself, to her christian death. From all accounts Sygne's reply indicates her resignation to God's will; consequently, she dies prepared for her journey to God. To judge from her character and spiritual interest throughout the play, together with the final symbolic gesture of the cross that she makes before Turelure, it would seem that she is willing to carry her cross as she journeys to Heaven. To deny her spiritual motivation before her death would be unjust:

Sygne se redresse tout à coup et tend violemment les deux bras en croix au-dessus de sa tête. (Claudé, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 210)

As the business of the King is attended to we are reminded still further of the motif of the voyage that

terminates the dramatic action on the stage:

Entrent le Roi d'Angleterre, le Roi de
Prusse, l'Empereur d'Autriche,
l'Empereur
de Russie, le Nonce du Pape. (C Claudel, Oeuvres
Complètes, II, 214)

From all parts of the globe both secular and religious leaders have travelled to France in order to partake in the signing of a new social contract that will hope to provide peace and security for all those concerned. The spiritual voyage of Sygne de Coûfontaine is therefore very important in the structure of the drama since it implies the return of the Pope to Italy and with him, hope and assurance, a situation very similar to that of Anne Vercors as he journeys back from Jerusalem with news of stability and security present, once again in France.

(ii) Le Pain Dur

Contrary to the world of the Coûfontaine monastery, the world of Le pain dur is almost completely Godless and is governed by materialistic ambitions. The secular, industrialized society is symbolized by Sichel and her father Ali Habenichts, who is representative of the stereotyped Jewish entrepreneur. Le pain dur does contain, however, some spiritual truth; it is present in the symbolism of the spiritual voyage once again. Lumîr, the Polish girl, who belongs to the Turelure household is symbolic of the Christian pilgrim. Rather than stay in France and become

the bride of Louis Turelure, she chooses to return to Poland where she will be more suited to her country's needs:

Lumîr - Je vais vers ma patrie terrestre
 puisqu'il
 n'y en a point d'autres

.....

La mienne est de mourir. (C Claudel, Oeuvres
Complètes, II, 383-384)

Louis Turelure, for example, unlike his mistress, who is symbolic of Christ in terms of suffering, and who resigns herself to death to save this world, he resembles his father by his bourgeois mediocrity and lack of spiritual awareness. The only spiritual hope in this play rests with the character Lumîr whose journey back to the homeland is parallel to Christ's last voyage to the cross, the meeting place of death and life after death.

(iii) Le Père Humilié

From the secularized society of France we now find ourselves in the last of the trilogy plays Le Père Humilié, having journeyed to Rome, where Claudel sets this play. Here, our interest rests upon Pensée, the blind daughter of Sichel and Louis Turelure and upon Orian who is ostensibly the nephew and adopted son of Pope Pius IX.

The themes of love, separation and voyage reappear again as the drama is performed by Pensée and Orian. Although it is her wish to marry Orian, Pensée's ambition is soon curtailed by the Pope's interests in his nephew. Almost

as a Christophe Colomb figure, Orian is to journey to uncivilized countries and enlighten the pagans with the word of God. It is not mere coincidence that Orian's name is symbolic of the constellations whose symbolic spiritual light guides the christian traveller across the seas:

Le Pape - Orian, mon fils, ce que je
n'ai pu faire, fais-le

.....

Fais-leur comprendre qu'ils n'ont d'autre
devoir au
monde que de la joie!

(C Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
II, 444)

Thus is Pensée separated from Orian and later conditioned to accept the reality of his spiritual quest. Before Orian departs, he visits Pensée, whereupon he is ordered to leave since now, as H. Watson points out, "she finds the strength to send him to his destiny which is to love him in death, beyond the flesh."²⁹ In this scene it is difficult not to expect Prouhèze and Rodrigue to appear through the characterization of Pensée and Orian. Only through Orian's death can Pensée benefit from his spiritual value and symbolically open her eyes as she prepares the way for his infant, soon to be born. Orian's spiritual journey to death is consequently Pensée's spiritual rebirth.

IV

Resolution of Spiritual
and Temporal Conflict:

Jean D'Arc au bûcher

In Jeanne D'Arc au bûcher, Claudel's dramatic poem,

we find the historical and symbolic levels of expression brought to a climax within the context of the spiritual voyage. Already in L'Annonce faite à Maire we have heard news of her journey to Rheims and in Jeanne D'Arc au bûcher our attention is centred upon other specific places:

Only the moments which illuminate Jeanne's vocation and its meaning are considered: Rouen, Rheims, Domrémy... To create this aesthetically and morally satisfying pattern the chronological order of events is reversed. Events are respected but the contingent detail gives way to the greater claims of spiritual truth, conveyed by symbol and metaphor. 30

At the beginning of the play we find ourselves in Rouen, where Jeanne is attached to a burning stake just as she is about to leave her beloved France and journey to Heaven. At Rouen our attention centres upon Jeanne where we witness, in the form of allegory, her trial and sentencing.

Here the political background and information is developed symbolically wherein "historical protagonists appear", as Moya Laverty observes, as "figures in a pack of cards."³¹

Nearer the end of the play the spectator is reminded of Domrémy where Jeanne first hears the voices from Heaven. The beginning of her voyage, Domrémy, is about to join her last place on earth, the stake; this reminds the audience that Jeanne's progress, uninterrupted and complete, just as Violaine's journey back home completed her progress:

Jeanne - Je les reconnais! la Catherine
qui dit De

profundis / et la Marguerite bleue
 et blanche dans le ciel
 qui dit Papa Maman!
 Comme je les écoutais jadis à
 Domrémy, la Catherine
 et la Marguerite! (C Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes,
 II, 1129)

To terminate his dramatic poem Claudel brings us back to Rouen, to the beginning of the play, where we witness Jeanne's execution. As we shift from setting to setting we are constantly aware of Jeanne's death and journey to the superhuman world. Just as it was for Violaine, Prouhèze, Ysé, and to a more restricted degree for Sygne de Coûfontaine, Jeanne's exit from this world is for her a blessing and a source of joy. Even for Claudel Jeanne D'Arc incarnates, par excellence, the spiritual reality as he leaves her with her "hands in chains, lifted in a last sign of reconciliation and restoration of peace."³²

In each of the plays discussed in this section our concentration has been centred upon the theme of voyage expressed in its spiritual context. Viewed from this particular horizon Claudel's travellers and their voyages around the world express the playwright's preoccupation with the universe and its metaphysical values that transcend the physical confines of time and space. All of Claudel's travellers move through their own spatial reality as they journey from place to place, and yet at the end of the voyage, through the experience of death, they enter a world where time and material essence are left behind.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Wallace Fowlie, Paul Claudel. (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1957), p. 20.
2. Guy Michaud, Message poétique du symbolisme. (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1947), p. 609.
3. Ibid., p. 615.
4. Fowlie, op. cit., p. 35.
5. Ibid., p. 73.
6. Joseph Chiari, The Poetic Drama of Paul Claudel. (New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1954), p. 106.
7. Louis Chaigne, Vie de Paul Claudel. (Tours: Mame 1961), p. 5.
8. Ruth Horry, Paul Claudel and Saint-John Perse. (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), pp. 55-56.
9. M. I. Kraemer, "Le rôle du voyage chez Paul Claudel" (Ph.D. dissertation, Middlebury College, 1969), p. 195.
10. Kraemer, op. cit., p. 193.
11. Harold Watson, Claudel's Immortal Heroes: A Choice of Death. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1971), p. 75.
12. Ibid., p. 79.
13. Ibid., p. 80.
14. Ibid., p. 80.
15. Ibid., p. 88.
16. Ibid., p. 88.
17. Jacques Madaule, Le drame de Paul Claudel. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer et Cie, 1947), p. 366.
18. Kraemer, op. cit., p. 201.
19. Watson, op. cit., p. 152.

20. Ibid., p. 152.
21. Kraemer, op. cit., p. 174.
22. Watson, op. cit., p. 49.
23. Ibid., p. 35.
24. Ibid., p. 65.
25. Wallace Fowlie, A Guide to Contemporary French Literature.
(New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 97.
26. Watson, op. cit., p. 110.
27. Fowlie, op. cit., p. 99.
28. Ibid., p. 175.
29. Ibid., pp. 136-137.
30. Moya Laverty. "Jeanne D'Arc au Bûcher and its Place in
the Work of Claudel", in Richard Griffiths, ed.,
Claudel: A Reappraisal. (Chester Springs, Pa.,
Dufour Editions, 1970), p. 76.
31. Laverty, op. cit., p. 66.
32. Laverty, op. cit., p. 69.

CONCLUSION

Through an examination of Claudel's theatre we have seen how cosmic dimensions such as Heaven and Earth are characteristic of a particular style of dramatic revelation where verisimilitude is often exploited in favour of metaphysical principles. The theme of voyage is a case where setting and dramatic action reach their greatest creative expression directed, all the while, on a spiritual level that comes to dominate all other levels of expression.

At first glance Claudel's plays reflect almost a "log-book" of travels and adventures; Le Soulier de satin demonstrates, as it would appear, a chronicle of events as they happen to a multitude of seafarers. Upon closer inspection, however, the voyage emerges as a symbol with which the playwright has occupied himself to illustrate a drama whose value lies within a spiritual framework. Whether it is Don Rodrigue, Spain's greatest conqueror or Joan of Arc, the most humble of French maidens, never do Claudel's characters lose sight of their individual mission and personal crusade which is at all times, the quest for the spiritual absolute, the voyage to God.

Never at any time in the course of Claudel's plays are his characters without some semblance of guidance as they journey along the long and often perilous path before God. As we have already witnessed, settings for the

dramatist are not simply arbitrary geographical locations, but rather a network of carefully chosen ports of call which represent spatially a spiritual odyssey for the traveller as he enters and exits from each location.

The traveller is aided as well by sign-posts that mark the route along which he must pass. The most striking symbol expressing the idea of travel was found in Jeanne D'Arc au bûcher, that is to say, the image of the burning stake. The vertical movement of the flames, for example, suggests symbolically the upward or heavenward direction of Jeanne's travelling spirit as well as having the obvious powers of purification and liberation. The importance of the stake is entirely spiritual since it connects Jeanne's destination point, which will be Heaven, to her temporal roots. Jeanne D'Arc's journey from life to death personifies hope, man's salvation, and the liberated christian soul whose journey through life is simultaneously the way to Heaven and to God:

Et pour atteindre ce but il y a la
route, la route éternelle qui part,
qui parcourt et qui arrive... Nous,
voyageurs par essence, ne sommes
que de pèlerins de la terre à la
recherche de l'autre Rive, notre
Maison Paternelle dans la Terre
Promise. 1

Claudél's works bear resemblance to the works of Rimbaud in that he was intrigued by the notion of voyage and its possibilities; in a similar fashion, Claudél used this theme as a literary device to articulate certain opinions.

Unlike Rimbaud, the young revolutionary, who was determined to travel beyond the spiritual significance of the voyage, Claudel found that in its spiritual context the theme of voyage was best suited for his purposes. The whole direction of our lives must be channelled in such a way that we develop in terms of ideal christian principles. For Claudel the duty of every true christian is to find God and consequently to find self-awareness. As we look at the travellers in the plays we have discussed, it is apparent that their preoccupation, whether directly or indirectly, manifests itself in the quest for God and salvation of the self. For some characters such as Christophe Colomb and Anne Vercors their purpose in life is evident as they search for christian values. Other characters, however, like Dona Prouhèze, Ysé, Sygne de Coûfontaine, Simon Agnel, it is not always explicit what each must do. Despite the means, the end is always the same. All of Claudel's characters conclude their journeys inside the spiritual world.

The traveller situated in the Claudelian universe finds that, for the most part, the journey to God resembles an obstacle course. Before the destination is complete each of the characters must undergo an examination of conscience. The factor that is often used by the playwright to gauge his characters' worth is the sentiment of love. It is a rule rather than an exception that two lovers achieve happiness during their mortal lives. As we look at Rodrigue and

Prouhèze, Ysé and Mesa, and at Violaine and Pierre de Craon, we find that separation and frustration are scheduled in the course of events when one would expect to find the opposite. To accompany what would appear to be a tragic and fatalistic view upon life, Claudel adds the reality of death. As we have discussed, however, the Claudelian concept of death is an act of liberation and beginning of a superior stage of being; it is not terminal.

As a result of the theme of voyage, the drama of Paul Claudel is fundamentally one of discovery. To limit one's self-knowledge to this world would indicate a resignation to the powers existing beyond when, in fact, every christian should explore the unknown mysteries that surround him in order to appreciate, at least to some extent, the ways in which the cosmic order is fashioned. As we have seen, God is not a force that functions outside of his creation, as it were, leaving mankind's survival completely in man's own hands, independent of the divine scheme of things. Plays such as Le Soulier de satin, and Christophe Colomb, reflect the omnipresence of the religious order as the symbol of the constellation of Orion provides the guiding light to the travellers crossing the great seas. The way to self-discovery is, therefore, not without benign direction from God himself. God's intellect and will are exposed before us all, yet they are of a nature that must be sought after and found:

Saint Jacques - Quand la terre ne sert
 qu'à vous séparer, c'est au ciel
 que vous retrouverez vos racines... Vous
 me retrouverez comme un point
 de repère. En moi
 vous deux mouvements s'unissent au mien
 qui est éternel.

.....
 Levez vers moi les yeux, mes enfants
 vers moi, le
 Grand Apôtre du Firmament, qui existe
 dans cet état
 de transport. (Claudel, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 926)

As a stylistic device the theme of voyage integrates plot, character, and setting within the texture of the drama. Although Claudel's plays are set in all parts of the world where his characters are forever appearing and disappearing, there exists, nevertheless, a line of development in relation to the character and his particular circumstances. To connect incident to incident, experience to experience Claudel uses the spatial nature of the voyage image as he unfolds his drama in a style that is often characterized by features of the baroque; Le gouliver de satin is once again such a play where the symbol of the voyage links up, in a chain-like fashion, the scattered bits and pieces of fiction.

From a thematic viewpoint of the overall structure of his plays, Claudel draws upon the theme of voyage and its peculiarities to present the playgoer with a theatre rich in symbolism and spiritually metaphorical in nature. It should be noted, perhaps, that Claudel's plays are first and foremost, theatrical in their composition. Although

they would appear to defy the conventions of the theatre, it is only through the nature of voyage that they remain in a position for presentation upon the stage. By its very nature the voyage image allows for a continuum of setting and dramatic action as each of the characters appears in parts of Claudel's poetic universe throughout the duration of his plays. Through the fantasy of the theatre the image the voyage symbolically transcends the peremptory limitations of the stage, while at the same time, however, availing itself to the artistic tastes of the spectator. For Claudel the symbols of this world and the next are achieved on stage with no real difficulty; the problem arises, however, as each of us journeys to God and as we try to overcome the obstacles along the way. Claudel's travellers, the symbol for all of humanity, must never abandon the sinking ship:

Le Père Jésuite - Mais, Seigneur, il
 n'est pas si facile de vous échapper,
 et s'il ne va pas à vous parce qu'il a
 de clair, qu'il y aille
 par ce qu'il a d'obscur; et par ce qu'il
 a de direct, qu'il y
 aille par ce qu'il a d'indirect. (Claudel,
 Oeuvres Complètes,
 I, 860)

The theme of voyage for Claudel is, without a doubt, an important stylistic device since it equips him with a particular framework out of which he is able to create a working relationship of dramatic and spiritual principles. During the period when Claudel corresponded with theatre managers and producers it was evident that the playwright

sought after professionals whose creative qualities could present the Claudelian drama with sensitivity and intelligence, all the while adhering to the dramatist's artistic demands. Jean-Louis Barrault's talent and skill often met Claudel's requirements and consequently was responsible for the success of many of the dramatist's plays. Barrault never overlooked the many possible viewpoints of Claudel's drama.

As we have seen the theme of voyage is operative on two specific levels: spiritual and dramatic. The theatre of Claudel is consequently a schedule of events already arranged, still, however, for his characters to experience.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. M. I. Kraemer, "Le rôle du voyage chez Paul Claudel"
(Ph.D. dissertation, Middlebury College, 1969),
pp. 193-194.

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