ART AND REVOLUTION AGAINST DESTINY:

AN EXAMINATION OF THE WORKS OF ANDRE MALRAUX, 1920-1943

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE WORKS OF ANDRE MALRAUX, 1920-1943

by

ROBERT SAMUEL THORNBERRY, B. A. (Queen's University, Belfast)

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MASTER OF ARTS (1968) HOMASTER UNIVERSITY (Romance Languages) Hamilton, Ontario Art and Revolution Against Destiny: An Examination TITLE: of the Works of Andre Malraux, 1920-1943. Robert Samuel Thornberry, B. A. (Queen's University, AUTHOR: Belfast). SUPERVISOR: Professor E. W. Knight. NUMBER OF PAGES: vii, 133. SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The aim of this thesis is to suggest that beneath the apparent diversity of Andre Malraux's writings lies a definite unity: that revolutionary activity and artistic creation are two of man's many attempts to triumph over Destiny.

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R. S. T.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

٩

FOREWORD . vi

PART I

PEFORE THE NOVELS

CHAPTER 1		THE EARLY WRITINGS	2
CHAPTER II	-	LA TENTATION DE L'OCCIDENT	21
CHAPTER III	-	THE NRF REVIEWS	29

PART II

THE GREAT NOVELS

CHAPTER	IV	•••	LA VOIE ROYALE	40
CHAPTER	v		LES CONQUERANTS	48
CHAPTER	VI	5 2	LA CONDITION HUMAINE	61
CHAP TE R	VII	-	L'ESPOIR	76

PART III

ART AND ETERNITY

CHAPTER VIII		ART IN THE NOVELS	91
CHAPTER IX	-	ART IS A CONQUEST	100
CHAPTER X	-	LES NOYERS DE L'ALTENBURG	112
CONCLUSION			126
BIBLIOGRAPHY			128

... on pourrait dire que l'anarchie pure s'exprime par M. Malraux.

André Rousseaux, "Un quart d'heure avec André Malraux", <u>Candide</u>, 13 novembre 1930, p. 3.

There abides, in Malraux, a respect for Catholicism, wherever it is found in the world.

Edward Gannon, <u>The Honour of</u> <u>being a Man</u>. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1957, p. 88.

Mais Malraux n'est pas un ambitieux vulgaire. Il est, en un sens, le seul authentique fasciste français.

> Albert Béguin, "Point de vue sur Malraux", <u>Esprit</u>, octobre 1948, p. 451.

Malraux n'est pas d'abord un écrivain, mais un artiste et un homme d'action doués d'un écrivain.

> Emmanuel Mounier, "Malraux, ou l'impossible déchéance", <u>Esprit</u>, octobre 1948, p. 469.

Malraux is as religious as a Hindu or Christian monk, but one who refuses God.

André Blanchet, <u>La Littérature</u> <u>et le spirituel</u>. Paris: Aubier, 1959, p. 193.

De tous les romanciers français contemporains, il se peut que Malraux soit le seul témoin de la vérité historique profonde de notre époque; le seul qui soit à sa hauteur et aille dans son sens.

Gaëtan Picon, "Malraux, écrivain révolutionnaire", <u>Confluences</u>, no. 36, novembre 1944, p. 190.

Je ne peux pas supposer une seconde qu'André Malraux et Thierry Maulnier aient voulu servir la propagande communiste. A mes yeux, c'est pourtant très exactement ce qu'ils ont fait.

Gabriel Marcel, "La Condition humaine", Recherches et Débats, no. 11, mai 1935, p. 84.

v

FOREWORD

Fascist, Communist, anarchist, respecter of Catholicism, artist, man of action -- the preceding quotations bear witness to the incredible confusion generated by the many activities of André Malraux. One could easily add other labels: existentialist, individualist, adventurer, art historian, spiritual leader of the inter-war generation, and so on.

Some of these descriptions are easily discredited, others are partially true, few are undeniably so. The purpose of this thesis will be to deal with two aspects only of Malraux's long career: his controversial relations with Communism during the inter-war period and his long-standing fascination with art.

The first section will attempt to make clear both the persistence of Malraux's interest in art and his profound knowledge of all its many forms from the time of his early manhood onward. In the second section, I will examine and evaluate the role played by Communism in the great novels. Due to the absence of precise biographical material and the silence which Malraux has kept over the more controversial aspects of his career, I propose to refer to Communism and Marxism as discussed in the novels only. In the third and final section, I shall continue to trace the evolution of Malraux's views on art up to and including his last novel, <u>Les Novers de l'Altenburg</u>, which was published in 1943.

Although Malraux never wrote a major work on art before 1947, when the first part of <u>La Psychologie de l'art</u> appeared, he developed

vi

many of his principal ideas and concepts in scattered reviews, prefaces and short articles published throughout the twenties and thirties. It is these minor writings that I wish to concentrate on in the first and third sections. No reference will be made to any book or article published after Les Noyers de 1 Altenburg in 1943.

PART I

BEFORE THE NOVELS

...our conversations had centered around art and history and sometimes metaphysics. My companion took scarcely any interest in men, those ordinary, everyday, transient beings that struggled as best they could to keep themselves going.

> Clara Malraux, <u>Memoirs</u> (translated from the French by Patrick O'Brian). New Y_ork: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967, p. 295.

I knew what a refuge art was to him, and what writing and painting meant to him as a means of grasping the world.

Ibid., p. 193.

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY WRITINGS

Archaeology was my first study; it formed me. Art was my most constant preoccupation, then literature. It is my own obsession with other civilizations that has given my own civilization and probably my own life their special accent. 1

Lunes en papier

Armand Hoog² remembers how a considerable number of critics and readers alike were amazed that André Malraux, a universally-acknowledged novelist and Goncourt Prize winner, should "turn" his talents to the world of art. And yet Malraux himself, on being asked how long he had spent on his art books, has replied concisely: "All my life."³ One of his closest friends, Pascal Pia, also testifies to his fascination with art. "dès l'âge le plus tendre".⁴

The purpose of these introductory chapters will be to indicate to what extent the young Malraux was involved in matters of art and, in addition, to reveal his very extensive knowledge of the subject.

¹Janet Flanner, "The Human Condition, Part 1", <u>The New Yorker</u>, November 6, 1954, p. 66.

²Armand Hoog, "Malraux, Möllberg and Frobenius", <u>Yale French</u> Studies, No. 18, 1957, p. 89.

³Janet Flanner, "The Human Condition, Part 2", <u>The New Yorker</u>, November 13, 1954, p. 85.

⁴Pascal Pia, "L'Etat n'est pas fait pour diriger 1'art mais pour le servir", Carrefour, no. 393, 26 mars 1952, p. 5.

It is astonishing to learn that Malraux is almost completely self-taught. Although he occasionally followed courses at the Louvre and at the celebrated Musée Guimet of Oriental Art, he never enrolled at any of the various art colleges in Paris. He would spend all his time in museums where he not only studied his favourite subject, but was also introduced to connoisseurs of art and rare-book dealers.

Before he was twenty, Malraux was employed by the distinguished art connoisseur René-Louis Doyon, also founder and editor of <u>La Connaissance</u>, a literary review to which Malraux later contributed. With great enthusiasm, and equally great success, he acted as <u>chineur</u> for Doyon. A <u>chineur</u> was usually a young man of considerable intelligence whose wide knowledge of rare books and special editions enabled him to earn a living by selling his discoveries to art dealers. His hunting ground was the left bank of the river Seine, where his task was facilitated by numerous second-hand book stalls.

It was quite a lucrative occupation after the First World War, since many wealthy people were prepared to purchase rare books and paintings as a means of protection against the decreasing value of paper money. Doyon was so pleased with Malraux's success that he promoted him to editor of La Connaissance.

However, for unidentified reasons, Malraux left Doyon in 1920 and was employed as literary director for the publisher Simon Kra, who was also an art dealer and bibliophile. At the age of nineteen, he prepared for publication two volumes of <u>inédits</u>⁵ by the poet Jules Laforgue, and

⁵<u>Inédits</u> are articles, poems, essays, etc. which have not been published in book form, but which may have been published in reviews.

he made a valuable contribution to Kra's expensive <u>Editions du Sagitteire</u>. These were elaborately-bound and ornate volumes that were printed in small numbers and bore the warning: "Ces éditions ne seront jamais réimprimées." This immediately made them attractive to wealthy bibliophiles. Each Sagittaire edition bore on the title page: "Ce livre a été établi par Andre Malraux", and they won lavish praise from several of Paris' most distinguished connoisseurs.⁶

After his rupture with Kra, Malraux began to write and to contribute reviews and articles to various literary journals. A brief glance at the contents of several of these articles will be sufficient to show that the young writer was very much preoccupied with matters of style, and that form was more important than content. His "Des Origines de la poésie cubiste"⁷ constitutes a hommage to art, which Malraux then saw as a means of combatting an absurd and meaningless world. It is interesting to note that, several decades later, Malraux was to revert to and enlarge upon his youthful concepts of art in <u>Les Noyers de l'Altenburg</u> (published in 1943) and <u>Les Voix du silence</u> (published in 1951). In another brief review he singles out Laurent de Tailhade as the first poet since Mallarmé to show "combien de beauté peut s'inclure en le seul style".⁸

Malraux's first work of fiction was <u>Lunes en papier</u>, and the rather lengthy sub-title is indicative of both tone and content.⁹ If we

⁶See "The Debut of André Malraux, Editor", by Walter Langlois, PMLA, LXXX, No. 1 (March, 1965), pp. 111-122.

La Connaissance, no. 1, janvier 1920, pp. 38-43.

⁸"Trois livres de Tailhade", <u>La Connaissance</u>, no. 2, février 1920, p. 196.

⁹Petit livre où l'on trouve la relation de quelques luttes peu <u>connues des hommes ainsi que celle d'un voyage parmi les objets familiers</u> mais étranges.

ignore the warning given by Malraux himself -- "Il n'y a aucun symbole dans ce livre" -- and accept Goldmann's interpretation of the work as representing the struggle of non-conformist writers against bourgeois society, ¹⁰ then it is possible to see in <u>Lunes en papier</u> one of the author's first onslaughts on middle class values. But Malraux's warning, inserted at the beginning of the book, seems to suggest that both form and style are of most importance, and it is in this light that I shall examine it.

Lunes en parier describes, in a very poetical manner, a world that is indeed so boring that Death herself wishes to die. Malraux, acutely aware of the disintegration of Western values, seems to find compensation for the vanity and emptiness of the present world by creating one of his own. Lunes en parier is a defiance of all that is logical and rational. Any attempt by the intellect to impose meaning on these thirty or so pages must of necessity end in failure. It seems to me that if the work has any interest, it is not because of its style or any symbolic interpretation that may be read into it, but because it is a defiance of logical, rational thinking and a challenge to the subjectivism of the psychological novel. In this respect, Malraux is very much in harmony with his age; the Surrealists and Dadaists were attempting something similar. Lunes en papier is of interest to us because it indicates Malraux's dissatisfaction with existing literary genres and his rather naïve efforts at constructing something new.

However, despite its poetry and its fantasy, <u>Lunes en papier</u> is a dry, cerebral composition. The abundant visual images provide little

¹⁰Lucien Goldmann, <u>Pour une Sociologie du roman</u> (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 72.

compensation for the forced connections between unrelated objects. The first section opens in the following manner:

Ainsi qu'une annonce lumineuse, la lune jaune se colora successivement en rouge, en bleu et en vert; puis, ding! elle fut jaune à nouveau. Une note aigüe en tomba, comme une petite grenouille, et sur le lac, les perspectives nacrées des jeux d'eau divinrent infinies. 11

The rest of the book continues in this vein, with heavy emphasis on poetic description and what Vandegans calls <u>équivalence sensorielle</u>. Although Death predominates and although God, who is described as "sympathique, oui, mais un peu vulgaire"¹² has been replaced by Satan, all this is mocked and ridiculed. Meaning is subordinated to the fantastic.

This is another argument that runs counter to the Goldmann thesis. The latter, as we have just seen, interprets <u>Lunes en papier</u> as representing the struggle between non-conformist writers and the bourgeoisie, but serious issues like this are passed over very briefly or treated in a very flippant manner.

In a review that he wrote for <u>La Nouvelle Revue Francaise</u>, Malraux makes the following comments on the task of the writer of fantastic literature: "Le talent d'un écrivain fantastique consiste presque toujours à affirmer sans s'apercevoir que le monde communément accepté n'est que mensonge, non parce qu'il est vrai, mais parce qu'il est

¹¹André Malraux, <u>Lunes en papier</u> (Geneva: Albert Skira, 1945), p. 159.

12<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 168.

fixe."¹³ He goes on to add that the fantastic nearly always roveals a strong belief in what is possible. As Malraux has done in <u>Lunes en</u> <u>papier</u>, the author refuses to recognize the connections that already exist between objects and instead substitutes some of his own. In a way, he tries to deify himself by creating a new and independent world in the perfection of the work of art. In <u>La Condition humaine</u>, Malraux reverted to this idea when he had Gisors say, "tout homme rêve d'être dieu".¹⁴

I have avoided giving a summary of <u>Lunes en papier</u> because the fantastic events that it records do not admit of a summary and also because the content is of little importance in comparison with the style of presentation. The influence of Cubism¹⁵ is apparent, implicitly in the obsessive preoccupation with objects and explicitly in the many overt references to the geometrical forms that the Cubists used. The equation of nature and geometry is manifest in the following short quotations: "à l'ombre d'arbres coniques"; "leurs basses branches ... disposaient leurs feuilles suivant des formes géométriques: sphères, cubes, prismes ...";¹⁶ "les tiges s'aggloméraient pour former un parallélipipède aussi grand qu'une tour".¹⁷

¹³Review of <u>Pont-Egaré</u>, by Pierre Véry, <u>NRF</u>, décembre 1929, pp. 838-839.

¹⁴André Malraux, <u>La Condition humaine</u> (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), p. 186.

15 Essentially concerned with painting, Cubism was the realization of Cézanne's conception of painting as "construction after nature". Nature was treated in terms of geometrical forms: the cylinder, the cone and the sphere.

¹⁶<u>Lunes en papier</u>, p. 165.
¹⁷<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 169.

Perhaps enough has now been said to indicate that, despite several allusions to the absurd and to the dissapearance of values in the West, Lunes en papier is a work of fantasy, "engagé dans une stricte forme".¹⁸

In 1922, Malraux wrote two short revies for La Nouvelle Revue Française and his choice of material is not without significance. One is a romantic extravaganza and the second, more important, is Art poétique, by his friend Max Jacob.

In an earlier work, Le Cornet à des, which greatly influenced the style of Lunes en papier, Jacob had written that style and art are all important. He greatly admired the aesthetic approach to writing, the beauty of well-constructed works of art and he showed considerable sympathy for Cubism. Malraux, who, as has already been shown, sympathized with Cubism, praises one section of Jacob's book because, "les notes sur l'Art moderne constituent la meilleure justification du mouvement littéraire dit cubisme que l'on ait écrite jusqu'ici". 19 Both authors underlined the importance of originality.

However, despite his preoccupation with style (at least in the period preceding Les Conquérants), Malraux never at any time favoured the many extreme avant-garde art movements that invaded Paris in the twenties, Dadaism was too preoccupied with nihilistic individualism; Symbolism was too subjective; and Surrealism was over-concerned with dreams, insanity and manifestations of the subconscious. Even in his early youth, Malraux disliked exaggerated forms of individualism, especially the individualism

¹⁸André Vandegans, <u>La Jeunesse littéraire d'André Malraux</u> (Paris: Pauvert, 1964), p. 422. 19 Review of Art poétique, by Max Jacob, NRF, août 1922, pp. 227-228.

born of sentiment -- Gide and Flaubert -- as opposed to that born of action. In his preface to Charles Maurras' <u>Mademoiselle Monk</u>,²⁰ he refers to the necessity of active disciplined individualism. What he chiefly admired was Maurras' attempt to submit the individual to some form of collectivity. Malraux's greatest novels show men engaged in action with other men in a collective effort to combat the forces that threaten to submerge them. One would think that politics would be the obvious answer, but, as both Vandegans and Langlois have shown conclusively,²¹ Malraux had little or no interest in politics before his journey to Indochina. He seems to have been groping towards something that transcends political realities. The years that preceded his voyage to South-East Asia were devoted to his art studies, extensive travelling, editing, reviewing and composing works of fantasy.

However, one comment is indicative of what was to come. In "Aspects d'André Gide" (where he also stated that the artist must submit himself to some form of discipline chosen by himself), Malraux spoke of an urgent need to study foreign cultures, since: "Nous nous découvrons à travers les littératures de l'Est."²²

This is undoubtedly one of the reasons that prompted Malraux to undertake the long voyage to Indochina, which it is now necessary to discuss in relation to his studies of art and his introduction to Communism.

²⁰Preface to <u>Mademoiselle Monk</u>, by Charles Maurras (Paris: Stock, 1923), p. 8.

²¹Vandegans, <u>op. cit.</u>; Walter Langlois, <u>André Malraux: The</u> Indochina Adventure (New York: Praeger, 1966).

²²"Aspects d'André Gide", <u>Action</u>, avril-mai 1922, p. 20.

Indochina

It is rather difficult to determine exactly what prompted Malraux to make the arduous journey to the Orient in 1923. Given his fervent interest in archaeology and his specialized knowledge of the Eastern arts, it is safe to assume that Malraux went to Indochina in order to see and examine what he had read about in Paris. Although financial motives cannot be written off entirely,²³ Langlois has shown conclusively that the charges of profiteering levelled against Malraux by both French and American newspapers were unjustified.²⁴ In addition, his antipathy for the absurd, meaningless world of the bourgeoisie, with its introspection, its cult of individualism and its materialism, would have prompted him to study first hand a civilization where the concept of personality did not exist.²⁵

If some of the details of the Banteay Srei affair are obscure, the outlines of the story are quite well known. Malraux discovered, deep in the jungles of Cambodia, a ruined Khmer temple containing valuable bas-reliefs and statues. On his return from the scene of the expedition, he was arrested and tried for theft by the French colonialist administration of Indochina.

The importance of the trial is that it gave Malraux first-hand

²³Both Claude and Perken, the protagonists in <u>La Voie royale</u>, which is a novelized account of Malraux's jungle discoveries, are brought together by financial motives, among others.

²⁴Langlois, <u>André Malraux: The Indochina Adventure</u>, chs. 1 and 2.
 ²⁵André Malraux, <u>La Tentation de l'Occident</u> (Geneva: Albert Skira, 1945), p. 92.

information on the corruptions of French colonialism. This had two important repercussions. The first is that he became involved in politics for the first time, and the second that he came into very close contact with Communist propagandists.

The indifference that Malraux seems to have shown for politics in Paris is replaced by a vehement involvement in the political struggle between colonizers and colonized in Indochina. His sympathies lay entirely with the repressed native populace, and the daily paper that he put out in face of incredible difficulties is more of a plea for native rights than a justification of his own actions during the Banteay Srei episode.²⁶

As Malraux discovered from his own personal experiences, a fair trial was impossible in a country where all forms of bureaucracy, the police and the magistrates were controlled, dominated and intimidated by a corrupt and unscrupulous Governor and his equally corrupt cabinet of ruthless businessmen and profiteers. The latter had calmly appropriated public funds for their own benefits and had suppressed both freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Before Malraux's gallant defiance of these laws, there had been no organized attempt by the suppressed native populace to regain its rights. Bribery, all forms of corruption, blackmail and even "legalized murders" were rampant. The Indochinese were treated as slaves and branded as second-rate beings innately inferior to the self-seeking Europeans. (Genêt has brilliantly caught this attitude

²⁶The titles of Malraux's editorials are revealing in themselves: "Sur le rôle de l'administration" "Liberté de la presse" "Sur quelles réalités appuyer un effort annamite?" "Considérations sur la domination française de l'Indochine" "Ce que nous pouvons faire".

in <u>Les Paravents</u>, so much so that one would almost think that he had conferred with Malraux or read <u>Indochine</u> before creating the ludicrous but still existent Sir Harold.)²⁷ There were two sets of laws: one, leniently applied, was for the administrators; and the second, more rigorously applied, was for the Indochinese. Huge loans were distributed at low rates to the French, while local farmers were obliged to go to Chinese usurers for help.

These are some of the many forms of corruption that Malraux fought against tooth and nail. He even returned to Paris to seek financial support and helped to organize the Young Annam movement which was nationalistic in character. The newspaper <u>Indochine</u> and its successor <u>Indochine Enchainée</u>²⁸ (renamed after Malraux had been forced out of print) contained a biting and well-documented indictment of supercilious moralizers who pretended to be the guiding lights of an illiterate populace. Although both papers are replete with personal attacks on individuals, Malraux's editorials are by no means negative in scope. He repeatedly laid down outlines for reforms and did everything possible to solicit the assistance of Annamite intellectuals. He supported a national rehabilitation movement and he emphasized the importance of

²⁷Jean Genêt, <u>Les Paravents</u> (Décines (Isère): Arbalète de M. Barbezat, 1961). For Sir Harold Arabs are, by definition, inferior to the colonizers: "Si un Français me vole, ce Français est un voleur, mais, si un Arabe me vole, il n'a pas changé: c'est un Arabe qui m'a volé, et rien de plus." (p. 98). Whereas a Frenchman (or European) can lower himself by committing a disreputable act, the Arab can sink no further.

²⁸The first issue of the anti-colonialist newspaper <u>Indochine</u> appeared on June 17, 1925. It appeared regularly every day but Sunday until August 14, when it was suppressed by Governor Cognacq. Over two months later, it reappeared as <u>Indochine Enchaînee</u> until its final disappearance in February, 1926.

Annamite culture. So that the French and other Europeans would become acquainted with the culture of Indochina, Malraux published translations from Annamite books and magazines. It is certain that his experiences in Cambodia led him to see the urgency of a serious dialogue between East and West, a dialogue that he later initiated in <u>La Tentation de l'Occident</u>.

Having outlined the circumstances which involved Malraux in politics, I will now examine the exact nature of his political engagement. Despite the accusations of Bolshevism hurled at him by his enemies. Malraux seems to have remained conservative during his period with Indochine and Indochine Enchainée. He advocated laissez-faire capitalism, private enterprise and the need for a strongly competitive market, and, although he believed in strong workers' unions, he was not then influenced by Marxism. He envisaged the abolition of existing corruptions in the colonial system without advocating its overthrow at the hands of revolutionaries. He never stated that the French or other Europeans should pull out unconditionally and he believed that an enlightened colonialism could make a valuable contribution to the development of the Orient. By recommending such a policy, Malraux is accepting implicitly that the problems of the East are purely material and that Western middle class capitalism, with its emphasis on material well-being, could begin to solve the problems of the East. (La Tentation de l'Occident puts the problem in its proper perspective.) That was Malraux's political credo at the time, but his repeated pleas seem to have gone unheeded by the Colonial Office in Saigon, as in Paris. He was lucid enough to realize that if reform was slow in coming from Europe, the frustrated Annamites would turn to Communism. Thanks to the organization of Borodin, the

Russian director of Propaganda, the Chinese Nationalist Party (the Kuomintang) had a strong Communist wing. Backed by Russian militarism, efficient organization, strong financial support and a rapidly disseminating ideology, Communism would be an obvious recourse for the frustrated Annamites.²⁹ Malraux would have preferred help to come to Saigon via Paris (in the form of enlightened and liberal colonialism). When he realized that this was slow in coming, and that the down-trodden Annamites could not go on waiting indefinitely, he lent vocal support to the Communists. If colonialism failed to live up to its ideals³⁰ -- as it surely did -- then the only force that offered both ideology and organization was Communism. When Malraux saw that the democratic ideal of one man-one vote was illusory in the East, he understood that to toe the middle line was not to toe any at all and decided to combat colonialism with Communism: "Personally, having lived in Indochina, I cannot conceive that a courageous Annamite could be anything other than a revolutionary."³¹

The Hong Kong-Canton strike of 1925, a fleeting visit to the British-occupied port and a possible meeting with Borodin seem to have cemented Malraux's relations with Communism, which we shall examine more carefully in connection with Les Conquérants. The importance of the

²⁹In his review of <u>Défense de l'Occident</u>, by the Catholic apologist Henri Massis, Malraux speaks of the failure of Soviet Communism to unify Asia: "... contre les gouvernements capitalistes d'Europe et d'Amérique ...; mais nous le voyons partout en recul. Angora lui échappe, l'alliance des cinq est brisée et l'opposition de Chang-K'ai Shek aux communistes est certainement la défaite la plus grave qu'elle ait subie." <u>NRF</u>, mai 1927, p. 815.

³⁰Assuming that, beneath the colonialists' craving for wealth and power, there did exist some ideals.

³¹Langlois, <u>André Malraux: The Indochina Adventure</u>, p. 210.

Banteay Srei affair is that it impressed upon Malraux the fact that man is a responsible being who must be <u>engage</u>, that is, he must make an active contribution whenever moral or political issues are at stake.

Royaume farfelu

As we have just seen, the Malraux that returned to Indochina after a fund-raising voyage to Paris was a man deeply committed to freeing Annamite victims from the injustices of colonialism. However, if the transformation brought by the Angkor trial and all its repercussions had been as profound as commonly believed, I would have accorded little importance to the early emphasis on works of fantasy. What is most important and indeed surprising is that in 1928, after his anti-colonialist struggle in Indochine, after his acquaintance with Marxism and the Communist ideology, and at the same time as the appearance of Les Conquérants, Malraux should have consented to the publication of another work of fantasy, Royaume farfelu. If it were not for this extremely important factor, Lunes en papier could be dismissed as a mere adolescent trifle. But if the Malraux of 1920 had not matured, there is little doubt that the Malraux of 1928, as Les Conquérants will testify, had matured both as a man and as a writer. There are some critics who argue that the aesthetic approach to Malraux's greatest novels is the most valid one, and that they will survive only as well-constructed works of art. 32 However important this aspect of writing may be, most people are agreed that the

³²Gaëtan Picon, "André Malraux", Esprit, octobre 1948, pp. 452-456. "Mais pourquoi s'inquiéter d'un romancier si vous n'honorez que les messages?" (p. 454).

content of the so-called revolutionary novels by far outweighs the style and skill with which they are presented. It is surely a very significant fact that <u>Les Conquérants</u>, with its revolutionary content and its Marxism and <u>Royaume farfelu</u>, which, as Vandegans has shown, "a pour essentielle fin artistique 1a suggestion d'une ambiance", ³³ should have appeared in the same year. In 1928, Malraux the fantasist and Malraux the revolutionary novelist worked in harmony.

We have already mentioned, with reference to <u>Lunes en papier</u>, Malraux's definition of the fantastic as being "une adhésion rigoureuse au possible", ³⁴ and its connection with the sacred. In 1927, in his essay "D'une jeunesse européenne", he made a more explicit comment on what he calls <u>le possible</u>:

> Le possible, domaine ancien du fantastique et de la folie, avec son peuple de songes, s'élève tout à coup à une bizarre royauté. Il règne seul sur les arts plastiques de l'Europe orientale, et presque seul sur la poésie de l'Occident tout entier. 35

Malraux goes on to say that works of fantasy are very common in the late twenties. His next remark expresses an idea that was later to be very valuable to him: "Si ces oeuvres sont éphémères le mouvement qui nous attache à elles est constant."³⁶ General interest in <u>le possible</u> may be

³³Vandegans, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 404. Cf. 418. Of all Malraux's works, <u>Royaume farfelu</u> is "celle où la poésie s'épanche le plus largement et le plus librement".

³⁴Véry, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 839 (see footnote 13).

³⁵"D'une jeunesse européenne", <u>Ecrits</u> (Paris: Grasset, 1927), p. 150.

³⁶<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 151.

short-lived, but, according to Malraux, every work of art expresses man's longing for eternity.³⁷

At the beginning of the Skira edition of <u>Royaume farfelu</u>, Malraux has inserted the following remark:

Cette histoire, dont une partie a été écrite en 1920 et une autre publiée sous une forme un peu différente par <u>Commerce</u> en 1927 à été imprimée pour la première fois sur les presses de l'imprimerie Darantière en november 1928. 38

<u>Royaume farfelu</u> is a piece of writing begun at the same time as <u>Lunes en papier</u> and completed on Malraux's return from Indochina. One is tempted to write <u>Royaume farfelu</u> off. and say that Malraux merely wanted to finish a work begun several years earlier. However, the fact that he did consent to complete it and to publish it at a time when he was modifying his concept of literature is of great significance. In 1927, the story was published as "Le voyage aux fles fortunées"³⁹ and in the same year he agreed to publish "Ecrits pour un ours en peluche",⁴⁰ another piece of writing where fantasy reigns freely.

Royaume farfelu is slightly different from the other works of pure imagination in that it has a story. The first part relates the travels of the narrator in the Middle East: his visit to a bazaar, his

 37 The idea of man struggling against Destiny will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters.

³⁸André Malraux, <u>Royaume farfelu</u> (Geneva: Albert Skira, 1945), p. 130.

³⁹Commerce: Cahier 12, été 1927, pp. 95-131.

⁴⁰900 (Neuf Cents: Cahiers d'Italie et d'Europe), no. 4, été 1927, pp. 114-124. imprisonment and his subsequent appearance before an Eastern prince. Appointed court historiographer by the latter, he accompanies an army that sets off to capture Ispahan in Persia. The second half of the story is an account of how that army, without ever meeting the enemy, is woefully routed and annihilated by lizards and scorpions. But it is not only the scorpions that are responsible for the defeat, but also the soldiers' laziness and utter imcompetence.

Goldmann has interpreted this <u>histoire</u> as an allegory of the collapse of universal values and as an example of man's romantic aspiration to a new but unknown set of values.⁴¹ Allusions to the disappearance of Western values are usually metaphorical: "les papes et les antipapes dorés se poursuivent dans les égouts déserts de Rome"; "cette heure n'est plus la vôtre";⁴² "La princesse, entourée de chatons blancs, se faisait apporter tous les dieux des peuples vaincus ... et les enchaînait un à un";⁴³ "les ours en peluche importés d'Europe ... ont pris la place des lares";⁴⁴ "les dieux abrutis cèdent la terre aux génies sauvages de la poésie".⁴⁵

On the other hand, <u>Royaume farfelu</u> seems at least equally concerned with exploring <u>le possible</u>, with the creation of an autonomous

⁴¹Goldmann, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 65.
⁴²<u>Royaume farfelu</u>, p. 131.
⁴³<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 136.
⁴⁴<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 147.
⁴⁵<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 142.

world in which poetic fantasy reigns freely. Vandegans has shown that between 1926 and 1928, during a post-war financial crisis, there was a vogue for works of escapism and exoticism. In many respects, <u>Royaume</u> <u>farfelu</u> may be classified as an exotic tale. It is set in the Middle East and is a mixture of disguised historical truth and fantasy. The inhuman, in the form of repulsive reptiles and insects, plays a large part and full vent is given to the imaginary and the picturesque. The stylized descriptions, as in <u>Lunes en papier</u>, are largely visual in their appeal and many passages evoke, in a fantastic manner, the colours of the Orient:

Poussé, serré, je passai devant des éventaires chargés d'oeufs orangés, de chaux rose et de feuilles, de canards tatoués, de rats tapés, transparents comme du jade gris, réunis en bouquets par leurs queues d'écailles oblongues, de petits chevaux de papier, d'images de sucreries aux couleurs tendres et de fleurs; de fleurs innombrables: enfilées en guirlandes, jointes, posées, liées, dressées selon toutes les formes ou éparses 46

Despite occasional philosophical overtones, the poetic element predominates in this piece of writing. Vandegans¹ interpretation of the story as being "la suggestion d'une ambiance"⁴⁷ seems more acceptable than Goldmann's.

Royaume farfelu is Malraux's farewell to the purely poetical and the fantastic. From 1929 on his political and ideological commitment

46 Royaume farfelu, p. 132.

⁴⁷Vandegans, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 404. However, if Vandegans is "right" in specifying Malraux's intention in writing <u>Royaume farfelu</u>, I think that Goldmann is equally "right" since he is getting at something feasible since 1920; "la suggestion d'une ambiance" could belong to any period.

to the struggles of a divided Europe prevail over aesthetics. 48

⁴⁸The following quotation has been included because in both form and content it is remarkably representative of the young Malraux. No comment is necessary in the light of the conclusions reached in Parts 1 and 3 of this chapter:

Je me souviens qu'un soir de 1920, un de ces soirs où les démons sauvages de la poésie habitaient encore le vieux Montmartre provincial et où une ivresse légère et volontaire libérait chez quelques hommes qui semblent vouloir l'oublier aujourd'hui un monde d'histoires incomparables, le hasard du désoeuvrement nous conduisit -- dix peut-être -- chez un peintre qui habitait en face du Sacré-Coeur une immense bâtisse de planches, aujourd'hui disparue, qui s'appelait le Panorama parce qu'un Christ décoloré y souffrait la passion au centre de 200 mètres de toile. Le propriétaire était mort, ou avait oublié l'existence de la maison; des peintres logeaient là. Ils peignaient au son d'un harmonium que tourmen. tait, à partir de six heures, un vieillard d'aspect noble mais peu humain, qui jouait Wagner en discutant, avec quelque brocanteur convié. des lieux où le véritable Napoléon avait achevé sa vie, tandis que le faux mourait à Sainte-Hélène, Il était onze heures du soir, le froid piquait. Nous causions depuis une demi-heure dans la chambre de notre ami lorsque nous crûmes entendre des sons inquiétants,

Et nous voilà sortis en longue file, l'un derrière l'autre, le peintre élevant au-dessus de sa tête sa lampe-pigeon comme une auréole et chacun marchant avec lenteur et soin, vaguement inquiet, pour ne pas tomber (l'escalier était une échelle). Des hommes étaient couchés en bas, qui se levèrent quand nous les interpellâmes, répondirent à notre question par des cris. Tout s'expliqua enfin: c'étaient des aveugles de la Butte qui s'étaient réfugiés là. Je revois la forme de ces hommes appuyés les uns contre les autres, nos silhouettes sortant à peine de l'ombre, et dans la lumière, le peintre, stupéfait, les cheveux en broussaille, tenant à la main un fleuret dont il s'était armé à tout hasard et qui accrochait une ligne droite et mince de lumière jaune.

Nous partimes, poursuivis par cette image de Breughel, à la fois poignante et burlesque, et Galanis nous conduisit chez lui. Là, dans cette piece où Léon Bloy avait lutté contre sa longue misère, où rôdaient encore des échos de la tragédie d'Utrillo, où semblaient s'être établie depuis des années et des années cette fantaisie tragique dont André Salmon a fait une poésie, dans cette pièce où l'ombre déformée de nos mains évoquait les gestes et tout à l'heure, Galanis ouvrit le petit harmonium qu'il a construit et décoré lui-même, s'assit et joua. Tous nous dressâmes l'oreille; c'était du Bach. (Quoted from Vandegans, <u>op. cit.</u>, pp. 47-48; originally published in "A propos des illustrations", Arts et métiers graphiques, avril 1928, pp. 230-231).

CHAPTER II

LA TENTATION DE L'OCCIDENT

Toujours l'esprit de l'Occident s'efforça de donner aux choses auxquelles il attribuait de la valeur un caractère durable. Il y a en lui une tentative de conquérir le temps, d'en faire le prisonnier des formes. 49

Although <u>La Tentation de lºOccident</u> is far from being a work of philosophy, it poses many problems of a philosophical nature. Since virtually all the themes of the revolutionary novels are to be found here -- some are merely hinted at, others are discussed quite extensively -- it is somewhat unusual that most critics should have glossed over it in a most casual manner. Even Goldmann dismisses it in a few pages.⁵⁰

If the contents of both <u>Lunes en papier</u> and <u>Royaume farfelu</u> are not to be taken too seriously, <u>La Tentation de l'Occident</u> (which was published in 1926, two years before the completion and publication of <u>Royaume farfelu</u>) cannot be dismissed so easily. Written between 1921 and 1925, it is an exchange of letters between a Frenchman resident in China and a Chinaman travelling through Mediterranean Europe.

Although the civilization of China is discussed, the book, for the most part, constitutes an indictment of Western culture, "culture uniquement livresque".⁵¹ God is dead, but so too is man, now a prey to

49 La Tentation de l'Occident, p. 85.

⁵⁰Goldmann, <u>op. cit.</u>, pp. 77-82. At least two of the five pages are quotations only.

⁵¹ La Tentation de l'Occident, Indication, p. 18.

the absurd. There is no <u>mythe cohérent</u>, ⁵² no sense of purpose to inspire man. Individualism, interiority and psychology are all rejected by Malraux. In Europe, civilization and geometry are equated and confused. Ling writes from Paris that: "La peine semble lutter seule à seule, avec chacun de vous; que de souffrances particulières!"⁵³ Europeans are weary of themselves and "ce qui les soutient est moins une pensée qu'une fine structure de négations".⁵⁴ An excellent introduction to the novels, a microcosm of Malraux's universe, <u>La Tentation de l'Occident</u> is very relevant to this thesis because of its sub-theme, art. The comments on art provide a transitional step between the aesthetic considerations that dominate the early works and a new, dynamic concept of art that will receive more elaborate expression in the preface to the French translation of Faulkner's <u>Sanctuary</u>.⁵⁵

Before analysing <u>La Tentation de l'Occident</u>, it is important to point out that the book, despite the problems that it poses, is at times very lyrical and poetical in tone. The haunting, mysterious presence of timeless Asia is evoked in terms that are reminiscent of Royaume farfelu.

For Ling, the Chinese traveller, the Western mind is obsessed with geometry and form, with the need to impose order and harmony upon everything: towns and cities, gardens and nature, and art too. Even the

 52 A Nietzschean term that is used throughout the book to denote an ethos or collectivity to which man can submit himself.

⁵³La Tentation de l'Occident, p. 29.

⁵⁴ <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 86.

⁵⁵See following chapter, pp. 35-36.

tormented faces of Christian statuary reveal "une grande souffrance harmonieuse".⁵⁶ Minimizing the importance of creative power, he maintains that art is enhanced by "des éléments d'une pureté parfaite aux modes infiniment variées".⁵⁷ For Ling the creative power that gives rise to the work of art, and which will later be of paramount importance in Malraux's theories, is of little import. For him, as for many Orientals, art is purely aesthetic or decorative and appeals only to the sensitivity of the beholder;

> L'artiste n'est pas celui qui crée; c'est celui qui sent. Quelles que soient les qualités, et la qualité d'une oeuvre d'art, elle est mineure, car elle n'est qu'une proposition de la beauté. Tous les arts sont décoratifs. 58

Although it would be exceedingly dangerous to attribute these views to Malraux, and claim that they constituted his art theories in the early twenties, they do coincide with what we have been saying about the period that precedes the publication of Les Conquérants in 1928.

Ling seeks the soul of the Western world in the remnants and ruins of Rome and Athens. In Rome he notes the "harmonie un peu dure que vous appelez le style",⁵⁹ and remarks that the variety of nature has prevailed over the orderliness of classical antiquity. He is saddened and disappointed by Greece and Rome, by all the statuary, by the museums.

⁵⁶La Tentation de l'Occident, p. 30. Ling criticizes the West for trying to "conquérir le temps, d'en faire le prisonnier des formes" (p. 85).

⁵⁷<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 30. ⁵⁸<u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 30-31. ⁵⁹<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 41.

"Toute l'après-midi j'ai regardé les tableaux du Louvre. A leur maladroite réunion, que je préfère ce que montrent les fenêtres."⁶⁰ It is interesting to compare Ling's attitude with that of Vincent Berger. The latter, on returning to Europe after a long stay in the Middle East, remarks that what he missed most were the "musées inépuisables"⁶¹ of his home country. For Berger as for the Malraux of <u>Les Voix du silence</u>, museums contain all that remains of man the creator engaged in his struggle with destiny. Ling is of a completely different opinion: "Je suis toujours déçu par ces lieux où vous préférez la satisfaction de juger à la joie plus fine de comprendre."⁶² Museums encourage people to draw comparisons, to look for differences, to exercise an intelligence that completely dominates their sensitivity. The beholder should not criticize or draw parallels, but understand and feel.

Ling, and in this case Malraux too, beyond any doubt, sees in one statue an allegory of the Greek or Western mind. He remembers in particular "une tête de jeune homme aux yeux ouverts"⁶³ and is reminded of Oedipus. In contrast to Asian pantheism, by which the individual life is but a meaningless fragment in a harmonious universe, Oedipus personifies the Western tendency to "mesurer toute chose à la durée et à l'intensité

⁶⁰La Tentation de l'Occident, p. 77.

⁶¹André Malraux, <u>Les Noyers de l'Altenburg</u> (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 77.

⁶²La Tentation de l'Occident, p. 77.

⁵³<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 48.

d'<u>une</u> vie".⁶⁴ It is not uncommon for Malraux to illustrate an idea or philosophy with a reference from the world of art. The European's consciousness of being distinct and total, his cult of power and strength all originate with Minerva: "L'Occident nait là avec le dur visage de Minerve, avec ses armes, et aussi les stigmates de la future démence."⁶⁵ The Europeans' cult of power stems from the glorification of force under ancient Rome.

According to Ling, Oriental art has an additional dimension that is alien to the Western consciousness:

> Il y a en nous un sens dont vous ne semblez pas devenir même qu'il puisse exister: celui des vies étrangères, des vies essentiellement différentes des nôtres. Il imprègne notre art populaire et nos arts plastiques. 66

Unfortunately, the European mind is too rational and logical to appreciate that one can attribute to objects "une vie particulière ... étrange aux choses humaines".⁶⁷ We are once again in the realm of the fantastic.

But did not the Symbolists and Cubists attempt something similar? Did they not, like certain passages of <u>Lunes en papier</u>, try to bequeath upon objects a new existence? Yes, they did. However, the essential difference is that the novel literary and artistic experiments of the twenties appealed only to a self-consciously cultured élite and had no meaning for the non-professional, whereas the extra dimension mentioned

⁶⁴La Tentation de l'Occident, p. 48. 65 Ibi<u>d.</u>, p. 49. ⁶⁶Ibid., p. 75. 67<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 76.

by Ling was part of a tradition shared and loved by the peoples of Asia.

Oriental art, like the civilization that produced it, attributes no importance to the individual. It is characterized by "la notion d'espèce" which has nothing in common with the Western concept of <u>espèce</u> as a means of knowing or classifying. Ling defines it in the following terms: "La notion de l'espèce est celle de ce qui relie les formes que prend la vie dans les individus qui lui appartiennent: la nécessité de mouvements particuliers."⁶⁸ For Ling, the suggestiveness of style is the highest attribute of art and "son expression est le symbole de l'espèce vivante comme la ligne est celui de l'espèce morte".⁶⁹

Once again, one particular work of art, in this case a bronze mask, illustrates a fundamental difference between the two civilizations. It is the mouth which is the source of expression in all the primitive sculptures of the West. This mask doesn't have a mouth, just two eyes and a line that is the nose. It doesn't inspire or represent, it simply evokes. Likewise, Oriental painting is little concerned with representation, instead it conveys meaning via the sensibility, and not through the intellect.

One of the most typically Malrauvian passages in <u>La Tentation de</u> <u>l'Occident</u> is the sombre picture of Western man: weary, adrift, obsessed with reason, powerless before the disintegrating values that leave him helpless. In an attempt to counteract this, many people have resorted to art as a form of escapism. In the period following the First World War,

68_{La Tentation de l'Occident, p. 76.} 69_{Ibid}.

there was an abundance of art movements, many of which offered a means of escape from hard reality. "L'Art est alors un prétexte, et le plus délicat: la plus subtile tentation, c'est celle dont nous savons qu'elle est réservée aux meilleurs."⁷⁰ At first sight, it seems that Malraux is condemning the obsession with extreme art forms:

> Oui, celui qui regarde les formes qui se sont succédé en Europe depuis dix ans et ne veut pas <u>s'efforcer</u> de comprendre a l'impression de la folie, d'une folie consciente d'elle-même et satisfaite. 71

However, one important word is underlined, <u>s'efforcer</u>, for if one strives to find a meaning behind these semmingly meaningless activities, one comes across "une force angoissante qui domine l'esprit".⁷² Even if these new art forms, which have to be "<u>apprises</u> comme une langue étrangère",⁷³ appeal only to a select few, it is, nevertheless, the "force angoissante" that gives them value. This same passage hints at some of Malraux's later theories, that art is a manifestation of man's efforts to "renouveler certains aspects du monde".⁷⁴ There is something positive and creative beneath the apparent escapism.

All of Europe is obsessed with the new importance assumed by art:

... c'est le monde qui envahit l'Europe, le monde avec tout son présent et tout son passé, ses offrandes amoncelées de formes vivantes ou mortes et de méditations. Ce grand spectacle trouble qui commence, mon cher ami, c'est une des tentations de l'Occident. 75

70 _{La}	Tentation	de	1ºOccident,	p.	86.
71 _{1b}					
72 _{1b}			¢		2
73 1b	id.				
74 _{1b}	id.				
75 Ib	id., p. 87	¢			

Few critics have mentioned that it is art which is referred to in the title of La Tentation de 1ºOccident.

All possibilities are being exhausted in a virulent attempt to fill the gap left by the disappearance of Christianity. The artist is trying to recreate what Malraux calls the <u>qualité perdue</u>. What does Malraux mean by the world that is invading Europe? That world is the universality of art: "Aurige de Delphes, Koré boudeuse, Christs romans, têtes saïtes, ou khmères, boddhisatvas des Wei et des Tang, primitifs de tous les pays."⁷⁶ Their universal value is that they illustrate "l'effort d'une culture sans cesse attaquée pour se soumettre les forces ennemies et sa vie même, son plus impitoyable adversaire".⁷⁷

Despite the fact that <u>Royaume farfelu</u> and "Ecrits pour un ours en peluche" have yet to be published, Malraux at this juncture is much closer to <u>Les Voix du silence</u> than to <u>Lunes en papier</u>.

76 La Tentation de l'Occident, p. 88.

77<u>Ibid</u>.

CHAPTER III

THE MRF REVIEWS

Je vois dans l'affaiblissement de l'importance accordée aux objets l'élément capital de la transformation de notre art. En peinture, il est clair qu'un tableau de Picasso est de moins en moins "une toile", de plus en plus la masque d'une découverte, le jalon laissé pour le passage d'un génie crispé. 78

Very few of the many recently-published volumes on Malraux deal with a vitally important part of hisliterary output, the twenty or so book reviews written for <u>La Nouvelle Revue Française</u> in the twenties and early thirties. Malraux, as has already been established, began his career as critic in 1920 when he contributed articles to <u>La Connaissance</u>. Two years later he was commissioned by <u>La Nouvelle Revue Française</u>, and in 1927, shortly after his return from Indochina, he resumed his activities as critic for the same periodical.

In this chapter, I shall examine those reviews that follow the publication of <u>La Tentation de l'Occident</u> in 1926 and precede the appearance in 1937 of <u>L'Espoir</u>, where Malraux's preoccupation with art is more manifest than in the novels that are set in the Orient. Passing reference will be made to several articles outside that period, to the essays on Laclos, D. H. Lawrence and Faulkner, and to the brief introduction to his own novel, <u>Le Temps du mépris</u>.

⁷⁸William Faulkner, <u>Sanctuaire</u> (traduit par R. W. Raimbault et Henri Delgrove). Préface d'André Malraux. Paris: Gallimard, 1949, p. 8. The preface first appeared in the original 1933 edition of the translation.

Malraux's first important review for <u>La Neuvelle Revue Française</u> provides additional proof of his very wide knowledge of art. This is a short critique of <u>Art poétique</u> by his friend, the Cubist poet Max Jacob.⁷⁹ Although Malraux was only twenty-one when he wrote the review, several of his suggestions anticipate the theories expressed in <u>Les Voix du</u> <u>silence</u> thirty years later. He recommends Jacob to divide his treatise into two principal sections: <u>Psychologie de l'artiste</u> and <u>Psychologie du</u> <u>sentiment artistique</u>. It is interesting to note that when the three volumes that were later to constitute <u>Les Voix du silence</u> appeared separately in 1947, 1948 and 1949, they were all entitled <u>La Psychologie</u> <u>de l'art</u>, with additional sub-titles to distinguish each volume. The young critic was already nurturing some of his most important ideas.

The major writings on art all testify to Malraux's special love of Christian art. This same preface (where he also recommends to Jacob the sub-heading <u>L'Art chrétien</u>) shows that he had already begun to think deeply about it. Malraux disputes Jacob's idea that "l'art chrétien réprouve la passion"⁸⁰ by contending that what Christianity objects to is not so much passion itself, but the unworthy objects of human passion. He refutes Jacob's interpretation of the seventeenth century as being profoundly Christian by objecting that Christian art is made by Christians and not by non-believers who subscribe to certain tenets of Christian morality. The short article on the Cubist poet is replete with references and comparisons which bear witness to a wide knowledge of both literature and art.

⁷⁹Review of <u>Art poétique</u>, pp. 227-228.

⁸⁰<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 228.

If few of the later reviews are so directly concerned with art, nevertheless, all of them contain allusions to it and it is not uncommon for Malraux to draw parallels between literature and art.⁸¹ Three of the reviews written in the early thirties are really short programme-like introductions to art exhibitions held in Paris.⁸² Although they contain extremely little of theoretical interest, they show Malraux's enthusiasm for the arts of Asia and illustrate his ability to relate, compare and contrast the Western world with the Orient.

In the sections on <u>Lunes en papier</u> and <u>Royaume farfelu</u>, we have seen to what extent Malraux was interested in fantasy and the place that it occupied in his own writings. Vandegans has drawn up an almost complete inventory of the books that influenced or could have influenced the young writer in the composition of these two early works, and they are considerable in number.⁸³ A brief glance at the novels reviewed during the period under study is sufficient to show that he preserved a keen interest in works of fantasy long after he had ceased writing them

⁸¹"Je crois que le fait capital de notre littérature, ces dernières années, a été la substitution d'un 'ton' qui exprime une personne, à une 'écriture' qui exprime un art" (Céline contre Delteil). Review of <u>Journal d'un homme de quarante ans</u>, by Jean Guéhenno, <u>NRF</u>, janvier 1935, pp. 150-151.

⁸²"Exposition Gothico-Bouddhique" and "Exposition Greco-Bouddhique", <u>NRF</u>, février 1931, pp. 298-300.
"Exposition d'oeuvres de Sémirani", <u>NRF</u>, avril 1932, pp. 771-773.
"Exposition Fautrier", <u>NRF</u>, février 1933, pp. 345-346.

⁸³André Vandegans, La Jeunesse littéraire d'André Malraux, p. 108ff, p. 314ff.

himself.⁸⁴

In 1920, when Malraux's obsession with aesthetics and the poetic approach to literature was most manifest, he lauded the pure fantasy of André Salmon: "La fantaisie gagne beaucoup à n'être pas accompagnée Ici, elle est le 'sujet' meme."⁸⁵ In 1923, he defined the two principal components of the fantastic as being: "le pittoresque, et cette émotion particulière, étrangeté ou terreur, qui donne la vie au conte."⁸⁶

In 1928, Malraux praised one of Franz Hellens' novels for having "le sens le plus subtil, et surtout le plus constant, du possible."⁸⁷ As we have already seen (page 16), interest in <u>le possible</u> -- which may be taken to include both fantasy and the fantastic -- was very marked in the 1920's. In <u>L'Enfant et l'écuyère</u>, the child-hero, with his untamed sensitivity, interprets his surroundings as being "un monde sans garanties, un monde fantastique parce que les rapports habituels de sensibiblité n'y existent pas".⁸⁸

⁸⁴An important point is raised here. Did Malraux himself select the books that he reviewed for <u>La Nouvelle Revue Française</u> or were they allotted to him? A definite reply has not been found to this question, but since a considerable number of volumes deal with art and since several others concern the Orient, it seems reasonable to suppose that the specialty and tastes of the reviewer were taken into consideration when the books were allocated.

⁸⁵ Review of <u>La Négresse du Sacré Coeur</u>, by André Salmon. Quoted from Vandegans, La Jeunesse littéraire d'André Malraux, p. 75.

⁸⁶Review of <u>Malice</u>, by Pierre Mac Orlan, <u>NRF</u>, mai 1923, p. 836.
⁸⁷Review of <u>L'Enfant et l'écuyère</u>, by Franz Hellens, <u>NRF</u>, août 1928, pp. 291-292.

⁸⁸<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 292.

In 1929, in his short discussion of Pierre Véry's Pont-Egaré,⁸⁹ Malraux shed considerable light upon the task of the writer of works of fantasy. The latter, lamenting the stability and orderliness of the world, uses his own almost supernatural belief in <u>le possible</u> to discover hidden connections between ordinary objects. In a way, his art constitutes a form of escapism, a flight from reality into the pure world of aesthetics or, as Malraux himself puts it, he attempts to create "un monde à notre image lorsque nous ne voulons pas être à l'image du monde".⁹⁰

Alexandre Vialatte's <u>Eattling le ténébreux</u> ressembles Véry's novel in that, "chacun de ses personnages s'est refugié dans le rêve qui l'habite, a substitué son ordre à celui des hommes".⁹¹ It is no coincidence that Malraux's commentaries on <u>L'Enfant et l'écuyère</u> and <u>Battling le ténébreux</u> should have appeared in 1928, when <u>Royaume farfelu</u> was published, or that Pont-Egaré went into print the following year.

The twenty or so brief reviews under consideration seem to indicate on Malraux's part a predilection for exceptional and forceful writers who can carry him off into a private world.⁹² The short essays

⁸⁹Review of <u>Pont-Egaré</u>, pp. 838-839.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 839.

⁹¹Review of <u>Battling le ténébreux</u>, by Alexandre Vialatte, <u>NRF</u>, décembre 1928, pp. 869-870.

⁹²In his review of Charles Sorel's <u>Histoire comique de Francion</u> (<u>FRF</u>, août 1927, pp. 253-255), Malraux voices his approval of the attempts of the Sorbonne intellectuals to restore texts published in France between 1550 and 1660. Incidentally, Sorel's "fantaisie brillante" is greatly admired.

on Laclos and D. H. Lawrence betray a liking for the erotic works of the eighteenth century -- Nerciat, Retz and Laclos himself -- but he shows little sympathy for the cerebrations of the Marquis de Sade. Malraux takes the latter to task because of the conscious effort that his writings betray. He strives to be sensual and yet there isn't a single voluptuous scene in the whole work.

Sade's fundamental artistic weakness is that his characters symbolize desires, are created by them instead of actually creating them. The desires are not so much a part of the characters as something that dominates them entirely.⁹³ Malraux makes the same criticism of a work diametrically opposed to that of the eighteenth century sadist, Bernanos' <u>L'Imposture</u>: "Ce ne sont pas les personnages qui créent les conflits mais les conflits qui y font naître les personnages."⁹⁴

A second criticism that Malraux makes of Bernanos seems strange at first sight in view of what we have been saying about the significance of the fantastic: "l'auteur ne se soumet au réel communément reconnu; il vit dans un monde particulier, créé par lui."⁹⁵ The basic difference between <u>L'Imposture</u> and all the works of fantasy already discussed is that whereas the latter are primarily aesthetic or even poetic in scope, Bernanos' novel, according to Malraux's interpretation, is of a much more serious nature in that it deals with fatality and the power of

⁹³Review of <u>Historiettes et fabliaux</u> and <u>Dialogue d'un prêtre et</u> <u>d'un moribond</u>, by the Marquis de Sade, <u>NRF</u>, juin 1928, pp. 853-855.

⁹⁴Review of L'Imposture, by Georges Bernanos, <u>NRF</u>, mars 1928, p. 406.

95<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 407.

34,

Satan. It is for that reason that Bernanos' defect is a grave artistic weakness. He cannot impose his world upon the reader and in many cases he reduces himself to the level of a mere pamphleteer.

In a foreword to his own novel, <u>Le Temps du mépris</u>, Malraux makes the following comment on the task of the writer and artist: "Ce n'est pas la passion qui détruit l'oeuvre d'art, c'est la volonté de prouver."⁹⁶ In Sade and Bernanos it is the <u>volonté de prouver</u> that prevails. Both writers fail to achieve that "accord entre ce que l'oeuvre exprime et les moyens qu'elle emploie",⁹⁷ which for Malraux constitutes the greatness of a work of art. The preface to <u>Le Temps du mépris</u> shows that style and aesthetics, even if they are of secondary importance, as is obviously the case in Malraux's own works, are important in insuring the success of a novel.⁹⁸ Needless to say, he had little sympathy for the Art for Art's Sake movement, as is illustrated by the gradual disintoxication with Flaubert that a reading of his critical works reveals.

It is fitting to conclude this brief study of Malraux's minor writings by having a look at his introduction to the French translation of Faulkner's <u>Sanctuary</u>.⁹⁹ This is one of the several prefaces of direct theoretical interest. It is also very important in that it

96 André Malraux, <u>Le Temps du mépris</u> (Paris: Gallimard, 1935), p. 9.

97<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 10.

 98 If not, then the novelist would become a journalist, or a philosopher or a historian.

99 Preface to Sanctuaire.

provides a link, with the theories behind the works of fantasy and it anticipates in a rather vivid manner some of the ideas expressed in both Les Noyers de l'Altenburg and Les Voix du silence.

For Malraux, the supreme art form was Greek tragedy and he praises in Faulkner's novel "l'intrusion de la tragédie grecque dans le roman policier".¹⁰⁰ According to Malraux, all tragic art is founded on the psychological state of fascination which he defines in the following manner:

> Le poète tragique exprime ce qui le fascine, non pour s'en délivrer (l'objet de la fascination reparaîtra dans l'oeuvre suivante) mais pour en changer la nature; car, l'exprimant avec d'autres éléments il le fait entre dans l'univers relatif des choses conçues et dominées. Il ne se défend pas contre l'angoisse en l'exprimant, mais en exprimant autre chose avec elle. La fascination la plus profonde, celle de l'artiste, tire sa force de ce qu'elle est à la fois, l'horreur, et la possibilité de la concevoir. 101

In 1928, Malraux had also spoken of the artist liberating himself through his writings. 102

If there is a similarity between this and what we have been saying of Véry and the writers of fantasy, there is, however, one fundamental difference. The latter, as we have seen, strive to create "un monde à notre image quand nous voulons pas être à l'image du monde".¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰Preface to <u>Sanctuaire</u>, p. 9.
¹⁰¹Ibid.
¹⁰²Review of <u>L'Enfant et l'écuyère</u>.
¹⁰³Review of <u>Pont-Egaré</u>, p. 839.

Malraux, then, is moving away from the negativistic escape into aesthetics that characterized the period of <u>Lunes en papier</u> to a much more positive attitude. In a later preface he calls it "une possession du monde";¹⁰⁴ in an article published in <u>Commune</u> he declared: "J."Art n'est pas une soumission, c'est une conquête."¹⁰⁵ In <u>Les Noyers de</u> <u>l'Altenburg</u>, art is "une rectification du monde".¹⁰⁶ Art is no longer pure escapism, a flight from reality into aesthetics, but the organization of the forces that dominate man.

In the realm of literary fiction, the bourgeois novel of the nineteenth century -- "les beaux romans paralysés de Flaubert", in particular -- with its emphasis on milieu, its preoccupation with safeguarding "le monde intérieur"¹⁰⁷ and its accumulation of objects, has been replaced by a more forceful kind of writing in which the novelist challenges, asserts, refuses, discovers and even dominates. For Malraux the weakening of the importance attributed to objects is "l'élément capital de la transformation de notre art".¹⁰⁸ Paintings and, indeed, works of fiction have become: "la marque d'une découverte, le jalon laissé pour le passage d'un génie crispé."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Review of <u>Sans reprendre haleine</u>, by Ilya Ehrenbourg, <u>NRF</u>, novembre 1935, pp. 770-772.
¹⁰⁵ "L'Art est une conquête", <u>Commune</u>, no. 13-14, septembre-octobre 1934, pp. 68-71.
¹⁰⁶ Les Noyers de l'Altenburg, p. 128.
¹⁰⁷ Le Temps du mépris, p. 10.
¹⁰⁸ Preface to <u>Sanctuaire</u>, p. 8.

109<u>Ibid</u>.

* * * * *

These opening chapters have been intended to make abundantly clear the extent of Malraux's knowledge of all forms of art. In addition to his activities as <u>chineur</u>, editor, reviewer, essayist, literary critic, art specialist and writer of works of fantasy, Malraux found time to make frequent journeys to almost every country in Europe and Asia to seek first-hand knowledge of the works of art that never ceased to fascinate him.¹¹⁰ Despite his embroilment in politics and his introduction to Communism in French Indochina, and despite his very successful philosophical novels with their heavy revolutionary content, Malraux never for one moment ceased to be interested in all forms of art: "J'ai vécu dans l'art depuis mon adolescence."¹¹¹

¹¹⁰For biographical details see Janet Flanner, "The Human Condition, Parts 1 and 2", The New Yorker, November 6 and 13, 1954.

¹¹¹Pascal Pia, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 5.

PART II

THE GREAT NOVELS

Le roman moderne est, à mes yeux, un moyen d'expression privilégié du tragique de l'homme, non une élucidation de l'individu.

> Gaëtan Picon, <u>Malraux par</u> <u>lui-même</u>. Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1959, p. 66.

La conception dramatique de la philosophie, plus puissante d'année en année dans tout l'Occident, aboutira peut-être à une transformation profonde de la fiction.

> André Malraux, Review of Journal de voyage d'un philosophe, by Herman Keyserling. <u>NRF</u>, juin 1929, p. 886.

CHAPTER IV

LA VOIE ROYALE

La soumission à l'ordre de l'homme sans enfants et sans dieu est la plus profonde des soumissions à la mort. 112

The heroes of Malraux's first two novels, <u>Les Conquérants</u> and <u>La</u> <u>Voie royale</u>, belong very much to the Gidean tradition. Like Ménalque of <u>L'Immoraliste</u> they reject unconditionally the stereotyped bourgeois existence with its emphasis on materialism and the happiness of the individual. Property and possessions are anathema to them since they insulate man against existence and prevent him from being <u>disponible</u>.

However, the dialogue between opposing ideologies and politics, which constitutes the greatness of Malraux's three revolutionary novels, is completely lacking in <u>La Voie royale</u>. A minor work¹¹³ in comparison with the other novels, and like <u>Le Temps du mépris</u> a monologue, nevertheless <u>La Voie rovale</u> is a suitable point of departure in tracing the evolution of Malraux's thought.¹¹⁴

Claude and Perken, the protagonists, have several characteristics in common: "une indifférence à se définir socialement",¹¹⁵ "... même hostilité à l'égard des valeurs établies, même goût des actions lié à la

¹¹²André Malraux, <u>La Voie royale</u> (Paris: Grasset, 1930), p. 37.
¹¹³Malraux felt that it was not worth including in the Pléiade edition of his complete works.

¹¹⁴Although La Voie rovale appeared in 1930, two years after the publication of Les Conquérants, it is a less mature movel and, as far as the contents of this thesis are concerned, a much more adequate starting point.

115 La Voie royale, p. 13.

conscience de leur vanité; mêmes refus, surtout".¹¹⁶ As the preceding quotations indicate, their existence is in many ways a negative one; they refuse to accept the conventions and sterility of social life but can find nothing to fill the vacuum created by their refusal. Claude and Perken exemplify Ling's cutting observation of Western man:

> Les Européens sont las d'eux-mêmes, las de leur individualisme qui s'écroule, las de leur exaltation. Ce qui les soutient est moins une pensée qu'une fine structure de négations. Capables d'agir jusqu'au sacrifice, mais pleins de dégoût devant la volonté d'action qui tord aujourd'hui leur race, ils voudraient chercher sous les actes des hommes une raison d'être plus profonde. 117

Having denied all that has sustained man for centuries, Claude and Perken can find nothing to replace it. Acutely aware that there is no longer any absolute to adhere to, they try to create meaning, to give meaning to the raw material of life.¹¹⁸ They are, as Ling says, "capables d'agir jusqu'au sacrifice", especially Perken, whose sole ambition is to lead native tribes into battle against the colonialists of Indochina. But action for action's sake, in a sense another absolute, proves extremely unsatisfactory. Claude, lying in the jungle and surrounded by the enemy, is consumed by anguish as everything conspires to remind him of the meaninglessness of existence. As darkness falls around him, he is conscious only of "son propre néant".¹¹⁹ Only when he is engaged in scme

116 La Voie royale, p. 16.

117 La Tentation de 1ºOccident, p. 87.

¹¹⁸"La vie est une matière, il s'agit de savoir ce qu'on en fait" (Perken), <u>La Voie royale</u>, p. 108.

119_{Ibid.}, p. 145.

form of activity can he forget the absurd.

For all of Malraux's heroes, "un homme est la somme de ses actes",¹²⁰ but in <u>La Voie royale</u> the acts are confined to purely physical activity. It is Perken who discovers the inadequacy of such a restricted philosophy when he falls ill. The physical weakness that inevitably accompanies old age makes acceptance and submission much more difficult to combat.

Since the results of their actions are of little importance, Claude and Perken may be classified as adventurers. It is true that they are <u>authentiques</u>, and that they try to impart meaning to life, but all their efforts end in failure. Their relationship, despite its undisputed sincerity and the few moments of fraternity and sympathy born of their mutual obsession with death, is really that of two individuals. Claude and Perken find that the middle class concept of individualism is increasingly difficult to deny. Like Sartre's Mathieu and Oreste, they are the slaves of a useless freedom. They are uncommitted to anything that transcends the individual self, they are hopelessly adrift not only in a civilization radically different from their own, but also in a hostile jungle: "Quel acte humain ici avait un sens? Quelle volonté conservait sa force?"¹²¹ Action is their way of avoiding "la conscience de leur propre néant", ¹²² of struggling against death, and of affirming

¹²⁰La Condition humaine, p. 185.
¹²¹La Voie royale, p. 67.
122 Ibid., p. 145.

their own existence. Perken says: "Je veux laisser une cicatrice sur cette carte."¹²³ He wants to become a legend, to be remembered for his heroic activities.

Malraux could easily have shown Perken the road that leads to <u>engagement</u>. He portrays Perken as a man with a thirst for power, a man who wants to lead a military force. Remembering his own painful experiences in South-East Asia, Malraux could have portrayed Perken as an officer determined to eradicate the evil of colonialism from that area. But there is absolutely no mention of the many corruptions that existed in Indochine, of the relations between the French administration and the local populaces, or of social injustices. For Perken, it is the conflict itself and the opportunities that it provides for action that are important. The nature of the combat -- "soit entre colonisateurs et colonisés, soit entre colonisateurs seulement"¹²⁴ -- and its results matter little.

What then is the reason for Malraux's apparent defeatism on the social or political level? It is the absurd, the fact that everything is rendered meaningless by death: "La mort est là ... comme l'irréfutable preuve de l'absurdité de la vie."¹²⁵ One can argue, like Sartre, that man can give meaning to his existence by combatting social injustices, by attempting to alleviate the plight of the impoverished or the oppressed;

123 La Voie royale, p. 60. 124 Ibid.

or, on the other hand, as implied in <u>La Voie royale</u>, one can accept the view that since life itself is absurd, these apparently meaningful activities cannot render it any less so. This is a much more pessimistic point of view and one that receives further expression in most of the other novels. Malraux, as we shall see in <u>Les Conquérants</u>, nearly always argues on the metaphysical level and social questions are subordinated to metaphysical problems.

Like most of Malraux's characters, Perken is "un type de héros en qui s'unissent l'aptitude à l'action, la culture et la lucidité".¹²⁶ He is unable or simply refuses to transcend his own individual existence and contemplate the needs of others. Unlike the millions of people in Asia, Perken enjoyed the comparative luxury of being able to choose to give meaning to his life, and he chose a course of violent action. Just as the bourgeois seeks refuge from harsh reality in the accumulation of objects,¹²⁷ just as the nineteenth century sought refuge in fiction,¹²⁸ so too does Perken take refuge in violent action. The important difference is that Perken's form of escape is by no means a

¹²⁶André Malraux, <u>Les Conquérants</u> (Paris: Grasset, 1930), p. 230.

127 A. Habaru, "André Malraux nous parle de son oeuvre", Monde, 18 octobre 1930, p. 4. Malraux said: "... la bourgeoisie a inventé l'objet. Qu'il s'agisse du roman-objet d'art ou du tableau, à la grande expression humaine, grecque ou gothique, s'est substituée la chose qui peut être possédée, qui tend au plaisir."

¹²⁸ Andrée Viollis, <u>Indochine S.O.S.</u> Préface d'André Malraux. Paris: Gallimard, 1935, p. vii. "La fiction ... a dominé le XIX siècle à tel point qu'on a pu voir dans la transcendance ou l'évasion du réel l'idée même de l'art." Needless to say, such a generalization fails to account for Zola and the naturalists.

happy one nor a simple one. 129

Before he realizes his ambitions, Perken steps on a poisoned dart in the jungle and dies a gradual, painful death. The non-action or nothingness that accompanies his illness leaves him defenseless against the absurd, now reinforced by his own suffering and solitude. The gaze that others direct upon him remind him continually that he is dying, and even Claude becomes "haissable"¹³⁰ simply because he was to go on living.

Despite his individualism, Perken's redeeming virtue is a determination to "lutter contre la déchéance",¹³¹ as did the fugitive Grabot when he gouged out an eye to show his contempt for a medical officer, "qui ne l'avait pas reconnu lorsqu'il était malade";¹³² as did Claude when he refused to submit to the horrors that he felt when covered with repulsive insects in the depths of the jungle; as did Perken's uncle when he refused to cry out in the face of terrible pain. Perken used his very suffering as a means of triumphing over death: "... tant qu'il souffrait, il vivait."¹³³

For Perken, "la vraie mort, c'est la déchéance", 134 symbolized

¹²⁹"Se refuser sans réserves au monde, c'est toujours se faire souffrir terriblement pour se prouver sa force", <u>La Voie royale</u>, pp. 97-98. "On ne pense pas sans danger contre la masse des hommes", Ibid., p. 58.

¹³⁰<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 178. ¹³¹<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 130. ¹³²<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 64. ¹³³<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 181.

134 Ibid., p. 36. For Hong, the Chinese terrorist in Les Conquérants, death was equated with failure.

by a degenerate Grabot, who, unable to commit suicide and avoid capture, is gradually reduced to a more <u>rien</u>. Using Heideggerian terms, Halraux describes Perken as one who finds strength in existing "contre la mort".¹³⁵

The comments that an author makes on his own work are always illuminating, and Malraux is no exception. In an interview accorded to André Rousseaux, he said of <u>La Voie royale</u>: "J'ai voulu dire la verité sur l'aventure", which he defines as "l'obsession de la mort". The adventurer, just like the gold digger, "se fuit lui-même, c'est à dire qu'il fuit sa hantise de la mort -- en même temps qu'il court vers elle."¹³⁶

In another interview, Malraux was more forthcoming:

Par rapport aux <u>Fuissances du désert</u>, l'élément essentiel de <u>La Voie royale</u> c'est de traduire à travers un thème d'une extrême violence la solitude fondamentale de l'homme devant la mort, ce livre n'étant que le prologue des luttes collectives qui vont suivre. 137

It is unfortunate that Malraux never wrote the second section of <u>Les</u> <u>Puissances du désert</u> to illustrate exactly what he meant by "luttes collectives", unless, of course, we consider <u>La Condition humaine</u> as being the second part. Although the theme of the book is metaphysical, the above quotation shows that Malraux was giving serious thought to the conflict between individualism and collectivity. If <u>Les Puissances du</u> désert had been completed, we might have seen that the first volume had

La Voix royale, p. 108. Cf. "Ce n'est pas pour mourir que je pense à ma mort", p. 109; "l'exaltation de jouer plus que sa mort", p. 131; "Il se peut que faire sa mort me semble beaucoup plus important que faire se vie", p. 164.

136 André Rousseaux, "Un quart d'heure avec André Malraux", <u>Candide</u>, 13 novembre 1930, p. 3.

137 A. Habaru, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 4.

been written in order to expose the inadequacies of individual action. The death of Perken, individual par excellence, is a tragic one. His last relations with a woman convince him that human experience is uncommunicable. The fraternity that linked him with Claude disintegrates because the latter, since he was to go on living, becomes "étranger comme un être d'un autre monde".¹³⁸ Perken's activities die with him, since they were individual acts with no foundation outside of his own existence.

It remains now for Malraux to suggest a remedy for man's solitude, a remedy acceptable to all those who, like Claude and Perken, abhor a society where people work in order to "gagner en considération".¹³⁹

¹³⁸La Voie royale, p. 182. ¹³⁹Ibid., p. 37.

CHAPTER V

LES CONQUERANTS

... une passion pour laquelle les objets à conquérir ne sont plus rien. 140

Les Conquérants, like the other two revolutionary novels, is concerned with the interaction of individualism and some form of collectivity. It is not, as Trotsky was misled to believe, a "chronique romancée de la révolution chinoise dans sa première période, celle de Canton", ¹⁴¹ but, in Malraux's own words, an examination of "le rapport entre des individus et une action collective, non sur l'action collective seule". ¹⁴² For this reason, it is preferable to consider <u>Les Conquérants</u> as being posterior to <u>La Voie royale</u>, since the theme is exactly the same as Malraux had proposed for the second volume of Les <u>Puissances du désert</u>.

The hero of Malraux's first novel is Garine, a wealthy European working as "directeur de la Propagande" for the Canton rebellion in the summer of 1926. From the very first pages, a link is established between Perken and Garine; the latter is described as an adventurer, as a man capable of action. Claiming that he is indifferent to the results of the

140 Les Conquérants, p. 62.

¹⁴¹Léon Trotsky, "La révolution étranglée", <u>NRF</u>, avril 1931, p. 488.

142 André Malraux, "Réponse à Trotsky", NRF, avril 1931, p. 502. In <u>Monde</u> Malraux, as we have already seen, called <u>La Voie royale</u> "le prologue des luttes collectives qui vont suivre".

revolution, Garine is at odds with Borodin, the Russian Marxist, for whom doctrine and the results are everything. <u>Les Conquérants</u> is a dialogue between these two opposing points of view.

Although it is a much more profound work than <u>La Voie royale</u>, it in no way suggests that the tragedy of the solitary life of the individual can be alleviated by an adherence to a doctrine or organization. Garine is completely indifferent to systems in general and to the scientific socialism¹⁴³ of Marxism in particular. For him, the revolution is not a means, not a war of liberation, but "un état de choses", ¹⁴⁴ "l'espoir d'un temps de trouble"¹⁴⁵ that will give him the opportunity of displaying "l'emploi le plus efficace de sa force".¹⁴⁶ In many respects, he is another Perken for whom "une certaine forme de puissance"¹⁴⁷ is his most compulsive need. "On ne se défend qu'en créant", ¹⁴⁸ and if a successful revolution brings to an end Garine's opportunities for creative activities, then, like Perken, he will be an easy prey to the absurd.

For Garine, the revolution is merely a series of "actes à accomplir",¹⁴⁹ The essential thing "c'est de ne pas être vaincu",¹⁵⁰

143"Garine n'est pas anti-Marxiste, mais le marxisme n'est nullement pour lui un 'socialisme scientifique'", Les Conquérants, p. 207.

144<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 64.
145<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 57.
146<u>Ibid.</u>
147<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 69.
148<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 215.
149<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 58.
150<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 197.

just as for Perken what was most important was to avoid succumbing to <u>la déchéance</u>. Garine is never more explicit about his attitude towards the Canton rebellion than when he says:

> Mon action me rend aboulique à l'égard de tout ce qui n'est pas elle, à commencer par ses résultats. Si je me suis lié si facilement à la Révolution, c'est que ses résultats sont lointains et toujours en changement. Au fond, je suis un joueur. 151

He despises those idealists who claim to "travailler au bonheur de 1'humanité",¹⁵² just as he despises those who support the revolution or espouse Marxism just in order to be right. Whereas Borodin believed that the Soviets could help organize and improve Chinese society, Garine called himself "asocial", as well as atheistic: "Je ne tiens pas la société pour mauvaise, pour susceptible d'être améliorée; je la tiens pour absurde."¹⁵³ The chasm separating Garine and the orthodox Marxist could not be wider. The latter is convinced that the Communist reorganization of society and man's subsequent liberation from the capitalist yoke will not only improve him materially, but morally as well. Garine remarks on "l'impossibilité de donner à une forme sociale, quélle qu'elle soit, mon adhésion".¹⁵⁴

Garine's apathy extends even to the poor. He doesn't have the missionary's humanitarian love of the down-trodden and the impoverished.

¹⁵¹Les Conquérants, p. 201. , p. 57. bid. p. 62. 154_{I bid}.

He makes no secret of his misanthropy, his indifference to "les pauvres gens, le peuple, ceux en somme pour qui je vais combattre".¹⁵⁵ This is due partly to his realization that, should they triumph, they would soon turn into abject bourgeois. For Garine, the revolution is not so much the manifestation of a class struggle, but simply an opportunity to fight off the absurd. Should the poor be victorious and should the struggle end, Garine would have nothing to sustain himself against the absurd.

On the other hand, Borodin, for whom the absurd does not exist, represents an ideology that can use the revolution positively, and organize the workers' success. He is the only main character in <u>Les</u> <u>Conquérants</u> who is also an orthodox Communist. However, Borodin seldom appears in person and we learn about him through the conversations of others. A Latvian Marxist who combines a flair for organization with a crusader-like devotion to the party line, he is continually criticized by the "conquerors": "Dans tous les vieux bolcheviks ... il y a quelque chose des fondateurs d'ordres religieux."¹⁵⁶ He is likened to those monks who first build their monasteries and then set out to convert the pagans. Convinced that the Soviet state was a model one, he was prepared to use every possible means in the furtherance of Soviet policy. Borodin is unfavourably treated by Malraux, since he is a man for whom reality, or the present moment, doesn't exist and because at heart he despises the Chinese people.

155 Les Conquérants, p. 68.

¹⁵⁶André Malraux, "Fragment inédit des <u>Conquérants</u>", <u>Bifur</u>, no. 4, 31 décembre 1929, p. 6.

In a sense, Borodin exists only in so far as there is something to organize, just as for Garine existence is identified with the physical duration of some form of action. The latter detests Borodin's "insupportable mentalité bolchevique"¹⁵⁷ and his stupid exaltation of discipline. For Garine, Marxism is more than scientific socialism, more than the means for constructing "le rez-de-chaussée d'un édifice communiste".¹⁵⁸

The conflict is continued in <u>La Condition humaine</u> and predominates entire sections of <u>L'Espoir</u>. Is the spontaneity of revolutionary idealism in itself sufficient to overthrow colonialism (or fascism), or must it be made subservient to some sort of organization? Can harmony or compromise exist between conquerors like Garine, of whom one Communist says, "il faut des gens qui sachent s'oublier mieux que lui", ¹⁵⁹ and adamant Marxists like Borodin, for whom " le parti est lié à sa vie"?¹⁶⁰

If Borodin is, in many respects, a monomaniac, then Garine is an infinitely more complex character. A respected but solitary figure, he is remote from the febrile spirit of revolutionary activity. He seems to suspect that a remedy for his loneliness and vulnerability to the absurdity of life would be in "se lier à <u>une grande action</u> quelconque et ne pas la lâcher, en être hanté, en être intoxiqué"¹⁶¹ Garine envies Borodin's enthusiasm and allegiance to "une grande action", even if he cannot share his ideas. He would prefer that "chaque homme sente

157 Les Conquérants, p. 206. 158_{Ibid.}, p. 207. 159 I<u>bid.</u>, p. 210. 160"Fragment inédit des Conquérants", p. 6. 161 Les Conquérants, p. 68.

que sa vie est liée a la Révolution",¹⁶² instead of to the Party. For Garine, life and action are one and the same: "quand <u>mon action</u> se retire de moi ... c'est aussi du sang qui s'en va."¹⁶³ He yearns nostalgically for the time when his life was completely dominated by something. He is also thinking of this when he says that what links him to the Kuomintang is "surtout le besoin d'une victoire <u>commune</u>".¹⁶⁴

However, despite his reluctant individualism and his adventurous spirit, Garine does have certain motivations which are very strong. Some are negative: he was nauseated by middle class life and he wished to liberate the Chinese from the domination of foreign imperialists. He wanted to overcome the remorse that he felt when he was excluded from the Russian Revolution, since he didn't want to be connected with a party. Others are positive and constructive: praising his success as director of pro-revolutionary propaganda, a minor figure, Gerhard, tells how Garine gave to the oppressed Chinese "la possibilité de croire à leur propre dignité".¹⁶⁵ Thanks to his efforts, the nascent revolution is a source of "life" to the people. He even organized Chinese workers into a strong military force. Garine himself says that he created not fine-sounding

162 Les Conquérants, p. 113.

¹⁶³<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 200. The word "action" is used here with two different meanings. For Garine, action is the need to exercise power, to accomplish, to create. What he seems to yearn for is that his own individual accomplishments be subordinated to "une grande action", something like Communism, that transcends the self. The spectacle of the Russian people possessed by an idea was to haunt Garine all his life.

164 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 114. 165 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 20.

phrases, but "l'espoir des hommes, leur raison de vivre et de mourir".¹⁶⁶ He showed his men the way to "une existence plus réellement humaine";¹⁶⁷ he instilled in them a confidence in their ability to organize things by themselves.

Despite Garine's determination to make his life "une affirmation très forte",¹⁶⁸ he is a prey to a feeling of absolute futility that he calls the absurd. He describes a trial in which other men dress up and pronounce judgement upon him as one of the manifestations of the absurdity of life. Society too is absurd, and the most irrefutable argument for the absurdity of life is suffering: "La souffrance renforce l'absurdité de la vie."¹⁶⁹ However, on the other hand, it is from the absurd that Garine derives all his strength. If nothing has any meaning, then it is for him to create meaning: "On ne se défend qu'en créant."¹⁷⁰ He accepts the absurd, but struggles resolutely against it. At times he rejoices at a glimmer of success -- the hopes he has created in the hearts of the Chinese -- and at other times he laments his very lack of success. At one particularly bitter moment, he used a very vivid image to describe his task:

¹⁶⁶Les Conquérants, p. 158. ¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 112. ¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 199. ¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 214. ¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 215.

Ce que j'ai fait, ce que j'ai fait! Ah! là, là! je pense à l'empereur qui faisait crever les yeux de ses prisonniers, tu sais, et qui les renvoyait dans leur pays, en grappes, conduits par des borgnes: les conducteurs borgnes, eux aussi, de fatigue, devenaient aveugles peu à peu. Belle image d'Epinal pour exprimer ce que nous foutons ici, plus belle que les petits dessins de la Propagande. 171

For Garine, it is a question of the blind leading the blind. It is also very significant that the two principal organizers of the rebellion (Garine and Borodin) are both seriously ill.

Two other characters, Tcheng-Dai and Hong, although of primary importance to the rebellion and of secondary importance to the novel, provide a more vivid contrast than Garine and Borodin.

Tcheng-Dai is described as the spiritual leader of the right wing of the Nationalist Party, the Chinese equivalent of Gandhi. A purist with a thirst for absolute truth and absolute justice, he refuses to soil his hands or engage his moral responsibility: "Il est beaucoup plus attaché à sa protestation que décidé à vaincre."¹⁷² Tcheng-Dai is the counsellor, the moral adviser who used the revolution as a means of protest. Just as Garine would be empty without the physical activity of the rebellion, and just as Borodin would be helpless if deprived of the possibility of future conquests, so too would the life of Tcheng-Dai disintegrate if the injustices against which was his "role" to protest were to disappear after a successful revolution. His individualism and concern with becoming a legend cause him to refuse to commit himself and

171 <u>Les Conquérants</u>, p. 194.
172 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 91.

his actions to the Nationalist Party. He refuses to become president, just as he refuses to sign the decree on which the success of the revolution depended very heavily. Because of his obsession with purity, Tcheng-Daï is a hindrance to everyone; to the Chinese revolutionaries and the Russian Communists, to the conquerors themselves and to the anarchists.

Hong, anarchist leader and terrorist, is a purist of an entirely different nature. He is prepared to adopt all possible means -- including the torture and murder of leading Chinese politicians -- in the pursuit of the revolutionary goal. Motivated by a fanatical hatred of the bourgeois or rich ("II n'y a que deux races, dit-il, les mi-sé-ra-bles et les autres."),¹⁷³ he fights so that the poor will enjoy the opportunity of "s'estimer". For Hong, hatred is a way of life, a duty, just as the search for absolute justice was a way of life for Tcheng-Dai. However, Hong's impatience and ruthlessness also jeopardize the goals of the revolution. His total disinterest, not only in Communism, but also in all forms of politics; his concern for the immediate only; his refusal to wait for a propitious moment; his refusal to join in a concerted attack and his brutal murders made of him an enemy of the revolution -- despite his one great virtue, the will to action.

The question remains as to what extent <u>Les Conquérants</u> is a Communist novel. It does not deal with a Communist revolution, for, despite strong Soviet support, the Canton strike and rebellion of June, 1925 were strongly nationalistic in purpose. The revolution was aimed

173 Les Conquérants, p. 144.

at foreign agressors and capitalist imperialists. The Kuomintang, or Chinese Nationalist Party, is the organization that plays the most prominent part in the novel. Founded by Sun-Yat-Sen, its three principles were nationalism, democracy, the people's livelihood -- all of which pointed out the cautious road to socialism. When Borodin was sent to China to help Sun-Yat-Sen head the nationalist movement, a tacit alliance was effected between Chinese Nationalism and Russian Communism, the common bond being the three principles mentioned above.

The events of <u>Les Conquérants</u> are historically accurate and, to coin Malraux's own phrase, the characters, who are fictitious apart from Borodin, act in accordance with "une vérité psychologique liée aux événements".¹⁷⁴ Malraux never interprets the liberation as being a Communist movement, despite strong support from Russia, and, moreover, Borodin is very critically treated. Appearing only once in the novel, and briefly at that, he is portrayed as a kind of automaton for whom the party line is an absolute and who, unlike Garine, displays very few human qualities. If the validity of Marxism as a revolutionary doctrine is never for one moment contested, Borodin's determinist interpretation of it is disputed. His "scientific socialism" is opposed to Garine's interpretation of Marxism as "une méthode d'organisation des passions ouvrières, un moyen de recruter chez les ouvriers des troupes de choc".¹⁷⁵ He is afraid that Borodin's extreme policies should compromise the revolution by uniting the forces of the extreme Right. Borodin's

174 André Malraux, "La question des <u>Conquérants</u>", <u>Variétés</u>, 15 octobre 1929, p. 431.

175 Les Conquérants, p. 207.

crusading zeal comes in for strong criticism. As we have already seen, he is a man who scorns the Chinese and who is using his sojourn in Canton to internationalize the Communist movement.

Garine, whose attitude to Marxism is sympathetic, is nevertheless not a Marxist. Enough has been said of his individualism, his surrender on social questions and his inability to submit himself to a doctrine. In addition, the absurdity that Garine feels as an essential part of the human condition would not exist for the orthodox Communist or Marxist, who is convinced that man's problems are mostly economical and social.

Of the many critics who have written on <u>Les Conquérants</u>, none was in a better position to analyze the novel's Communist content than the exiled Trotsky. One of Trotsky's main complaints is that Malraux describes the revolution from above, from the European's point of view. Apart from a few allusions to the rich and the poor, or to a hatred born of oppression and poverty, Malraux is more concerned with pointing out the inconveniences caused to the Europeans by the revolution: they stifle with heat because the coolies are not looking after the ventilators. Trotsky concedes that Malraux's treatment of the Canton uprising is sympathetic, but regrets that the author's excessive individualism and artistic concerns, to say nothing of "une petite note de supériorité blasée",¹⁷⁶ have marred his treatment. Needless to say, being a Communist and being in exile, Trotsky viewed the events of the revolution with different political perspectives from thos of Malraux. His cure for the latter was "une bonne inoculation de marxisme",¹⁷⁷ but Trotsky had

176 Trotsky, op. cit., p. 490.

177_{Ibid.}, p. 493.

nothing but criticism for Borodin, the only orthodox Marxist in the novel. Trotsky wanted the proletariat alone to accomplish the revolution and criticized Borodin for being in league with the bourgeois Kuomintang. The situation is not unlike that of <u>Les Mains sales</u>. Borodin sees that it is expedient to make a temporary alliance with the Kuomintang and by doing so lay the foundations of Communism in China.

In his reply, Malraux said that the Chinese proletariat was not sufficiently conscious of itself as a body, let alone attempt to accomplish a revolution: "Vouloir diriger le prolétariat chinois en tant que prolétariat était totalement impossible, car il n'y a pas de prolétariat chinois. Il y a des pauvres, ce qui n'est pas la même chose"¹⁷⁸ Most of the Chinese still believed in an after-life, and Hong, whom Trotsky had praised so lavishly, is not even a worker.

But Malraux's reply, despite its political contents, is illuminating from another point of view. He describes what for him were the main themes of the novels. Malraux doesn't dispute the value of Marxism as a revolutionary doctrine, but he maintains the book is not so much concerned with politics or Communism:

> Les révolutionnaires ont cru que j'avais l'intention de peindre la révolution chinoise. Ce n'était pas du tout ce que je voulais. J'ai saisi un moment déterminé de cette révolution et non tenté d'en définer la ligne historique. 179

The contents of Les Conquérants are not directly political, however much

178_{A. Habaru, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 4. 179<u>Ibid</u>.}

politics we read into them. As we have just seen, it is a dialogue between the conflicting forces of individualism and collectivity; on the one hand, Malraux describes the novel as being first and foremost "une accusation de la condition humaine".¹⁸⁰ The conquerors, Garine in particular, see in the revolution a means of combatting the absurd. They have no illusions about its social repercussions or its results; it is an end in itself, a means of combatting destiny and the essential solitude of the human condition:

> La question fondamentale pour Garine est bien moins de savoir comment on peut participer à une revolution que de savoir comment on peut échapper à ce qu'il appelle l'absurde. L'ensemble des <u>Conquérants</u> est une revendication perpétuelle, et j'ai d'ailleurs insisté sur cette phrase: échapper à l'absurde en fuyant dans l'humain. 181

All political or ideological considerations are subordinated to man's great metaphysical struggle against the gods: "Garine représente à un haut degré le sens tragique de la solitude humaine qui n'existe guère pour le communiste orthodoxe."¹⁸² It is the problem of solitude that receives its most poignant expression in Malraux's masterpiece, <u>La</u> Condition humaine.

¹⁸⁰ "Réponse à Trotsky", p. 502.
¹⁸¹ "La question des <u>Conquérants</u>", p. 436.
¹⁸² A. Habaru, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 4.

CHAPTER VI

LA CONDITION HUMAINE

... le fond de l'homme est l'angoisse, la conscience de sa propre fatalité. 183

La Condition humaine is Malraux's first work of fiction in which one of the heroes is totally committed and dedicated to a cause that transcends the individual. Claude and Perken represent refusal only; Garine senses the value of commitment but remains uninvolved; Kyo, however, has no doubts about the value of his activities. He is the final stage in the evolution towards <u>engagement</u> that is one of the many themes in Malraux's novels.

Kyo is a Communist revolutionary and, unlike Borodin, a very sympathetic one who displays many human qualities. He is Garine converted to Communism, but the conflict between the conquerors or pure revolutionaries on the one hand and the professional revolutionaries on the other still exists. Vologuine, a more communicative Borodin, represents caution, pragmatism, expediency, political virtues that are tempered by a calculating coldness. Obeying the orders of the International, he sacrifices Kyo, Katow, May and the pure revolutionaries to the enemy, with whom he concludes a temporary pact that will give him an opportunity to wait for a more propitious moment to begin the revolution.

183 La Condition humaine, p. 123.

The political background of <u>La Condition humaine</u> is very much the same as that of <u>Les Conquérants</u>, one vital difference being that the revolutionaries, abandoned by the party, are ruthlessly annihilated by Chiang Kai-shek.

The underground Communists, supported by the trade unions and anarchists, organize a rebellion against the capitalist domination, but the International and the Chinese Communist party abandon them when they realize that Chiang Kai-shek is militarily superior at that moment. Vologuine, like the Borodin of <u>Les Conquérants</u>, has his hands tied. He is dependent on both the Kuomintang and the International.

These are the events that form the nucleus of the novel. However, it seems that, despite the great importance attributed to politics in La Condition humaine, the principal themes are not of a political nature.

As in <u>Les Conquérants</u>, it is necessary to differentiate between the social and the metaphysical. On the social level, Kyo, Katow and May are concerned with releasing the Chinese peasants and workers from the slavery of local landlords and from foreign economic domination. Like Hong, they want to rescue the working man from humiliation and give him a chance to "s'estimer". Kyo wants to restore in him "la possession de sa propre dignité", ¹⁸⁴ which he defines later as "le contraire de l'humiliation".¹⁸⁵ Man's work must be made meaningful, since "il n'y a pas de dignité possible pour un homme qui travaille douze heures par jour

184 La Condition humaine, p. 55. 185 Ibid., p. 234.

sans savoir pour quoi il travaille".¹⁸⁶ If there is anything cheerful in the dénouement of <u>La Condition humaine</u>, it is in the fact that Hemmelrich, liberated from domestic preoccupations by the murder of his family, can say: "C'est la première fois de ma vie que je travaille en sachant pourquoi, et non en attendant patiemment de crever."¹⁸⁷ Hemmelrich is the only survivor, the only man left who can, in Gisors' words, struggle to make the factory as meaningful to modern man as the cathedral was to medieval man.

Kyo, Katow, May, and to a certain extent Hemmelrich, have succeeded where Perken and Garine failed. Just before his suicide, Kyo thought: "Qu'eût valu une vie pour laquelle il n'eût pas accepté de mourir."¹⁸⁸ However, despite his ability to impart meaning to both his life and his work (the same thing), Kyo is no less a solitary figure than his predecessors in Malraux's first two novels.

The love that he feels for May "qui l'avait délivré de toute solitude", ¹⁸⁹ and with whom he shared everything, undergoes a marked change when she confesses an "infidelity". Kyo is consumed by anguish; his suffering is intense and his solitude unbearable. He is overcome by jealousy, and his inability to communicate his suffering to others agonizes him. He senses the death of the love he had shared with May and the end of their "complicité consentie, conquise, choisie".¹⁹⁰ His

186 La Condition humaine, p. 55. 187 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 268. 188_{Ibid.}, p. 247. 189 Ibid., p. 246. 190 Ibid., p. 46.

grief is intensified by the memory of a previous experience in which he failed to recognize a recording of his own voice. Both incidents fill him with the awareness of his own solitude. But if Kyo's relations with May are modified by this incident, he can never be completely separated from her: "Pour May seule, il n'était pas ce qu'il avait fait: pour lui seul, elle était autre chose que sa biographie."¹⁹¹ Only May accepted him without judging him, and with her only does he share a love which is not happiness. but:

... quelque chose de primitif qui s'accordait aux tenèbres et faisait monter en lui une chaleur qui finissait dans une étreinte immobile, comme d'une joue contre une joue -- la seule chose en lui qui fût aussi forte que la mort. 192

It is an awareness of the uniqueness of his love that makes Kyo decide to return for May as he makes his way off to death: "Il comprenait maintenant qu'accepter d'entraîner l'être qu'on aime dans la mort est peut-être la forme totale de l'amour, celle qui ne peut pas être dépassée."¹⁹³ However, Kyo and May are forcibly separated after being captured by the enemy. Before committing suicide to avoid torture, Kyo remembers the alienation he suffered on hearing his own voice. He dies without May, "et la seule douleur à laquelle il fût vulnérable était sa douleur à elle".¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹La Condition humaine, p. 46. ¹⁹²Ibid. ¹⁹³Ibid., p. 166. ¹⁹⁴Ibid., p. 246.

Despite its intensity, the love that Kyo shares with May is a cause of suffering and anguish. Like everything else, it is vulnerable and Kyo discovers that nothing can provide a sure remedy against loneliness. It seems that Malraux, despite the importance of the social element in the novel, is, in this novel too, more concerned with the metaphysical element. Man's solitude, his anguish in the face of suffering and death, are irremediable. The very general title, <u>La Condition humaine</u>, suggests that behind the valuable efforts of the revolutionaries to help man socially is something universal that will thwart all their efforts. Malraux is always pointing out that the great weakness of Marxism is its refusal to answer questions of a metaphysical nature.

The problem of solitude pervades the entire novel, from the opening pages with Tchen to the closing scene in which Gisors and May, transformed by the death of Kyo, go their respective ways. No one is invulnerable to loneliness, not even the socially committed group of Marxists. After committing the murder, the Chinese terrorist Tchen confesses: "Je suis extraordinairement seul",¹⁹⁵ a problem that didn't exist for his predecessor Hong. His contacts with the world of murder sever him from the rest of humanity. Tchen never experiences the <u>fraternité virile</u> that fills some moments in the lives of all of Malraux's other heroes. If he too is fighting for Kyo and the others, then he is never with them. The murder of Tang-Yen-Ta was a solitary act, as was his attempt to kill Chiang Kai-shek; when he was operating with two other Chinese terrorists, Pei and Souen, they were unable to co-ordinate,

195 La Condition humaine, p. 48.

and Tchen went away thinking: "Jamais il n'eût cru qu'on pût être si seul."¹⁹⁶ Despite the fact that he hates to recall the past, Tchen is distracted by his attempts to discover a meaning behind his manifold dreams.

All of the main characters in the book adopt various ways of combatting their solitude. Clappique, a fantasist who harks back to the days of <u>Lunes en papier</u>, is a mythomaniac who denies life by acting out various roles. When necessary, he can talk seriously with others or play a serious role in their presence, but he prefers to combat the nothingness that threatens to envelop him by playing various roles. Clappique discovers that one has merely to assume a role to be identified with it. On changing into a sailor's outfit in order to facilitate his escape to Europe, he discovered that "les hommes n'existaient pas, puisqu'il suffit d'un costume pour échapper à soi-même, pour trouver une autre vie dans la vie des autres".¹⁹⁷ At one point, he says that in order to be happy one has merely to imagine that one is happy.¹⁹⁸ What is most surprising is that Clappique is also on the side of the revolutionaries, although

¹⁹⁶La Condition humaine, p. 152.

197_{Ibid.}, p. 239.

¹⁹⁸This is another point that Sartre has enlarged upon considerably in <u>L'Existentialisme est un humanisme</u>: "Gide a fort bien dit qu'un sentiment qui se joue ou un sentiment que se vit sont deux choses presque indiscernables, décider que j'aime ma mère en restant auprès d'elle, ou jouer une comédie qui fera que je reste pour ma mère, c'est un peu la même chose. Autrement dit, le sentiment se construit par les actes qu'on fait." <u>L'Existentialisme est un humanisme</u> (Paris: Nagel, 1964), p. 45.

presumably his activities with them are just another role that he cannot take seriously. He is responsible for Kyo's capture since, instead of warning him, he spends his time in a gambling parlour, where the intensity that he feels in the game overcomes all other considerations. Indifferent to possible financial gain, "il étreignait son propre destin, le seul moyen qu'il eût jamais trouvé de se posséder lui-même".¹⁹⁹ However, on leaving the saloon Clappique is once again defenseless against the <u>angoisse</u> that reminds him that, should he stay in China, he will be killed. Yielding once more to a need to "s'inventer des biographies",²⁰⁰ he gives play to his imagination and tells a waitress that he is contemplating suicide: "Quand il disait qu'il se tuerait, il ne se croyait pas; mais, puisqu'elle le croyait, il entrait dans un monde où la vérité n'existait plus. Ce n'était ni faux, ni vrai, mais vécu."²⁰¹

Just as Clappique flees from reality to an imaginary world of his own, Gisors takes refuge in opium smoking. The descendant of Tcheng-Dai, a professor of art and a Marxist theorist who was more interested in what people <u>are</u> than in what they <u>do</u>, Gisors is the intellectual who advises the revolutionaries fighting with Kyo. A much more sympathetic figure than Tcheng-Dai, Gisors is the spiritual adviser of Tchen and one for whom suffering and thought are one and the same: "Que de souffrances éparses dans cette lumière disparaîtraient, si disparaissait la

¹⁹⁹La Condition humaine, p. 197. ²⁰⁰Ibid., p. 201. 201 I<u>bid</u>.

pensée"²⁰² Gisors is part of the revolution since his son Kyo plays an active role in it, but because of his age, he never participates in the action. As for almost every intellectual, violence is for him too a forbidden planet. Malraux was thinking of men like Gisors when he said: "Depuis que l'idée révolutionnaire la plus efficace n'est plus fondée sur la notion de justice, l'intellectuel dans la révolution, est un 'amateur'."²⁰³ Gisors fled solitude, "l'angoisse et l'obsession de la mort", 204 by smoking opium. It is he who refers to the condition d'homme that gives the novel its title: "Il faut toujours s'intoxiquer: ce pays a de l'opium, l'Islam le haschich, l'Occident la femme Peut-être l'amour est-il surtout le moyen qu'emploie l'Occidental pour s'affranchir de sa condition d'homme."²⁰⁵ Gisors' depression is worsened by the death of his sons Kyo and Tchen (the latter is a sort of "spiritual" son), by the annihilation of the revolutionaries and by the departure of all those closest to him. The pain and horror that others have suffered, the imminence of his own death and the disappearance of his only hope, Kyo, leave him full of anguish, and he equates the human condition not so much as one of solitude as one of suffering: "Il sentait trembler en lui la souffrance fondamentale, non celle qui vient des êtres ou des choses mais celle qui sourd de l'homme même et à quoi s'efforce de nous arracher la vie." 206 On a previous occasion. Kyo told Tchen that, for his father,

²⁰²<u>La Condition humaine</u>, p. 273.
²⁰³A. Habaru, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 4.
²⁰⁴<u>La Condition humaine</u>, p. 57.
²⁰⁵<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 185.
²⁰⁶<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 255.

"le fond de l'homme est l'angoisse, la conscience de sa propre fatalité". 207

Katow is one of Malraux's most memorable characters since it is he who provides the supreme example of fraternity by giving his cyanide to two terrified prisoners. And yet Katow is no less anguished than his companions, despite the fact that his sacrifice was "le plus grand don qu'il eût jamais fait".²⁰⁸ It is Katow who had said: "La seule chose nécessaire est de ne pas être seule",²⁰⁹ and it is Katow who is loneliest of all in defeat and before death. As he listens to the convulsions of the men he had helped towards easier death, Katow, trembling, "se sentit abandonné".²¹⁰

Solitude, isolation, separation, suffering, anguish, agony, fatality, inability to communicate, death: these are the words that are found on every page of <u>La Condition humaine</u> and the subjects of melancholy monologues by all the principal characters. This is the essence of Malraux's world, for these same terms are found in <u>La Tentation</u> <u>de l'Occident</u>, <u>Les Noyers de l'Altenburg</u> and the historical works long before and long after Malraux's interest in Communism. Having denied religion and its "solution", Malraux discovered that Marxism provided no

²⁰⁷<u>La Condition humaine</u>, p. 123.
²⁰⁸<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 250.
²⁰⁹<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 168.
²¹⁰<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 251.

satisfactory answer to the metaphysical problems that haunted him. 211

However, if Marxism plays a greater part in <u>La Condition humaine</u> than in the two previous novels and finds greater acceptance among Malraux's heroes, then it is not tacitly accepted à la Borodin. As the following quotations illustrate, the principle protagonists of the novel interpret Marxism in a different manner from the International.²¹² Gisors tells his son:

> Le marxisme n'est pas une doctrine c'est une volonté, c'est, pour le prolétariat et les siens -- vous -la volonté de se connaître, de se sentir comme tels; vous ne devez pas être marxiste pour avoir raison, mais pour vaincre sans vous trahir. 213

Kyo interprets Marxism in the same way as his father, as we see during his attempt to convince Vologuine of the immediacy of the revolutionary goal. When Vologuine puts forward his plans for delaying the insurrection, Kyo is not convinced: "Mais il y a dans le marxisme le sens d'une fatalité et l'exaltation d'une volonté. Chaque fois que la fatalité passe avant la volonté, je me méfie."²¹⁴ Nevertheless, despite

²¹¹One could very well argue that Malraux's concern with metaphysical problems, when the fate of millions of men was being decided, is somewhat callous. Henri Peyre has drawn attention to this by accusing him in the following quotation from Shakespeare:

> "You speak of the people As if you were a god to punish, not A man of their infirmity."

The Contemporary French Novel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 201.

²¹²It is interesting to note that whereas Mussolini banned Malraux's novels because they were "Communist", the Soviet authorities banned them because they were not.

213 La Condition humaine, p. 56.
214
Ibid., p. 114.

Kyo's insistence that the revolution must be initiated immediately, Vologuine remains adamant. Kyo, convinced that he has been betrayed, attempts the impossible, and the insurrection ends in disaster.

What Malraux has done is to dramatize the struggle within the Communist ranks and to use the vain efforts of the insurgents to combat superior forces to suggest man's conflict with Destiny. Kyo and Katow, deprived of the help of the International, faced almost insurmountable odds, as does man in his struggle with fate.

However, there is one way in which man can assert his strength and claim a victory over Destiny: he can take his own life: "Et mourir est passivité, mais se tuer est un acte."²¹⁵ This is an idea that has already been expressed in <u>La Voie royale</u>. It is much better to take one's own life than to be reduced to the <u>rien</u> or <u>déchéance</u> that is Grabot. It is Perken who says that "quand on déchoit -- il faut se tuer".²¹⁶ Kyo "avait toujours pensé qu'il est beau de mourir de <u>sa</u> mort, d'une mort qui ressemble à sa vie".²¹⁷ For Kyo, a life that wasn't worth dying for was of little worth. But Malraux had already said the opposite in

La Tentation de 1'Occident:

Celui qui se sacrifie participe à la grandeur de la cause à laquelle il s'est sacrifié. Mais cette cause je ne lui vois de grandeur que celle qu'elle doit au sacrifice. 218

215 La Condition humaine, p. 246. 216 La Voie royale, p. 98. 217 La Condition humaine, p. 246._ 218 La Tentation de l'Occident, p. 56.

However, the circumstances are vastly different. Kyo's suicide is not gratuitous like that of many Christian martyrs, but the last resort of a man condemned to be tortured and for whom escape was absolutely impossible. In his case, it was rather "la suprême expression d'une vie à quoi cette mort ressemblait tant".²¹⁹ All of Malraux's heroes are obsessed with a need to die well. Tchen wanted to "mourir le plus haut possible",²²⁰ just as Perken was afraid of dying badly, like the majority of men. In his opinion, "faire sa mort ... semble beaucoup plus important que faire sa vie".²²¹ At the end of <u>Les Conquérants</u>, Garine too expressed the need to die well. Tchen 's instructions to Pei are simple and forthright: "Témoigne",²²² he tells him as he prepares to die an exemplary death.

Death, like everything else, can be an act chosen by man, a means of triumphing over Destiny. Needless to say, religious comforts and the consolations of an after-life are denied, as they have been throughout all of Malraux's work:

> Certes, il est une foi plus haute: celle que proposent toutes les croix des villages, et ces mêmes croix qui dominent'nos morts. Elle est amour, et l'apaisement est en elle. Je ne l'accepterai jamais; je ne m'abaisserai pas à lui demander l'apaisement auquel ma faiblesse m'appelle. 223

219La Condition humaine, p. 247. 220<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 38. 221<u>La Voie royale</u>, p. 264. 222<u>La Condition humaine</u>, p. 152. 223<u>La Tentation de l'Occident</u>, p. 124.

The same idea is expressed in <u>La Voie royale</u>. Claude is filled with hatred for all those who seek the consolation of religion: "Claude se souvint, haineusement, de la phrase de son enfance: Seigneur, assisteznous dans notre agonie"²²⁴

Consolation, comfort, security, ease and even happiness are all shunned by Malraux's heroes. They are men who can exist only when there is something overwhelming to struggle against. Some of them have an almost masochistic love of suffering. Katow remembers reading the following sentence in some book, and we infer that he is thinking mainly of Kyo and himself as he ponders over its significance: "Ce n'était pas les découvertes, mais les souffrances des explorateurs que j'enviais, qui m'attiraient."²²⁵ Tchen is uneasy when his former teacher, Pastor Smithson, speaks of love, peace and happiness: "Je ne cherche pas la paix. Je cherche ... le contraire."²²⁶ Malraux's novels present an insoluble paradox. On the one hand, characters like Perken, Garine and Kyo regret the suffering, solitude and absurdity that constitute the human condition; on the other hand, Tchen and Katow seem to will that it be so.²²⁷

²²⁴La Voie royale, p. 182.

²²⁵<u>La Condition humaine</u>, p. 248. One immediately thinks of Claude telling Ramèges, director of the French Institute in Saigon: "Je ne suis pas à la recherche du confortable et de la tranquillité." <u>La Voix</u> royale, p. 44.

La Condition humaine, p. 135.

²²⁷Needless to say, the characters cannot be classified into two distinct and separate groups. Most of Malraux's creations give expression to both aspects of the conflict.

Tchen is one of Malraux's extreme creations, but it is he who provides the best example of the desire for <u>intensité</u> that is almost a Malrauvian virtue. An acquaintance with the world of murder and his subsequent isolation from the other revolutionaries leave Tchen fascinated with the world of death. From then on he is obsessed with the mystique of terrorism, which offers him "la possession complête de soimême".²²⁸ For Tchen, intensity of experience is identified with his self only. His abortive attempt to murder Chiang Kai-shek was the supreme expression of an individual, whereas Kyo, Katow and May are totally committed to a cause that will survive their own individual lives.

La Condition humaine is without any doubt Malraux's most tragic novel. Apart from a few brief episodes -- the most memorable being Katow's fraternal sacrifice and the communication born of it -- there is little to suggest that man's solitude can be alleviated.

There is no such thing as happiness or progress; contemplating the past is dismissed, since it prevents man from concentrating on the immediate; there are no descriptions of nature and the only example of love is very remote from the world of romantic love. Malraux's world is one in which men never laugh, enjoy or relax. However, if his creations are in many ways exemplary, then they are in many ways remote from the activities of the average man.²²⁹ They excel only in extreme circumstances -- in war, in violent physical action, in suffering, before

²²⁸La Condition humaine, p. 150.

²²⁹Sartre's Roquentin and Mathieu are more acceptable to us, since they operate in more familiar surroundings and more easily acceptable circumstances.

death -- in countries that are not their own.

Malraux's next novel, the first to be set in Europe, provides many more examples of men fighting and dying outside their own country. From all corners of the Western world, men of every political creed joined hands in 1936 to combat the threat of fascism in Spain. It now remains to examine Malraux's account of their hopes and failures in L'Espoir, one of the most moving documents on the Spanish Civil War.

CHAPTER VII

L'ESPOIR

I am fighting for my ideas as I have always done, and I shall not write one line until Fascist and Nazi methods are annihilated. 230

At the end of <u>L'Espoir</u>, in a moving dialogue between Alvear, an art historian, and Scali, an art connoisseur, the latter declares that: "L'art est peu de chose en face de la douleur, et, malheureusement, aucun tableau ne se tient en face de taches de sang."²³¹ Malraux himself was among the first of the many European intellectuals and poets who, at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, abandoned their art to support the Loyalist cause.

In 1937, as the war was entering its second year, and when it seemed likely that the Loyalist troops would be the final victors, Malraux published an account of his experiences in the novel <u>L'Espoir</u>. However, to avoid confusion, it is necessary to point out that Malraux's account of his experiences is by no means that of a war hero, the autobiography of a valiant soldier, but the testimony of a man who suppressed the tale of his own participation in order to portray the spirit of the heterogeneous forces that fought on the Loyalist or Republican side.

230 Henri Peyre, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 187.

²³¹André Malraux, <u>L'Espoir</u> (Paris: Gallimard, 1937), p. 316.

Not only is the novel for the most part historically true, but the men who still live on as symbols were living men of flesh and bones, who did everything possible to annihilate fascist and Nazi methods. In many cases, Malraux didn't bother to give them new names: Puig, who was killed early in the war, was an anarchist from Barcelona; Hernandez was actually in command at Toledo; Manuel is the Spanish author, Ramón Sender.

It is because of this throbbing human quality that <u>L'Espoir</u>, despite its loose construction and its abundance of episodes and dialogues, remains today as a living document of this century's most ghastly civil war. Among the many themes examined in the fifteen or so dialogues is the one most relevant to this discussion, Communism.

L'Espoir, as Goldmann has pointed out, marks a new stage in the politics in Malraux's fiction in that, for the first time, Communism is accepted explicitly as being the only means of accomplishing victory. It was the only way to discipline and unify the heterogeneous groups: "... libéraux, hommes de l'U.G.T. et de la C.N.T. anarchistes, républicains, syndicalistes, socialistes"²³² that constituted the Republican troops. However, before examining the exact nature of Iberian Communism during the civil war period, and the reaction of the fighting men to it, it is fitting to examine why so many men of so many different sorts should prefer to die rather than witness the triumph of fascism. Their motivations, for the most part simple, are as manifold as the political parties to which they belong.

The pilot Magnin, a member of the gauche révolutionnaire

232_{L'Espoir}, p. 29.

<u>socialiste</u>, has the same goals as Kyo and his fellow revolutionaries. As manager of many factories and as a former workman, he realizes only too well what it is to spend "une vie entière à perdre huit heures par jour".²³³ One immediately thinks of Kyo's concern to make work more meaningful for the average man, particularly for the man who has to work twelve hours a day without knowing why. Magnin expresses the same concern: "Je veux que les hommes sachent pourquoi ils travaillent."²³⁴

Le Négus, of the <u>Federación Anarquista Ibérica</u>, also wants to change the lot of the working man, whom he likens to the convict: "... quand les hommes sortent de prison, neuf fois par dix leur regard ne se pose plus. Ils ne regardent plus comme des hommes. Dans le prolétariat aussi il y a beaucoup de regards qui ne se posent plus."²³⁵ Like his fellow anarchist Hong, what he really wants is to remedy the fact that "un pauvre ne peut pas s'estimer".²³⁶ For the working men in general, the civil war was an attempt to secure-"le droit de parler".²³⁷

Although the social and economic goals of the civil war were vitally important to the Republican cause, they were not the only reasons that inspired men to combat. Many of the Republicans had no other motive than an intense hatred of fascism. Garcia, not a worker, but an intellectual, remarked that: "La droite et la gauche espagnoles sont

233 L'Espoir, p. 82. 234 Ibid ²³⁵Ibid., p. 119. ²³⁶Les Conquérants, p. 144. 237 L'Espoir, p. 269.

séparées par le goût ou l'horreur de l'humiliation. Le Front populaire, c'est, entre autres choses, l'ensemble de ceux qui en ont horreur."²³⁸ Scali fought to combat the fascist idea of innate superiority:

> L'idée, si commune parmi les fascistes, que leur ennemi est par définition une race inférieure et digne de mépris, l'aptitude au dédain de tant d'imbéciles n'était pas une des moindres raisons pour lesquelles il avait quitté son pays. 239

Manuel, Communist leader, shared more or less the same opinion about the fascist mentality:

D'abord, ce dont révent les trois quarts de nos fascistes espagnols, ce n'est pas d'autorité, c'est de bon plaisir. Et puis, les fascistes, au fond, croient toujours à la race qui commande Tout fasciste commande de droit divin. 240

Captain Mercery is one of the many combattants bent on improving the quality of man's existence as a whole, as distinct from the conditions under which he works. Spurred on by a letter from his wife: "Un homme ne peut tolérer l'indignité de ce qui se passe ici",²⁴¹ he fought for that "quelque chose d'authentique"²⁴² which Garcia observed in him. For Hernandez, "Ia révolution est un mode de réalisation de ses désirs éthiques".²⁴³ Garcia, for whom the idea of the proletariat for the proletariat's sake was anathema, considers the revolution worthless, "si

238 L'Espoir, p. 206. 239 Ibid., p. 142. 240 Ibid., p. 168. 241 Ibid., p. 79. 242 Ibid., p. 203. 243 Ibid., p. 207. elle ne doit pas rendre les hommes meilleurs".²⁴⁴ For Scali, its object is "enseigner aux hommes à vivre",²⁴⁵ although he is by no means indifferent to the plight of the Spanish peasantry. Ximénès, an ardent Catholic and colonel in the Civil Guards, is a purist in the Tcheng-Daï tradition, with the one fundamental difference that, despite all his scruples, he does not fear to "soil his hands" by participating in the struggle against fascism. Addressing his troops, he declares: "Que ... la Nation espagnole soit avec nous, garçons, qui combattons pour ce que nous croyons juste,²⁴⁶ Shade, the American journalist, tells a fascist soldier: "tout ce qui est dégoûtant est avec vous. Et tout ce qui a besoin de justice est avec nous, même les femmes."²⁴⁷ It is Guernico, another Catholic, who embodies that great hope expressed in the title of the novel, who says: "... la plus grande force de la révolution, c'est l'espoir."²⁴⁸

A notably large number of Spaniards fought in the civil war to protest against the prostitution of the Church at the hands of unscrupulous self-seeking prelates who supported the fascist cause. It is, I think, to Malraux's credit that he does not condemn the Spanish Church outright (a temptation into which many have fallen), despite the silent aquiescence of many of its members. He gives expression to the many

²⁴⁴L'Espoir, p. p. 210.
²⁴⁵Ibid., p. 387.
²⁴⁶Ibid., p. 165.
²⁴⁷Ibid., p. 191.
²⁴⁸Ibid., p. 49.

complaints of those impoverished peasants who could not reconcile the noble idea of Christian charity with the wealth of the Church, and at the same time he creates several deeply Christian figures, notably Ximénès, who is admired even by the Communist leader Manuel, and Guernico, the Catholic writer who was, unlike Tcheng-Daï, not afraid to engage his moral responsibility: "Nous, écrivains chrétiens, nous avons peut-être plus de devoirs que d'autres."²⁴⁹ (It is interesting to note that Manuel, the responsible Communist leader, tells his men exactly the same thing: "Yous n'avez pas plus de droits que les autres, mais vous avez plus de devoirs.")²⁵⁰

For Ximenès and Guernico, the revolution is just a little more painful than for the others, since they, all the while preserving their faith in God, must in addition fight against the corruptions of the temporal body of the Church. These corruptions are quite well known, but very concisely summarized by Malraux in L'Espoir:

> Les paysans reprochaient à l'Eglise d'avoir toujours soutenu les seigneurs, approuvé la répression qui suivit la révolte des Asturies, approuvé la spoliation des Catalans, enseigné sans cesse aux pauvres la soumission devant l'injustice, alors qu'elle prêchait aujourd'hui la guerre sainte contre eux. Un reprochait aux prêtres leur voix "qui n'était pas une voix d'homme"; beaucoup, l'hypocrisie ou la dureté, selon le grade, des hommes sur qui ils s'appuyaient dans les villages; tous, d'avoir indiqué aux fascistes, dans les villages conquis, les noms de ceux qui "pensaient mal", n'ignorant pas qu'ils les faisaient fusiller. Tous, leurs richesses. 251

²⁴⁹L'Espoir, p. 305.
²⁵⁰Ibid., p. 267.
²⁵¹Ibid., p. 176.

Guernico says that for twenty years he has witnessed rituals, seen priests exercise their profession, but he has never seen any trace of spiritualism in the Church. What he hopes most of all from the revolution, is "une renaissance de l'église".²⁵²

On the other hand, the extreme nihilism of the anarchists, an important group in most wars and revolutions, finds expression. In <u>L'Espoir</u>, the spirits of Hong and Tchen linger on in the figures of Puig et Le Négus. The former is in many ways the typical anarchist, for whom futurity is an alien concept, and to whom the immediate present is everything. For Puig, all the hopes and illusions of the revolution, which he dismissed as a mere <u>Jacquerie</u>, were insignificant. He was an anarchist because anarchy gave him the possibility of displaying exemplary courage and absolute bravery, divorced from any external considerations.

Le Négus is a much more complex character. As we have already seen, he was a member of the Iberian Anarchist Party and at the same time he showed deep concern for the condition of the Spanish workers, a concern which surely makes him an anarchist in name only. There is a fundamental contradiction in Le Négus. How can he even begin to change the Spaniards' working conditions when for him revolutionary activity is in itself a way of life? Indifferent to organization, parties and any form of government, he simply wants to forge new men.

It will be seen from these comments that the Spanish Civil War was of a very complex nature, and that the Republican troops incarnated a very wide number of grievances. The only motivation of many was an

²⁵²<u>L'Espoir</u>, p. 309.

intense loathing of the fascist mentality; others abhorred the tacit alliance between Church and insurgents; many were idealists fighting for justice, for the quality of life, for the dignity of man. Many were social reformers; a few were anarchists indifferent to social reforms; too few saw the need to organize, the most immediate need of all. Ιt will be obvious by now that the Spanish Civil War was not simply a war between the antagonistic forces of fascism and Communism, but that in reality Communism played a relatively small part in the struggle. And, as will be shown, Communism was accepted by García (and Malraux) only in so far as it offered the Republicans the possibility of organizing themselves into a competent, disciplined army capable of taking on the Germanand Italian-trained Forces of Franco. The Republican downfall can easily be traced back, not so much to their lack of military equipment (although this is surely important), as to their general inability to fight as a unified force. Communism was the only force that offered the combination of organization, discipline, strategy and objectives that are the necessary ingredients of any fighting body. If any one theme predominates in L'Espoir, which is replete with ideas, it is the need to organize the rebellion, the need to reconcile "being" with "doing".

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The Spanish Civil War had one peculiar characteristic: the large number of men who believed implicitly that God or justice was on their side and that, since they were destined to triumph, organization was unnecessary. Le Négus, Hernandez, and the majority of the common soldiers can be placed in this category. The myth of the people, the idea that spontaneous revolutionary enthusiasm is in itself capable of sustaining and winning a war, proved just as nefarious to the Republican morale as

the German-made shells fired by fascist troops.

Perhaps no one was more painfully aware of the Republicans' main weakness than García, Malraix's mouthpiece in two key dialogues, where he pleads for discipline, which he defines as "l'ensemble des moyens qui donnent à des collectivités combattantes la plus grande efficacité".²⁵³ He tries to convince Magnin that the Apocalypse of fraternity, however moving it may be, is insufficient for winning battles. But Magnin, less pragmatic than García, has a dream of total liberty that will create a new type of.man. For García, one of the greatest dangers on the Republican side is that "tout homme porte en soi-même le désir d'une Apocalypse",²⁵⁴ a danger that must be thwarted by a more pressing need: "... organiser l'Apocalypse."²⁵⁵

Shortly after, García reiterates the same arguments for the benefit of Hernandez, who also saw in the revolution a means of making men better. García's objections illuminate the essential problem of the war: "Les communistes veulent <u>faire</u> quelque chose. Vous et les anarchistes, pour des raisons différentes, vous voulez <u>être</u> quelque chose."²⁵⁶ Le Négus is another fighter who fails to see why the revolutionary ideal in itself will not destroy the fascists. García informs him that "quand on veut que la révolution soit une façon de vivre pour

²⁵³L'Espoir, p. 117.
²⁵⁴Ibid., p. 120.
²⁵⁵Ibid.
²⁵⁶Ibid., p. 212.

elle-même, elle devient presque toujours une façon de mourir".²⁵⁷ When Guernico asks him what he thinks of the Communists, he replies that they have all the virtues of action, at a time when action is all that counts.

The most sympathetic Communist in the novel is Manuel, who, all the while believing in the necessity of discipline, is not a robot like the Borodin of <u>Les Conquérants</u>, but one of the few leaders to succeed in being "aimé sans séduire".²⁵⁸ Only too aware of the danger of being a slave to party discipline, Manuel declared that: "Etre rapproché du Parti ne vaut rien si c'est être séparé de ceux pour qui le Parti travaille."²⁵⁹

Communism exists in <u>L'Espoir</u> as an unfulfilled possibility, rather than a living reality. It is perhaps paradoxical that, in the one novel where it is most fully accepted by Malraux, it should play such a relatively small part.

However, despite this acceptance and despite the many admirable qualities of its leader, Manuel, Communism nevertheless comes in for some strong criticism. Enrique, a character in the Borodin tradition, asserts that: "Pour moi, un camarade du Parti a plus d'importance que tous les Magnin et tous les García du monde."²⁶⁰ His intransigence contrasts with the understanding of Manuel, who admires the many qualities of Ximénez, a sincere Catholic. Magnin, disturbed by the Communists' crusader-like

257 L'Espoir, p. 200. ²⁵⁸Ibid., p. 173. Ibid., p. 402. 260 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 158.

devotion to Party discipline, was left with only one impression: "il n'était pas des leurs."²⁶¹ On another occasion, he voiced his frustration by declaring frankly that "les communistes m'embêtent".²⁶²

Le Négus accuses the Communists of having become like priests: "Je ne dis pas que le communisme est devenu une religion; mais je dis que les communistes sont en train de devenir des curés."²⁶³ Shade, the American journalist, expresses his disapproval of Communist verbiage much more frankly than Le Négus. "Vous avez tous de trop grosses têtes",²⁶⁴ he tells Pradas, another member of the party.

However, when one examines the Spanish Civil War historically, one is led to conclude that it was the "Enrique mentality", and not the "Manuel mentality", that predominated. Two very revealing documents,²⁶⁵ published by the <u>New York Times</u> just after Franco's victory, shed some light on the question. One was a letter containing the Communist Party's official policy, signed by Stalin, Molotoff and Voroshiloff. In it Stalin warned Caballero, then President of the Spanish Republic, of the necessity of attracting the peasants to his side. Their interests must be furthered by reductions in taxation and they must be encouraged to participate more actively in the army. Similarly, the Spanish government must win over the bourgeoisie by continuing to allow them freedom of trade. In addition, foreign capital must be appeased and great care must be taken

²⁶¹L'Espoir, p. 158.
²⁶²Ibid., p. 159.
²⁶³Ibid., p. 201.
²⁶⁴Ibid., p. 202.
²⁶⁵The New York Times, June 4, 1939, p. 43.

so that Spain is not seen abroad as a Communist Republic, or else the '

The American publication of Stalin's instructions to Spain was accompanied by another letter, composed by Araquistain, Ambassador to the Spanish Repubic in France for Caballero's government. Araquistain's letter leaves one in no doubt that he considered Stalin's instructions to be a mere foil to the real policies undertaken by Russiam Communists in Spain.

Araquistain quotes from a book by Caballero in which the latter alluded to "irresponsible outside interference" by the Russian government. The former is more explicit in that he describes the interference as deliberate Communist infiltration. He accused the Russians of attempting to control both the Spanish government and army, instead of acting as advisors. He accused them of being responsible for the disastrous campaigns of Teruel and Berete because they acted against the advice of the Spanish government. In addition, the Russians boycotted the Mérida campaign because it conflicted with their own strategy.

In general, Araquistain condemned the Russian advisors and troops for failing to subordinate themselves to Spanish military leaders and politicians. They were, in many cases, incompetent, and sowed the seeds of discontent. Russia completely controlled the Spanish Air Force, but in several cases it undertook manoeuvres without attempting to achieve co-ordination with land and sea forces.

In view of the prominent part played by destiny in all the previous novels, it is not a little surprising to find that metaphysics is relatively unimportant in L'Espoir. Perhaps the main reason for this

exception is the underlying optimism implied in the title, an optimism that was nourished by the Republicans' blind faith in the inevitability of victory. For this reason, I find it strange that René Girard should single out <u>L'Espoir</u> as Malraux's most metaphysical novel. For the French critic, <u>L'Espoir</u> is: "... moins une lutte d'hommes contre d'autres hommes qu'un effort collectif pour dépasser la condition humaine. L'ennemi n'est qu'un élément de ces forces cosmiques qui écrasent l'homme et auxquelles les héros ont lancé un défi."²⁶⁶ In my opinion, the above quotation aptly describes the essential conflict of the previous novels.

If there is in <u>L'Espoir</u> a single force that unites all the Republicans, it is surely fraternity. To everyone who has read <u>La</u> <u>Condition humaine</u>, the most memorable example of this is Katow's gift of his cyanide to two fellow prisoners. However, it seems to me that of all the novels, <u>L'Espoir</u> is the one in which virile fraternity -- that great Malrauvian virtue -- assumes an almost spiritual quality.

Whereas <u>La Condition humaine</u> contains moving illustrations of <u>fraternité virile</u>, for example, Katow's sublime gesture, in <u>L'Espoir</u> it it conceived as a conscious bond that unites the fighting men. It is a value of which all the combattants are aware. Puig, the anarchist, was amazed at the fraternity shared by political prisoners. For another young soldier, Jaime, "le Front populaire, c'était cette fraternité dans la vie et dans la mort".²⁶⁷ Shade said: "Il y a plus de fraternité ici,

266 René Girard, "L'homme et le cosmos dans <u>L'Espoir</u> et <u>Les Noyers</u> <u>de l'Altenburg</u>", <u>PMLA</u>, LXVIII, mars 1953, p. 53.

267 L'Espoir, p. 44.

dans la vie, que dans n'importe quelle cathédrale, de l'autre côté."²⁶⁸ Moreno, an old Marxist, was moved by "une fraternité qui ne se trouve que de l'autre côté de la mort".²⁶⁹

In fact, it seems that, had the moral bond of fraternity, the only positive force common to all those who fought on the Republican side, been translated into a practical political reality, the Spanish Civil War might not have ended as it did. As it was, fraternity proved ineffectual against the foreign-equipped troops of Franco.

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In this section, an attempt has been made at revealing the essence of Communism as it is interpreted by Malraux in the late twenties and thirties. His appreciation of the aims, the difficulties and the weaknesses of Communism will, I hope, have become manifest by now. If any single phrase could sum up the dialogues that have already been examined, it would be the conflict between Communism as blind adherence to doctrine and Communism as a will, a means.

In addition, I have tried to put the question of Communism in its proper perspective by bringing out what I take to be the main themes of the novels.

For the next and final section, we shall return to the question of art.

²⁶⁸<u>L*Espoir</u>, p. 50. ²⁶⁹<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 363.

PART III

ART AND ETERNITY

Notre art me paraît une rectification du monde, un moyen d'échapper à la condition d'homme. La confusion capitale me paraît venir de ce qu'on a cru ... que représenter une fatalité était la subir. Mais non! c'est presque la posséder. Le seul fait de pouvoir la représenter, de la concevoir, la fait échapper au vrai destin, à l'implacable échelle divine: la réduit à l'échelle humaine. Dans ce qu'il a d'essentiel notre art est une humanisation du monde.

> André Malraux, <u>Les Noyers</u> <u>de l'Altenburg</u>, p. 128.

CHAPTER VIII

ART IN THE NOVELS

Je suis en art comme on est en religion. 270

It is not possible to speak of Malraux's return to art, since one cannot truthfully say that art ever completely disappeared from his fiction. Perhaps one notable exception is <u>Les Conquérants</u> where politics, the absurd, and the debate between individualism and collectivity completely dominate the novel. However, as has been shown in the first section, the publication of <u>Les Conquérants</u> was contemporaneous with the composition of part of <u>Royaume farfelu</u>, <u>Ecrits pour un ours en peluche</u> and, more important, La Voie royale.

It is surprising that those who were most astonished at Malraux's "conversion" to art should have completely forgotten <u>La Voie royale</u>. Although it is undeniable that the novel attempts, in Malraux's own words, to show "la solitude fondamentale de l'homme devant la mort", ²⁷¹ nevertheless, the plot is a continual reminder of the importance of art. <u>La Voie royale</u> is, to all intents and purposes, a novelized account of Malraux's own experiences in Indochina. However, his confrontation with the corrupt colonial administration is not mentioned and the adventurous side of his journeys is emphasized.

²⁷⁰Janet Flanner, "The Human Condition, Part 2", p. 94.
²⁷¹A. Habaru, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 4.

Claude Vannec, an enthusiastic archeologist and specialist in Oriental art, organizes an expedition to South-East Asia in an attempt to discover a lost but valuable Khmer temple full of priceless statues. Although this is just a backcloth to the metaphysical questions already discussed in Chapter IV, one conversation between Claude and Ramèges, director of the French Institute in Saigon is very revealing, since it hints at Malraux's concepts of art in the late twenties.

Many of the ideas that Malraux was later to develop are sketched out in this brief dialogue: the timelessness of the work of art, its transformation by succeeding generations, its mythical value, the mentality of the civilization that is re-assessing its value. It is illuminating to note that he is more interested in the revaluation or metamorphosis that art undergoes at the hands of later civilizations than in the mentality of the age that produced it:

> J'en viens à dire que la valeur essentielle accordée à l'artiste nous masque l'un des pôles de la vie de l'oeuvre d'art: l'état de la civilisation qui la considère. On dirait qu'en art le temps n'existe pas. Ce qui m'intéresse, comprenez-vous, c'est la décomposition, la transformation de ces oeuvres, leur vie la plus profonde, qui est faite de la mort des hommes. Toute oeuvre d'art, en somme, tend à devenir mythe. 272

The interest of modern art, and indeed any art, lies in the insight which it provides into the mentality of the age that produces it. In the twenties, Malraux is either disinterested in this or feels that the time lapse is so enormous that we will never be able to recapture the climate of ideas of that civilization: "En profondeur, toute

272 La Voie royale, p. 42.

civilisation est impénétrable pour une autre."²⁷³ However, every civilization continues to exist, although in extremely different ways, in the minds of subsequent civilizations. Objects of art and buildings remain and, according to Malraux, it is the artist who resurrects, re-interprets and revalues them:

> Les musées sont pour moi des lieux où les oeuvres du passé, devenues mythes, dorment -- vivent d'une vie historique -- en attendant que les artistes les rappellent à une existence réelle. 274

It is unfortunate that Claude or Malraux did not define exactly what he meant by "une existence reale". Do they have any real existence apart from that which they enjoy in the minds of a few specialists or a few collectors?

In <u>La Condition humaine</u>, allusions to art are equally superficial but more manifold than in <u>La Voie royale</u>. At one point in the novel Gisors becomes a professor of Western art. However, despite his position and what Malraux fleetingly describes as "son sens si pur de l'art chinois, ²⁷⁵ Gisors never hazards an opinion on what he considers to be the significance and purpose of art. On the contrary, it is he who asks his brother-in-law Kama why he paints. Kama's reply is not very precise: "Quand je suis allé en Europe, j'ai vu les musées. Plus vos peintres font des pommes, et même des lignes qui ne représentent pas des choses,

273 La Voie royale, p. 42.

²⁷⁴<u>Ibid.</u> It is interesting to recall that in <u>La Tentation de</u> <u>1'Occident</u> (p. 77), Ling was unimpressed by European museums: "Toute <u>1'après-midi</u> j'ai regardé les tableaux du Louvre. A leur maladroite réunion que je préfère ce que montrent les fenêtres."

²⁷⁵ <u>La Condition humaine</u>, p. 56.

plus ils parlent d'eux. Pour moi, c'est le monde qui compte."²⁷⁶ One can deduce from this comment that Kama is not concerned with imitating the European artist's preoccupation with expressing his own subjectivity in the manner of Picasso or Cézanne. In this respect, he is being true to the Chinese tradition, for, as Malraux points out in his "Esquisse d'une psychologie du cinéma", Chinese painting ignores and even disdains depth, perspective and deliberate expression of one's feelings.²⁷⁷ For Kama, painting is still representational. However, the next sentence seems to indicate that Malraux was not so much concerned with the artistic reasons behind Kama's interest in painting as with his interpretation of art as being a remedy against solitude.

Gisors, translating for Clappique's benefit, adds: "Le maître dit que s'il ne peignait plus, il lui semblerait qu'il est devenu aveugle. Et plus qu'aveugle: seul."²⁷⁸ In answer to a question by Clappique, Kama contends that his painting would improve if he knew for certain that he was destined to die soon. Gisors continues:

> Il pense que l'approche de la mort lui permettrait peut-être de mettre en toutes choses assez de ferveur, de tristesse pour que toutes les formes qu'il peindrait devinssent des signes compréhensibles, pour que ce qu'elles signifient -- ce qu'elles cachent aussi -- se révélât. 279

²⁷⁶La Condition humaine, p. 154.

²⁷⁷André Malraux, "Esquisse d'une psychologie du cinéma", <u>Scènes</u> <u>choisies</u> (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), p. 325.

²⁷⁸La Condition humaine, p. 154.

279<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 155.

It seems that Kama is regretting his very lack of suffering, since he knows that great art is born of intensity of emotion, if not indeed of suffering.

This, then, is the only important dialogue on art in <u>La Condition</u> <u>humaine</u>. Kama, a representationalist, sees in painting what Gisors has seen in opium, the means of combatting fearful solitude. He is a mediocre painter who seems to yearn for the fervour of emotion that gives birth to great art.

In the later novels, Malraux uses his knowledge of art to heighten his descriptions of both people and places. This technique was initiated in <u>La Condition humaine</u>. The home of Gisors and Kyo is furnished with "des peintres Song, des phénix bleu Chardin; -- un Bouddha de la dynastie Wei, d'un style presque roman".²⁸⁰ In Ferral's office hang "des Picasso de la période rose, et une esquisse érotique de Fragonard".²⁸¹ The courtes an he arranges to meet is likened to "une statuette Tang";²⁸² Clappique, on seeing a blond servant girl, exclaims: "Un Rubens, -- mais pas parfait."²⁸³

This descriptive technique is not used in <u>Les Conquérants</u>, but from the publication of <u>La Condition humaine</u> until the appearance of <u>Les</u> <u>Noyers de l'Altenburg</u>, when it became abundantly clear that Malraux's interest was by no means a passing one, it gradually assumes greater importance.

280_<u>La Condition humaine</u>, p. 35. 281<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 88. 282<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 187. 283_{Ibid.}, p. 200.

In <u>L'Espoir</u>, Guernico is "long, blond, pâle, comme tant de portraits de Velasquez".²⁸⁴ Jaime's father, "un viellard massif, très grand, une tête à la barbe en fer de lance enfoncée entre de larges épaules voutées",²⁸⁵ is likened to one of El Greco's portraits. One could easily interpret these comparisons, of which there are many more, as a concession to local colour if it were not for Malraux's fervent interest in art. However, in this respect <u>L'Espoir</u> is of greater interest than any other previous novel, since it contains two important conversations on the function of art.

The aesthete Lopez hopes that the revolution will engender a "renaissance de l'art",²⁸⁶ an art that will express the hopes and lyricism of the revolutionaries, that will rival Christian cathedrals and Mexican frescoes, both revolutionary at one time and both born of a struggle against some hostile force. Shade, the American journalist, remains sceptical and questions the value of an art that speaks to the masses: "On ne peut pas faire un art qui parle aux masses quand on n'a rien à leur dire mais nous luttons ensemble, nous voulons faire une autre vie ensemble, et nous avons tout à nous dire."²⁸⁷ The communication born of a collective effort renders art superfluous, especially in war. Although he could reluctantly admire the art of man, "Shade se méfiait

²⁸⁴L'Espoir, p. 302. ²⁸⁵Ibid., p. 315. Ibid., p. 49. 287 Ibid,

des théories artistiques dont toute révolution est menacée".²⁸⁸ Unabashed, Lopez continues to elaborate his theories. He laments the fact that artists are over-preoccupied with rules and insufficiently concerned with the function and purpose of their art. We infer that for Lopez the ability to communicate as widely as possible is one of the virtues of the artist. He distrusts abstractions. A work of art must be directed at a given set of people. However, given the drastic situation in which the conversation takes place, it would seem that Shade is more right at this particular point; it is not a little callous to talk of art and style at a time when Spain is being overthrown by fascist armies?

During the numerous air attacks of the Spanish Civil War, many churches were reduced to ruins. At times this was accidental, at times a deliberate policy. Irate Republicans bombarded and burned Spain's treasure-filled churches, since these symbolized the alliance of church and fascism. Repeatedly throughout <u>L'Espoir</u>, Malraux voices his concern for the innumerable and priceless works of art contained in the churches and cathedrals. Lopez makes it his task to protect the priceless heritage of Toledo: "Fort peu efficace à la guerre, Lopez s'était montré éblouissant à la protection des oeuvres d'art. Grâce à lui, pas un Greco n'avait été détruit dans la pagaille de Tolède."²⁸⁹ But Lopez is no lone eccentric. We learn that some of the Republicans had formed a "comité esthétique révolutionnaire"²⁹⁰ and took extra-cautious measures so as not

²⁸⁸L'Espoir, p. 49.
²⁸⁹Ibid., p. 364.
²⁹⁰Ibid., p. 486.

to destroy religious buildings and their precious contents.

However, there is another side to the story. Scali and Alvear. both art historians, argue over the value of art. The latter, visibly grieved that his son Jaime should have lost his sight during the war. awaits death passively, surrounded by fine works and reading Cervantes and Quevedo. Scali, a friend of Alvear's son, is taken aback by the latter's defeatism, by his total lack of illusions concerning the long-term results of the war, even in the event of a Republican victory: "La servitude économique est lourde; mais si pour la détruire, on est obligé de renforcer la servitude politique, ou militaire, ou religieuse, ou policière, alors que m'importe?"²⁹¹ While it is undeniable that many revolutions substitute one form of tyranny for another, Alvear's total inaction and resignation offer no solution to anything. By advocating passivity he is simply supporting the fascists, and his aesthetic concerns are superfluous in wartime. He refuses to acknowledge the fraternity born of war: "Je veux avoir des relations avec un homme pour sa nature, et non pour ses idees", ²⁹² and since he has no apocalyptic vision of a postrevolutionary Utopia, he concludes that all effort is futile. Alvear is by no means an unsympathetic figure, and there is truth in much of what he says. However, Scali has one irrefutable objection to Alvear's position: "Dans les églises du Sud où l'on s'est battu, j'ai vu en face des tableaux de grandes taches de sang. Les toiles ... perdent leur

²⁹¹L'Espoir, p. 317. ²⁹²Ibid.

force"²⁹³ Several minutes later Scali makes the same point: "L'art est peu de chose en face de la douleur, et, malheureusement, aucun tableau ne tient en face de taches de sang."²⁹⁴ While Alvear sits back talking of "la qualité de l'homme",²⁹⁵ men like Scali attempt to "diminish the sufferings of man", to paraphrase Tchen. In such circumstances, there seems little doubt that Scali's position was much more tenable and indeed more admirable than Alvear's. In wartime, art must of necessity be relegated to second position.

The purpose of this chapter has been to indicate the continuation of Malraux's interest in art, even during times of vast political upheaval. I would now like to examine four articles of direct theoretical interest which were published in <u>Commune</u> in the thirties, and which contain the essence of Malraux, the art theorizer.

293 _{L'Espoir} ,	p. 314.
294 _{Ibid.} , p.	316,
295 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.	320.

CHAPTER IX

ART IS A CONQUEST

Tout art est un moyen de possession du destin.²⁹⁶

In the previous chapter, I examined the occasional allusions to art contained in Malraux's fiction. But the novel, and more especially a new kind of novel dealing with revolutions and warfare, is not the most appropriate place for discussing artistic matters. On the other hand, the essay form is. During the thirties, the review <u>Commune</u> published four addresses that Malraux gave on art. However, before analyzing their content it may be found convenient to give a complete résumé of all that we have managed to discover up until now.

Malraux's youthful fascination with aesthetics soon gave way to a more dynamic conception of art. In 1920, in his short article on Cubist poetry, he defined the task of art as that of combatting an absurd world. Elsewhere he speaks of renewing certain aspects of the world. In his review of <u>Pont-Egaré</u>, he alludes to Véry's concern with creating "un monde à notre image lorsque nous ne voulons pas être à l'image du monde".²⁹⁷ When reviewing Faulkner's <u>Sanctuary</u>, he wrote that: "Le poète tragique exprime ce qui le fascine ... pour en changer la nature."²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶André Malraux, "Sur l'héritage culturel", <u>Commune</u>, no. 37, septembre 1936, p. 1.

²⁹⁷Review of <u>Pont-Egare</u>, p. 839.
²⁹⁸Preface to <u>Sanctuaire</u>, p. 9.

100

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All good art is born of that <u>force angoissante</u> which, as we have already seen, Kama lacks. On the other hand, Malraux never neglected the pure representationalists -- particularly Ling in <u>La Tentation de l'Occident</u> and Kama in <u>La Condition humaine</u> -- although this was probably due to a need to contrast two conflicting concepts of art, the one passive, the other active. For the former, the creative power so continually stressed by Malraux is of minimum importance. In <u>La Voie royale</u>, Malraux alluded to the timelessness of the work of art, the metamorphosis that it undergoes at the hands of succeeding generations and the power of the artist to ressurect it. In <u>L'Espoir</u>, he bemoaned a tendency to stress the importance of rules over function and showed his concern for the creation of a new art that expresses the myth of modern man.

Sartre has said that part of Malraux's greatness lies in his determination to continually question the validity and value of everything, especially doctrine. Without ever being a Communist, Malraux nevertheless professed a definite admiration for the positive achievements of Communist Russia. In 1934, addressing an audience of Soviet writers, he lavished praise upon the confidence that Russia had shown in both workers and women. But he went on to lament the fact that this confidence had never been extended to writers. In no uncertain terms, he told the Soviets that art must not be subordinated to any ideology or creed, be it Catholicism, Communism or fascism. In a now famous phrase, he stated: "L'art n'est pas une soumission, c'est une conquête."²⁹⁹ The new

²⁹⁹"L'art est une conquête", p. 69.

socialist-realist novels that reflect the achievements and greatness of the Soviet Union are little in comparison with the works of a genius like Tolstoy. In any case, America is the living example of the idea that a powerful civilization does not necessarily create a powerful literature.

The creation of a new world, the struggle against a hostile, absurd world, and now a conquest. The military images are familiar now, but what does the conquest refer to? This time Malraux is more explicit: "... c'est une conquête ... des sentiments et des moyens de les exprimer. Sur quoi? Sur l'inconscient presque toujours; sur la logique, très souvent."³⁰⁰ The writer or artist must dominate and re-organize all the experiences he has undergone, then he must create an acceptable way of communicating them to others.

It is in another article, "Sur l'héritage culturel", that Malraux gives the best example of what he means by <u>conquête</u>. Having concluded that <u>Robinson Crusoe</u>, <u>Don Quixote</u> and <u>The Idiot</u> are all concerned with solitude (not unlike <u>La Condition humaine</u>), Malraux contends that Defoe, Cervantes and Dostoievsky "ont écrit la revanche de la solitude, la reconquête du monde par celui qui revient de l'enfer".³⁰¹ Their achievement was to possess the world of solitude and transform their sufferings into a conquest, and, at the same time, give the reader the illusion of having made the same conquest.

By using the term <u>conquête</u>, Malraux is acting very much within the existentialist tradition. For the existentialist, nothing exists

³⁰⁰"L'art est une conquête", p. 69.

³⁰¹"Sur l'héritage culturel", p. 1. This is an allusion to the fact that all three writers had been imprisoned.

with a pre-conceived essence, nothing is essentially good or bad or meaningful until man renders it such. It is man, too, who imparts meaning to the work of art and this so-called conquest requires conscious effort on his part: "L'héritage ne se transmet pas, il se conquiert."³⁰² Not only is the work in question recreated, but man himself is recreated in the process.

The writer must never yield to the temptation to lay bare his soul like the writers of long, psychological novels à la Proust. Malraux had already expressed his disapproval of psychology in <u>La Tentation de</u> <u>l'Occident</u>: "En acceptant la notion d'inconscient, en lui portant un intérêt extrême, l'Europe s'est privée de ses meilleures armes."³⁰³ In any case, as Malraux was one of the first to point out, Freud's discoveries render the novelist's preoccupation with psychological investigation rather futile. Nor must he trust too much in logic and rationalism, for most of the problems that haunt man cannot be solved by logic.

These remarks could very easily be an appraisal of Malraux's own works. Few writers are more opposed to what he himself called <u>intériorité</u>, and few novelists show such a profound mistrust in logical analysis. The elliptical style that Malraux uses, and which forces the reader's attention, in itself indicates that logic is insufficient. The technique of ellipsis, which leaves so much unexplained, forces the reader to participate in the novel and to construct a meaning.

³⁰² André Malraux, "L'oeuvre d'art", <u>Commune</u>, no. 23, juillet 1935, p. 1265.

LaTentation de l'Occident, p. 61.

What then must the artist write or paint? Interiority is dismissed, logic is insufficient, Marxism is too restricted since "le marxisme, c'est la conscience du social". 304 Beyond Marxism is "la culture, la conscience du psychologique", and this is the artist's domain. What Malraux means here by psychological has nothing to do with the inner probings of what is usually styled as the psychological novel. The word is closer to the term metaphysical, which it has been found convenient to use in the section on the novels. As in Les Conquérants and La Condition humaine, so too in this short speech Malraux stresses the point that Marxism, despite its value as a social doctrine, is inadequate for answering questions that are non-social by nature. And these are the very questions which the artist must try to answer: "Le monde n'attend pas seulement de vous l'image de ce que vous êtes mais aussi de ce qui vous dépasse."³⁰⁶ In "Sur l'héritage culturel", Malraux makes more or less the same point, except that he identifies man's striving to contain what surpasses him with beauty: " ... les hommes et les artistes appellent toujours beauté tout ce qui leur permet de s'exprimer davantage, de se dépasser eux-mêmes."³⁰⁷

It seems to me that most of Malraux's own novels are chiefly concerned with what surpasses man, notably death and destiny. He cites

³⁰⁴"L'art est une conquête", p. 69. 305_{Ibid} ³⁰⁶Ibid., p. 71.

307 "Sur l'héritage culturel", p. 8.

the example of the Russian classics, whose peculiar genius lay in revealing the "éléments contradictoires et imprévisbles"³⁰⁸ of man. This <u>Commune</u> article is entitled "L'art est une conquête", but Malraux is using the word art in a very wide sense: it means literature, as well as the graphic arts.

Art then is conquest, poetic discovery, the revelation of what is unpredictable and contradictory in man (the terms are all Malraux's), that part of man which is illogical and cannot be defined socially. Malraux gives the following example from Tolstoy of the psychological or poetic discovery that the brilliant artist makes: "... le prince André Bolkonski, blessé et couché sur le dos à Austerlitz, découvre la sérénité au-dessus de la douleur et de l'agitation des hommes."³⁰⁹ The novelist, in particular, can instruct man by setting down these brief insights -not important enough for philosophy, but too important to be neglected:

> Ils (les romanciers classiques russes) substituent un fait empirique à un fait logique; et comme il n'y a pas de vraie logique en psychologie, mais simplement l'imitation, ils substituent une découverte à une imitation. 310

The second of Malraux's articles, "L'attitude de l'artiste", is in many respects a repetition and elaboration of the ideas expressed in "L'art est une conquête". Again Malraux embarrassed the Soviets by discussing the topic of freedom. He maintained that literature was more than the application of doctrine and that the social realism of modern

³⁰⁸"L'art est une conquête", p. 69. ³⁰⁹<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 70. ³¹⁰Ibid.

Russian literature was not to be confused with the greatness of Tolstoy and Dostoievsky. The artist must have freedom, not to do anything, but to do what he wants to do. Great art is not born of negative, indiscriminate criticsm, however sincere it may be, but must always have something positive to offer man: "C'est seulement dans l'élément positif d'une civilisation que l'oeuvre d'art trouve sa force."³¹¹

If one compares the very negative <u>La Voie royale</u>, where both protagonists epitomize that part of man which says no, with <u>La Condition</u> <u>humaine</u>, with its self-sacrificing revolutionaries like Kyo and Katow, one can see Malraux's point; not that the later novels are totally lacking in negative personages. The road to commitment, as the novels indicate, is by no means an easy one, but it is to Malraux's credit that he could show in action many examples of the real hero: "celui qui engage sa vie pour d'autres hommes"³¹² -- without ever being a victim of that "volonté de prouver"³¹³ which he decried in Bernanos.

The social realism of modern Soviet literature is a retrograde step. Malraux does not deny that the <u>réalité tragique</u> of many events of recent Soviet history should be neglected, but maintains that the preoccupation with <u>peindre un monde</u> à la Balzac is no longer fruitful. Recent Russian literature, like the paintings of Kama a symbol of the Orient, is representational. What is lacking is that "réalité tragique ou pittoresque

³¹¹André Malraux, "L'attitude de l'artiste", <u>Commune</u>, no. 15, novembre 1934, p. 167.

312 Ibid., p. 172. 313 Le Temps du mépris, p. 9.

qui donne à un réalisme tout ce dont il a besoin pour être dépassé". 314

Malraux regrets that the personality of the Russian artist is submerged beneath his subject matter, "le monde lui semble plus intéressant que lui-même", ³¹⁵ mainly because he is discovering a new world, the new world of Russian Communism. However, something radically important is lacking, something that is alluded to in the following quotation:

> Les Possédés ne sont pas la peinture, même hostile, d'un milieu révolutionnaire russe: c'est le développement de la pensée éthique de Dostoïevski à travers une succession de personnages vivants. 316

The realist novel has little room for ethics, with the ethical standpoint of the author.

On the social level, Malraux agrees that the Western European artist, supported by an increasing number of <u>intelligenzia</u>, must continue to wage war on the bourgeoise. However, what is most predominant now is the "développement d'un problème personnel", ³¹⁷ in literature as in painting. If Cézanne's subjects are of minimal interest, it is because Cézanne attaches more importance to self-expression.

Malraux urged the Russians to turn away from the concept of realism that characterized the nineteenth century and instead attempt to "recréer un humanisme"³¹⁸ by writing of man. Humanism is one of the ways

³¹⁴"L'attitude de l'artiste", p. 173. ³¹⁵<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 171. ³¹⁶<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 168. ³¹⁷<u>Ibid.</u> ³¹⁸<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 173. that can break down the barriers separating East and West: "... l'humanisme peut être l'attitude fondamentale de l'homme à l'égard de la civilisation qu'il accepte."³¹⁹

From the middle thirties on, Malraux will devote more and more of his thoughts to the subject of humanism. In <u>Les Noyers de l'Altenburg</u> (published in 1943), it becomes obvious that this preoccupation is not a transitory one, and it is in the <u>Commune</u> articles that Malraux first began to speak extensively on the subject.

In "Sur l'héritage culturel", he returns to the idea that, beneath the endless mutations of civilizations and epochs, is something universal and eternal. For Malraux it is art that is common to all men: "L'humanité a toujours cherché dans l'art son langage inconnu."³²⁰

The question remains as to whether art ever was universal. It seems very unlikely since the development of art, as we know it, is recent. Malraux himself takes great care to explain:

> ... lorsqu'un artiste du moyen âge sculptait un crucifix, lorsqu'un sculpteur égyptien sculptait les figures des doubles funéraires, ils créaient des objets que nous pouvons appeler des fétiches ou des figures sacrées, ils ne pensaient pas à des objets d'art. Ils n'eussent pas même conçu que cela pût exister. 321

The universalism of the Middle Ages, best symbolized in Western Europe by general, popular participation in the construction of cathedrals, was religious in nature, and any artistic considerations were of secondary

³¹⁹"L'attitude de l'artiste", p. 173.
³²⁰"Sur l'héritage culturel", p. 4.
³²¹"L'oeuvre d'art", p. 1264.

importance. The idea of creating a work of art for aesthetic reasons only was an alien one. Everything had to symbolize some teachings of the Christian faith: "Toute oeuvre d'art se crée pour satisfaire un besoin mais un besoin assez passionné pour lui donner naissance."³²² If anything is universal, it is the "need" to create that is common to all artists -- but this is a mere starting point.

In any case, it is extremely necessary to make a distinction between the "need" expressed by the artist, the creator, a "need" that Malraux considers to be universal, and the "need" or attitude of the beholder. But is there not more than a slight difference between the abstract need that compels the artist to create and the varying needs expressed by different artists at different times? Presumably, Malraux would contend that basically there is only one vital need, man's vain, but nonetheless courageous, attempts to thwart destiny by surviving in the work of art. It is art which allows men to escape: "... leur condition d'hommes non par une évasion, mais par une possession. Tout art est un moyen de possession du destin."³²³

It seems to me that, despite his many great insights, Malraux falls down at this point. The concern with immortality has pervaded much of his later thinking and it is probably for this reason that many Catholic critics have hopefully seen in him a possible convert. Malraux's concern with living on in the minds of future men, which was an obsession to the Spanish philosopher, Miguel de Unamuno, constitutes a refutation

³²²"L'oeuvre d'art", p. 1265.

³²³"Sur l'héritage culturel", p. 1.

of many of the ideas elaborated in the novels, notably the equation of existence with the immediate present.

And, in any case, isn't Malraux constructing a philosophy of the élite, a philosophy intelligible only to those few minds sufficiently gifted to appreciate art? It is not an insignificant factor that Malraux says that the average man is completely blind when it comes to appreciating art. Indeed, this "blindness" can be equally well applied to very many intelligent people as well.

In "L'oeuvre d'art", the third article published in <u>Commune</u>, Malraux develops an idea that he had already expressed in <u>La Voie royale</u>, that the work of art undergoes a metamorphosis as it is re-assessed by succeeding generations. Art, as we have seen, is born of an urgent need, but once the individual work of art has been given form and the individual satisfied, it falls into temporary or complete disuse. It may lie dormant for centuries until an equally urgent need leads to its rediscovery and recreation. To use Claude's expression, "les artistes les rappellent à une existence réelle".³²⁴

Malraux gives as an example Renaissance Europe where artists, totally dissatisfied with existing norms, revived and strove to equal the artistic achievements of classical antiquity. Renaissance artists felt the need to renew their thoughts and, since they deemed that existing European ideas and forms were becoming inadequate, they resurrected the artistic glories of ancient Greece.

Presumably, the revival of antiquity by dramatists at the beginning

324 La Voie royale, p. 42.

of the twentieth century corresponded to a similar need. Contemporary interest in primitive forms, in the "new" perspectives offered by Oriental, Egyptian and African art, would presumably correspond to a similar need among artists dissatisfied with traditional European forms.

If many of the ideas expressed by Malraux in the middle and late thirties contradict his novels, one of his many memorable aphorisms seems an adequate stopping point in that it sums up what Malraux considers to be the artist's principal function, a function that is already present in the revolutionary novels. Our cultural heritage does not consist of those works that ought to be respected, but those that can help us to live. Culture, as he declared in "L'art est une conquête", is an invitation to learning, not a means of affirming one's respectability. In Malraux's own words, the function of the artist is this: "... donner conscience aux êtres de la grandeur ou de la dignité qu'ils ignorent en eux", ³²⁵ an idea that is embodied not only in Malraux's literary output, but also in his life during the late twenties and thirties.

CHAPTER X

LES NOYERS DE L'ALTENBURG

O vie, si vieille! Et si opiniâtre:³²⁶

In many ways <u>Les Noyers de l'Altenburg</u> marks a new departure in the creative writing of Malraux. It is a work of transition between the previous novels, his undisputed masterpieces, and the major works on art and aesthetics. It enlarges upon many of the ideas that were developed in the addresses published in <u>Commune</u>. It is also an introduction to <u>Les Voix du silence</u>, where the idea of universal, eternal man receives its most elaborate expression.

A first and superficial reading can leave one with the impression that <u>Les Noyers de l'Altenburg</u> is not so much a novel as a collection of short stories vaguely resembling one another. This is because the rigid classical construction of the revolutionary novels has given way to new structural design.³²⁷ And yet, although there are two principal characters, each of whom occupies whole scenes, and although there is neither unity of time or of place, everything in the novel is subordinated to the principal theme which, in Malraux's own terms, is: "Je crois à

³²⁶Les Noyers de l'Altenburg, p. 288.

³²⁷Goldmann (<u>op. cit.</u>, p. 245) has shown that the change coincides with Malraux's own disillusionment with the course of Communism and with other political changes in Europe.

l'homme éternel ... parce que je crois à l'éternité des chefs d'oeuvre."³²⁸

A brief synopsis of the five episodes that constitute Malraux's only post-war work of fiction will make it abundantly clear why I likened it to a collection of short stories.

When the novel opens, Vincent Berger, one of many French soldiers imprisoned in 1940 by the Germans beneath the vaults of Chartres Cathedral, is looking back through time and space and musing on what he calls Gothic man.

In the second section, we move back through time to the events leading up to the outbreak of the First World War. Vincent Berger's father, who has exactly the same name, is in many respects the heir of Perken, Claude and Garine, in that he is an intellectual adventurer leading a legendary existence in a foreign country. Like Malraux and Garine in Indochina, Berger is "un directeur de la Propagande", in this case in the services of the Young Turks movement. He espouses <u>touranisme</u> (which, according to Goldmann's brilliant parallel, is a thinly-disguised reference to Malraux's own interest in Communism)³²⁹ until he is painfully made aware that <u>touranisme</u> as applied in Turkey was not the universal movement that he admired, but simply an instrument of narrow-minded, nationalistic propaganda.

The central episode of Les Noyers de l'Altenburg is devoted to

328	Les	Noyers d	le.	1'Altenburg,	p.	113.	-
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³²⁹ Goldmann, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 255.

the celebrated debate where the question of man's essence is examined in philosophical terms. In what at times seems a parody of intellectualism, the discussion hinges around the conclusions of the Spenglerian ethnologist Möllberg. This is the only section of the book that doesn't deal with war.

The fourth part contains one of Malraux's finest examples of <u>fraternité virile</u>. German soldiers, horrified at the annihilation of the Russians through chemical warfare, ignore the disputes and differences born of nationalism and opposing ideologies and rush forward to rescue the enemy soldiers from the torture of gas. The astounded Berger, an officer, is caught up in the surge of humanitarianism and he too risks asphyxiation by attempting to rescue a choking Russian.

In the final section, we rejoin the younger Berger who, after being trapped in a clash with enemy tanks, emerges transformed by his brush with death.

The alleged disparity of the five episodes disappears when one realizes that all of them provide examples of universal humanism, of man's eternal and resolute struggle against a hostile destiny that is always threatening to submerge him. The many faces of fate are represented here by two world wars, in turn symbolic and suggestive of all the wars that men of all ages and nations have had to struggle against since time immemorial.

The disillusionment and hardship that were the aftermath of the First World War and the disintegration of traditional values led many historians and philosophers to meditate on the evolution and disappearance

of previous civilizations and attempt to see in them some sort of pattern or similarity. This tendency seems to have been very prominent in Germany, where historians like Oswald Spengler and Leo Frobenius wrote massive tomes on the meaning of history.

Frobenius (1873-1938) was an ethnologist and a man of action who travelled widely throughout Africa, examining traces of prehistoric man. In ethnology he was a partisan of extreme theories of diffusion, attributing a common origin to the cultures of Oceania and West Africa. The works of Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), especially <u>The Decline of the</u> <u>West</u>, are much better known. By comparing modern Western civilizations with those of the ancient world, Spengler discovered a historic cycle that seems to repeat itself, and through which all civilizations must pass. A fatalist and a determinist, he believed that the West had already passed through its creative stage and was declining irremediably. Spengler declared pessimistically that it was impossible to try and counteract the decline, just as it is impossible for an aging man to try and regain the physical resilience of an adolescent.

The intellectuals' debate at the heart of <u>Les Noyers de</u> <u>1'Altenburg</u> testifies to Malraux's concern with the problem of history. The specialist on African civilizations, Möllberg, is in Malraux's own words: "Physically ... Leopold Chaveau; ideologically, Frobenius (in so far as the characters of a novel are ever anyone)."³³⁰ But if Malraux has given considerable space to the views of the Africanist Möllberg, it

330 Armand Hoog, op cit., p. 92.

is in order to refute them, not because he approves of them. Möllberg had devoted fifteen years of research to a massive volume that attempted to give a Hegelian synthesis to world history. However, when he put his theories to the test during his peregrinations through the African continent, Möllberg was obliged to abandon the book. In Africa, he found nothing but evidence for the Spenglerian thesis of disconnected civilizations. After a long speech full of examples from anthropology (and Hoffmann has shown that at least one is taken almost word for word from the French translation of Frobenius' <u>Le Destin des civilisations</u>, 1939),³³¹ Möllberg concludes his long address with this sentence:

> Inutile d'accumuler des faits. Nous venons de considérer des sociétés qui ignorent; la première, notre sentiment du destin; la deuxième, notre sentiment de la naissance; la troisième, notre sentiment de l'échange; la dernière, notre sentiment de la mort. Ça suffit. 332

Möllberg is of the opinion that every civilization has its own absolute and autonomous mental structure which causes it to differ radically from any previous or succeeding one. However, he adds one small comment which is of great importance. If any sort of permanence does exist, then it is "une permanence dans le néant". Victor Berger adds immediately: "Ou dans le fondamental",³³³ and the whole of <u>Les</u> <u>Novers de l'Altenburg</u> is an illustration of what Malraux means by "le fondamental".

³³¹ Joseph Hoffmann, <u>L'Humanisme de Malraux</u> (Paris: Klincksieck, 1963), pp. 264-265. This is surprising, since Frobenius, during the period in which he was writing <u>Le Destin des civilisations</u>, rejected Spengler's thesis. He writes: "... tout se passe comme si ... l'homme, depuis les peuplades de la steppe africaine ... jusqu'aux nations dominitrices du monde, vivait les mêmes expériences."

³³²<u>Les Noyers de l'Altenburg</u>, p. 135. ³³³<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 145.

Whereas historians like Spengler and Frobenius were concerned with interpreting past civilizations, Malraux, like so many other twentieth century writers, was preoccupied not so much with interpreting our own as with creating for it a new ethos to replace Christian morality which is now of value to only a few: "... notre première faiblesse vient de la nécessité où nous sommes de prendre connaissance du monde grâce à une <u>crille</u> chrétienne, nous qui ne sommes plus chrétiens."³³⁴ As we have already seen, to impose a rigid set of values that man must adhere to leads to the sort of obnoxious dogmatism and absolutism that characterized many Christians and Communists. Malraux doesn't tell us what to do, but he tells us to do, to act, to create our own values, to impose our own form on the raw material that is life.³³⁵

In the previous novels, we have already come across many examples of the Malrauvian virtues: the courage of all the revolutionaries, the generosity of Katow, that fine form of comradeship known as <u>fraternité</u> <u>virile</u>, a lucid attempt backed up by exceptionally strong will power to impose a meaning on life, to struggle against <u>le néant</u> and <u>l'angoisse</u>, the refusal to submit unconditionaly (à la Borodin) to any doctrine, be it Marxism or Communism, without first of all questioning and evaluating its goals and the means of obtaining them.

In at least one respect, <u>Les Noyers de l'Altenburg</u> runs counter to the existentialism that Vincent Berger opposes to Walter's "l'homme

³³⁴"D'une jeunesse européenne", p. 137.

³³⁵ In <u>La Voie royale</u> (p. 108), Perken remarks: "La vie est une matière, il s'agit de savoir ce qu'on en fait."

est ce qu'il cache: un misérable petit tas de secrets".³³⁶ Although both Rergers offer up their lives as proof that man is indeed the sum of his acts, Malraux's own conclusions concerning the existence of eternal man and his refutation of the conclusions of Möllberg and Spengler seem to run counter to this. How can the existence of an eternal man, which is in a way an absolute, be reconciled with the existentialist position which holds that man is nothing in so far as he is not engaged in meaningful activity?

The Bergers differ from previous Malrauvian heroes in that they are not involved in an ideological struggle. They are not concerned with improving man's lot. They make no mention of Communism or Marxism; they make few if any references to the human condition as being one of solitude, anguish and despair. Poverty and humiliation are not mentioned. The younger Berger is the universal soldier compelled as a man to help his country fight off the enemy, and the elder Berger is the officer who organizes the struggle. There are no references to ideological or political disputes, and at the centre of the novel is man: "Ecrivain, par quoi suis-je obsédé depuis dix ans, sinon par 1'homme?"³³⁷ But Malraux's obsession with man seems to have widened considerably in scope, for at the centre of the novel is the famous discussion on the essence of man.

I have already mentioned that <u>Les Noyers de l'Altenburg</u> is, for the most part, concerned with wars, and that war, which has universally

336 Les Noyers de 1'Altenburg, pp. 89-90.

³³⁷Ibid., p. 29.

plagued men of all eras and civilizations, is in turn symbolic of all forms of destiny, of the blind forces that thrust down upon men. I intend to analyze the book in greater detail and examine what Malraux means by eternal man.³³⁸

³³⁸As has already been seen, all of Malraux's novels, with the exception of <u>Les Conquérants</u>, contain allusions to the world of art. In <u>Les Noyers de l'Altenburg</u>, this same procedure is employed.

The novel opens with a description of the mighty cathedral of Chartres where the French prisoners are being kept. Among the prisoners are "Sénégalais en casques, Arabes en fez, Français en coiffes de casques semblables aux calottes chinoises (p. 19). For the narrator, these same Senegalese soldiers and their Arab comrades represent "quelque chose d'éternel" (p. 25). The barbed wire that surrounds the prison camp is likened to a "haute palissade de camp romain", just as the prisoners' quarters are compared with a "masure babylonienne" (p. 25). The kneeling prisoners that write anguished letters to their distant families are "recroquevillés comme les momies du Pérou" (p. 25), an image that is repeated in the closing scenes of the novel when the trapped soldiers are as if "pétrifiés en momies péruviennes" (p. 283). The prisoners have Gothic faces, and as they lie sprawled on the floor of Chartres Cathedral, they are no different than prehistoric men waiting in caves. The joy that they feel "n'a pas change depuis Breughel, depuis les fabliaux" (p. 28).

The Jews that work in the elder Berger's factory are "dores comme ceux de Rembrandt" (p. 43), and Walter Perger is described as having "le nez caché de Michel-Ange" (p. 84). The mansion at Altenburg contains Renaissance furniture and Biedermayer commodes. Möllberg's grotesque little figures, which symbolize what he considers to be the futility of unconnected civilizations, are likened to the monstrous creations of Goya, and the head of the young man in the Acropolis museum -- "La première statue qui ait representé un visage humain, simplement un visage humain: libéré des monstres ... de la mort ... des dieux" (p. 98) -- symbolizes man's first victory in his relentless struggle against death and the Divine.

The elder Berger thinks of the waiting that preceded the gas attack as a scene from <u>The Arabian Nights</u>, and the prostrate soldiers become "des forgerons mythologiques" (p. 199). The church at <u>Reaulieu-sur-Dordogne</u> is singled out as having "l'un des plus beau tympans romans" (p. 251).

The last allusion to art in the novel is striking in that it provides a link with the opening pages. As the narrator enters the remote country village, he is reminded of the visitation of the Three Wise Men, and he wonders that farms should be exactly the same then as they were in the Gothic era.

The conceptual, the cerebral, the "culture uniquement livresque". 339 all that is objectively learnt with no or little root in the subjective is to be scorned. If all of Malraux's men of action are intellectuals. then the pure intellectual, the Tcheng-Daï, is very scathingly treated. Just the opposite of intellectual activity is the work of art, which is rooted in the subjective and perhaps its most poignant expression. The work of art -- be it sculpture or painting, stained glass window or fresco, temple or cathedral, bronze implement or pottery -- is all that remains of man the doer. Or it can be the poignant poem of Nietzsche sung in Walter Berger's presence as he accompanied the then-demented philosopher by train from Turin to Basle. On hearing such sublime lyrics, Walter is carried beyond the time and space of his actual surroundings to a mysterious planet where he comes into contact with something primordial, something perennial, something that transcends the individual and yet is felt by every man: "Et dans ce wagon ... les millénaires du ciel étoilé m'ont semblé aussi effacés par l'homme, que nos pauvres destins sont . effacés par le ciel étoilé."³⁴⁰ It is the sublime song, the poem, the statue created by man to thwart and deny the nothingness that threatens him.

It may reasonably be supposed that the views of Count Rabaud and the elder Vincent Berger are a synthesis of Malraux's own view on art. Rabaud's affirmation, "Je crois à l'homme éternel ... parce que je crois

339 La Tentation de 1ºOccident, Indication, p. 18.

340 Les Noyers de l'Altenburg, p. 97.

à l'éternité des chef d'oeuvre", ³⁴¹ is beyond dispute Malraux's own belief at this time, as well as a sort of prologue to the major works on art.

Just as Nietzsche's song dispels his madness and communicates a little of the mystery of life to Walter, so too Vincent Berger sees in the song, the poem, the bas-relief and art in general "une rectification du monde".³⁴² Man finds compensation for his own inadequacies and for the imperfections of the universe in creating an autonomous work of art which in itself is a microcosm of the world. While engaged in creativity, he is combatting the human condition, be it the terrible solitude of <u>La</u> <u>Condition humaine</u>, the humiliation and poverty that instigate the revolutionaries of <u>Les Conquérants</u> and <u>L'Espoir</u>, the wars, and consequently all forms of fatality that engulf the men of <u>Les Noyers de l'Altenburg</u>. However, the creative artist does not only escape from the human condition -- he transcends it by denying the nothingness that surrounds him. By representing something, the artist reduces it to human proportions and again proclaims the victory of man: "Dans ce qu'il a d'essentiel, notre art est une humanisation du monde."³⁴³

I would now like to examine how the notion of perennial man is suggested artistically, as distinct from philosophically. Juxtaposed with elaborate intellectual discussions and detailed descriptions of

341 Le Noyers de l'Altenburg, p. 113. Ibid., p. 128. 343 Ibid

modern warfare are many allusions to the simple, timeless things that have occupied man since his first appearance on earth. The captive soldiers, in suffering and anguish, lie huddled together in a cathedral and wait while their fate is being decided for them. Like so many other soldiers before them, they have in common "la mémoire séculaire du fléau"³⁴⁴ and "une familiarité séculaire avec le malheur".³⁴⁵ As the narrator contemplates the Gothic faces of his fellow soldiers, there he realizes that "ceux qui m'entourent, eux vivent au jour le jour depuis des millénaires". 346 Malraux seems to stress the Gothic quality because, as we discover later during the colloquy, the Middle Ages, unlike our own era, had not yet discovered the notion of time: "Le Moyen Age est un présent éternel. Comme l'est autrement, l'Asie primitive!"³⁴⁷ The joys of man have altered little since the Middle Ages, and what is more unchanging than the constancy and universality of death: "Il n'y a qu'à mourir que l'homme ne s'habitue pas!"348 What is more timeless than the "flamboiement de la présence divine"?³⁴⁹ Vincent Berger reminisces on the timeless quality of Muslim life where the past and the future, if not unknown, are of little significance to shepherds and goatherds, for

³⁴⁴ Les Noyers de l'Altenburg, p. 25.	,
³⁴⁵ <u>Ibid.</u> , p. 26.	
³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 28.	-
³⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 140.	
³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 24.	
349 <u>Ibid.</u> , p. 70.	

whom one day is no different than the next. On returning to Europe after a six-month sojourn in the Orient, the European obsession with time impresses him deeply. And yet it is the beauty and diversity of nature that strikes him most on reaching Marseille, a beauty that is on many occasions described as being analogous to the sacred.³⁵⁰

I have shown that Malraux rejected both explicitly and implicitly the opinions of Möllberg. One of his most effective ways of achieving this artistically was to interrupt the ethnologist's speech with allusions to such timeless occupations as those of the woodcutter. Similarly, as the complacent scientist is talking coldly of a gas that will asphyxiate the Russian soldiers, Malraux is overwhelmed by "les bulbes, les croix d'une église orthodoxe ... la profondeur du monde slave jusqu'au Pacifique".³⁵¹

Just before the gas attack begins, we are given snatches of the soldiers' conversations: "Le peuple tout court, peut-être: les hommes."³⁵² And it is these same representatives of that mythical body, the people, that by their <u>fraternité virile</u> and humaneness triumph over the inhumanities of war. Nature, too, is a force that emerges triumphant, despite the temporary destruction wrought by the gases: "La vie des

³⁵⁰For Malraux, the word sacred embodies all that is mysterious and eternal in man. In his preface to the French translation of Faulkner's <u>Sanctuaire</u>, he calls it "fascination". The gift of creation that artists possess is likened to "une part divine", by analogy with the myth of a god creating the universe; and it is that same "part divine" that liberates man from the limitations of time, space and death.

³⁵¹Les Noyers de l'Altenburg, p. 175.

³⁵²Ibid., p. 190.

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oiseaux continuait, et celle des sapins, et toute la vie de la terre."³⁵³ As the German volunteers surge forward to assist their enemies, the astonished Berger yields to the same "fraternité maladroite et poignante"³⁵⁴ that characterizes all the others. His reaction is that the meaning of life is happiness, but Malraux in a short note at the beginning of the novel warns that this is a simple psychological reaction. It is the mysterious communication that fascinates Berger as he lies thinking of "la noblesse que les hommes ignorent en eux ... la part victorieux du seul animal qui sache qu'il doit mourir".³⁵⁵ The attack is followed by a orchistoric silence and the eternal serenity of moonlight, and during the closing scenes of the novel, which constitute a sort of paean to joy, Vincent witnesses one of the most perennial sights of all, the isolated country village with its farmyards and barns. Like his father before him, the young Vincent Berger discovers a simple but sacred secret: "Oh vie, si vieille! Et si opiniâtre."³⁵⁶

In conclusion, <u>Les Noyers de l'Altenburg</u> is a considerable modification of the idea that man is the sum of his acts. These acts apply to everything that man does in his primordial struggle against a hostile Destiny, and in particular to the paintings and sculptures which are all that remain of man the doer. It is important to remember that

353 Les No	oyers de l'Alteni	ourg, p. 202.	
354 Ibid.,	p. 224.		
355 <u>Ibid.</u> ,		- -	
356 <u>Ihid</u> ,	p. 288.		

Les Movers de l'Altenburg was to be the first novel in a series called La Lutte avec l'ange, and it is in the generic title that we see that the struggle with the angel, with the divine or with fate constitutes the human condition. The very title, <u>La Condition humaine</u> (except perhaps for <u>La Voie royale</u>, all of Malraux's titles are vitally important), already implied that there was something eternal behind the struggles, as indeed the title <u>L'Espoir</u> seems to suggest that behind the anguish and solitude is an eternal hope instigating man in his struggle against destiny.

Les Noyers de l'Altenburg, where the stout walnut trees symbolize permanence and strength, is, in Malraux's own words, an attempt to "make man aware that he can build his greatness, without religion, on the nothingness that crushes him".³⁵⁷ The link with the previous novels is not political or ideological, but metaphysical. All the works of fiction from La Voie royale to Les Noyers de l'Altenburg contain examples of "ce son de question posée à Dieu sur la vie".³⁵⁸

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357 Janet Flanner, "The Human Condition, Part 2", p. 85.

³⁵⁸"Esquisse d'une psychologie du cinéma", p. 332.

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CONCLUSION

Part of Malraux's artistic greatness lay in his ability to accommodate the novel to the needs of the twentieth century. Conscious of his mission -- "Je voudrais être un anti-Proust"³⁵⁹ -- he rebelled against the limitations of the psychological novel. Malraux sought to impose no rational order or logic on the events he described; life is as he wrote about it: horizontal, not vertical. Our lives do not rise to a climax and fall into a denouement like a Racinian tragedy; they are full of contingent events which we are free to interpret as we please.

All the novels live with actuality; they are living documents of twentieth century man, now severed from his God, his traditions, his former values, and adrift in a meaningles's world full of gratuitous events and rent by wars and revolutions. It was Malraux's greatness to give expression to all this.

However, when, on the other hand, Malraux theorizes on art, he ceases to be a man of our century. He forgets that all art, like his own novels, reflects some of the hopes and aspirations, sorrows and anguish, of its age as faithfully as a mirror. Minimizing what is peculiar to this age -- the disappearance of values, the break with traditional forms and the use of bold innovations, our spiritual poverty, the confusion in which we live -- Malraux overlooks all this and takes refuge in a theory of universal humanism, a concept that is alien to most major twentieth

³⁵⁹ Patrick Loriot, "Malraux choisit son passé", <u>Le Nouvel</u> Observateur, 17 septembre 1967, pp. 30-31.

century artists. But perhaps this is the inevitable result of his attempt to embrace the many art forms of the world in one universal theory: art as anti-destiny.

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133