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TOWARDS THE ORIGINS OF 'COMRADE MALLARMÉ'

The Invention of a Politics of Reading

Translated by Robert Boncardo

> *Un coup de dés! Ding, jamais, ding, ding, un coup, ding, de dés, ding, n'abo, ding, ding, lira, ding, ding, l'hasard. Ding!*
>
> — *Jean-Paul Sartre, Le Sursis*

From the point of view of cultural history, Mallarmé was more a contemporary of the 20th century than of his own century.[1] Through the representations cobbled together by memory and plundered by readers, the poet has known posthumous lives that neither recourse to official registries, which record his dates of birth and death, nor the return to the body of work that bears his signature, can banish. One of these relics — and not the least of them — presents him in the role of "comrade Mallarmé", to reprise the title of an article by Jean-Pierre Faye published in the communist newspaper *L'Humanité* on September 12th, 1969.[2] A few years later, having been appointed to the prestigious chair of semiology at the Collège de France, Roland Barthes, hijacking a famous declaration of André Breton, will in turn side with the author of *Un coup de dés*: "'To change language', that Mallarméan expression, is a concomitant of 'To change the world', that Marxian one. There is a political reception of Mallarmé, of those who have followed him and who follow him still".[3] This figure of memory, in the guise of which Mallarmé is a revolutionary poet, is not the sole property of the avant-gardes of the 1960's. It incessantly reappears across the course of an interpretative tradition that crystallizes towards the end of the Second World War and prolongs itself right up to the present day. The first moment of this tradition, which can be called *existentialist*, groups together at the turn of the 1940's and 50's the interventions of Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Blanchot and Roland Barthes, who set out to inscribe the negativity of Mallarméan language in the adventures of the dialectic. The second moment, which can be described as *textualist*, groups together the interpretations

produced during the 1960's and 70's, notably in the pages of the journals *Tel Quel* and *Change*, and which refer to Mallarmé as the founder of a semantic materialism reconciling Marx and Saussure. The third and final moment, which we will call the *fin-de-siècle* moment, notably assembles former Althusserians like Alain Badiou, Jean-Claude Milner and Jacques Rancière, for whom Mallarmé represents a figure of political endurance in times marked by the retreat of revolutionary passion. For half a century, these critics, theoreticians and philosophers, despite deep disagreements regarding the interpretation of his poetry and prose, adopt the same politics of reading whose strategy consists, via an art of deliberate anachronism, in wrenching Mallarmé's work out from his time in order to clarify the debates of their own time and to affirm literature as a discourse of resistance to power. However, prior to these rival interpretations and in order for Mallarmé to become "comrade Mallarmé", it was first necessary that his work be *nationalized*, that is, inscribed in the French literary pantheon, then *politicized* by the mediators of his work, both writers and critics, who undertook to actualise the signification of his poems and prose works according to the exigencies of their present. This operation of nationalization and politicization, which had long been prohibited by the stranglehold if the *Nouvelle Revue Française* on the memory of Mallarmé, begins during the interwar years and comes to a close at the beginning of the 1940's, when France is subjected to the Vichy regime and the Nazi occupation. It is this prehistory of "comrade Mallarmé" that I would like to reconstitute here.

"Mallarmé, professeur de morale": allegory and philology

Against the interminable disavowals of literary history, it is salutary to recall that the historicity of a work can neither be reduced to a date ('Action', a prose poem published in *La Revue Blanche* on February 1, 1895, before becoming part of the collection *Divagations* two year later under the title 'Restricted Action'), nor to an epoch (the Third Republic), nor to an aesthetic movement (in this instance, Symbolism). No text that is accorded any cultural authority (and this is the case for juridical, religious or literary texts) can be reduced to the moment at which it was written, printed and disseminated. Before and after its production, it is inscribed in a stratified memory, both plural and mobile, which incessantly transforms its meaning. Upstream we find the memory crystallized by the text, a memory at once individual and collective, affective and conceptual, linguistic and discursive, which comes to the text from its author and from their time, but also from the vast repertory of forms and discourses. This memory, deposited black on white, makes the text an anachronistic object, at once of its time and of many other times, moulded like a fossil by the heterogeneous strata of the past. Downstream there is added the memory mobilized to their advantage by each new reader, displacing the exterior contours of the text and recomposing its internal architecture. Indeed, everyone orients themselves in the labyrinth of signs by drawing on the present that surrounds them no less than on the past that inhabits them, summoning at the same

time the library acquired since their birth and the collective history they inherit. Everyone deciphers texts in the light of collective representations that they have interiorized little by little and which orient their ways of speaking and doing. As such, the historicity of a work is composed equally of different strata of the past sedimented in it and of successive interpretations — interpretations which, in the course of its circulation in social space, have progressively displaced its meaning and transformed its value. A text does not exist *sub specie aeternitatis*: it is transformed as soon as it read and for as long as it is read.[4]

Depending on the fate they reserve for the historicity of inherited texts, scientific practices of reading oscillate between two opposing poles: philology and allegory.[5] Where philology immerses the work in the context of its appearance in order to reconstitute its meaning as closely as possible to its origin, seeking thereby to banish all interference between the past and the present, allegory appropriates the work by attributing a new signification to it, one which is irreducible to the intention of the author and their historical situation. Literary history is philological, at least when it aims, following the wishes of Gustave Lanson, to "know the works of the past in the past, and as past".[6] But the works of the past are also the objects of allegorical interpretations, which draw out their meaning as a function of the present, indeed of the future, to the point of imprinting the image of the present onto the souvenirs of yesteryear. The very same Lanson recognized that "each generation reads itself into Descartes and into Rousseau, makes a Descartes and a Rousseau in its own image and for its own needs".[7] Philology and allegory nevertheless imply distinct strategies of time: where philology takes the form of history by placing the past and the present *side by side*, allegory takes the form of memory by placing one *in* the other; where philology separates the past text from the present of its reading, allegory provokes an encounter between these distant times.[8] Although they are *de jure* distinct, these gestures of reading are *de facto* being endlessly entangled with one another. Philology takes hold of works that have been allegorized by the tradition so as to re-establish their historical signification and rectify interpretations it judges to be anachronistic. For its part, allegory finds in the results of philology the prerequisite knowledge for its own actualization of the texts of the past, which it thereby inscribes in the cultural memory. Reflecting on the circularity of the old and the new at the heart of these gestures of reading, Antoine Compagnon rightly remarked that "a work that stops being allegorized is a dead work".[9] But no doubt there exists no such thing as a living work, unless it is of the most ephemeral editorial actuality. We only ever encounter dead texts condensing a frozen memory — texts which, for lack of being read, are forgotten — and surviving texts whose slippage towards their own forgetting is suspended by allegorical readings that expose them to the breath of the present. Mallarmé's posthumous lives are so many relics of his work that interlace disjoint times, his texts having been allegorized and actualized in the light of epochs that were no longer his own.

In September 1943, in a mimeographed edition of *Les Lettres Françaises*, the clandestine organ of the *Comité national des écrivains*, between testimonials on the ca-

pitulation of Mussolini's Italy and the horrors perpetrated by Nazi Germany, there slips a short article entitled 'Mallarmé, professeur de morale'. This text defends the Symbolist poet in a polemic that had been raging for three years in the literary milieu and to which a critic from *Le Figaro,* André Rousseaux, had given the name "la querelle des mauvais maîtres".[10] The polemic concerns the responsibility of literature for the French debacle of 1940. In this search for the ideological causes of the defeat, the most renowned writers of the interwar years, notably those from *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, are accused of having corrupted the youth. In *La Gerbe*, a collaborationist newspaper, Camille Mauclair — a former disciple of Mallarmé whose anarchist convictions had long given way to a xenophobic nationalism — virulently prosecutes the case. Determined to eradicate the "literature of the vanquished" that infests the cultural milieu, the author of *Métèques contre l'art vivant* condemns, from amongst the innumerable faults of contemporary literature, the bolshevism and the homosexuality of André Gide, the catholic perversions of François Mauriac, and the disincarnate nihilism of Paul Valéry: "While on the other side of the Rhine a fanaticized youth gave up the seductions and the disorders of individualism and immolated itself in a collective ideal, our literary tenors were destroying national cohesion as they pleased with a mentality of the vanquished".[11] In *Candide*, the mouthpiece of young Maurassians like Lucien Rebatet and Robert Brasillach, Thierry Maulnier, who belonged to the editorial team of *L'Action Française*, offers a moderate version of this "trial of the intelligence": he reproaches the literature of the interwar years not for having exerted a nefarious influence, but for having cut itself off from the life of the nation and for having abdicated its intellectual magisterium in conformity with "the doctrine of the 'ivory tower'".[12] Transposing into the literary field the moral order advocated by Marshal Pétain, this quarrel constitutes the prelude to the debate on the responsibility of the writer that will play itself out in the wake of the Liberation at the other end of the political chessboard. But for the moment, the anonymous article in *Les Lettres Françaises* seeks to defend the memory of a reputedly hermetic poet who was the master of Gide and Valéry a half-century earlier:

> Lately and with great gusto, Mallarmé has been attacked as the "champion of the ivory tower", as the "teacher whose entire 'life' was spent between the four walls of a secondary school and of a staffroom", not to mention the descriptors "canker" and "the origin of our woes". It is very significant that in this time of brazen debasement — in which there proliferates more than ever writers who have sold their pens, and in which so many of our great men (whose lives, presented as exemplary, used to serve as illustrations for books of morals) are seen as ripe for becoming the logos of the Casino-State when it puts to work the machinery of the National Lottery — it is, no doubt, in tune with this period of official demoralisation that representatives of the *youth* end up reproaching a poet for having been too "pure" and for having refused for his entire life to make any concession to the desire for success no more than to the need for money. If Mallarmé were only this negative

> figure of a man who refused all compromise and chose to teach English in a secondary school rather than see the finest products of his thought be transformed into a commodity; if Mallarmé were only this man, this apparent *petit-bourgeois* at first sight, anonymous but exempt from any stain, then he would have the right to our complete respect. Certain of the most elementary virtues — of which not so long ago we hardly thought that a day would come when it would be important to praise them — certain discrete virtues such as a minimum of probity in the conduct of life and the exercise of the intelligence, the taste for completed work, the disdain for ambition and a constant fidelity to what is held to be the truth are today so stifled — despite the superficial moralism with which the official phraseology is marked — that we do not hesitate to characterize as "aestheticism" the attitude of a poet for whom it was quite simply repugnant to corrupt oneself and for whom the practice of the above-mentioned virtues was only to be expected, just like those very general rules of *savoir vivre* that people of all classes apply without even thinking about it since they are the ABC of all moral conduct in our civilized societies. Nobody would deny that Mallarmé is a poet who it is difficult to approach. Yet we should think that, if he is so abrupt, then it is because he has succeeded in what few poets could pride themselves on having done: creating for himself a language perfectly adequate to its object, a language that seeks less to describe or recount than to set off certain movements of the spirit. That we also think of the absolute integrity he showed throughout this enterprise — an enterprise that required not only the highest inventive power, but the efforts of an entire life. At this time in which, for the needs of propaganda, so many men — men who are not content to live on their knees — pass off at face value the most fallacious remarks, the lesson of professor Mallarmé can only be of profit to us.[13]

This appropriation of Mallarmé, which makes him a resistant *avant la lettre*, or at least a model for writers hostile to the Vichy regime and the Nazi occupier, is not without precedent. One year earlier, alongside poems by François Mauriac and Louis Aragon, for the centenary of his birth Pierre Senghers' journal *Poésie 42* had opened its pages to a previously unpublished sonnet by Mallarmé, accompanied by a brief presentation from his biographer, Henri Mondor, and a study by the Genevan critic Marcel Raymond.[14] André Gide had also participated in the celebrations by publishing 'Saint Mallarmé l'ésotérique' in the series of his *Interviews imaginaires*, published by *Le Figaro* in unoccupied France. The author of *Retour de l'URSS* found in the poet an "extraordinary example of disinterest" that inspired one "to raise oneself above the miserable condition of common and mediocre humanity".[15] He might as well have said that, in *la querelle des mauvais maîtres*, Mallarmé was defending from beyond the grave "the honour of poets", as per the title of the anthology published by *Les Editions de Minuit*. Now, the author of 'Mallarmé, professeur de morale' is Michel Leiris, a former collaborator of *La Révolution surréaliste*, and the director, alongside Georges Bataille and Roger Caillois, of the Collège de sociologie,

as well as a soon-to-be member of the editorial board of *Les Temps modernes*.[16] As his diary indicates, Leiris decides from January 1941 to suspend until further notice all publications so as to mark his opposition to the political conjuncture: "The essential signification that I attach to my poetic activity is that of a *refusal*". He disapproves of "this veritable sickness of 'men of letters' who cannot conceive of the possibility of being silent and for whom no longer publishing is equivalent to a kind of annihilation".[17] The banning of *L'Afrique fantôme* in November 1941 strengthens his convictions: "I can only be delighted with this decision, which, objectively, situates me".[18] In his eyes, Mallarmé's exemplarity has to do, precisely, with the fact that he never compromised his literary exigencies with the approbation of the public or the favours of power: his grandeur lies in his obstinate power of refusal.

In one of the first non-clandestine editions of *Les Lettres Françaises* in October 1944, Leiris will prolong these reflections. Under the title 'Ce que parler veut dire', the author of *L'Age d'homme* and *Haut Mal* invites the writers of his time to draw lessons from the trial undergone by language during the black years. Literature cannot continue as if the War had not taken place and, above all, as if language had not been perverted by military propaganda, anonymous denunciations, confessions extorted under torture — the surveillance and censure of an authoritarian regime.

> During the four years of oppression that have just ended, language underwent the most difficult of ordeals. As if it were a matter, apparently, of attacking man there where his very humanity makes itself most manifest, bloody outrages have been inflicted on this faculty that man has for exteriorizing his thoughts by voice or by writing. [...] At the same time as language seemed to be undermined by a very pernicious sickness, or to be collapsing into the negativity of silence, we had never known with greater clarity *what speaking means*, everything that the exercise of discourse involves and what mortal and immediate consequences the simple act of formulating a thought can have. In the light of such an experience, writers, technicians of language, appear as the bearers of a privileged art due to the fact that language, which is his instrument, is not only the means of constituting an imaginary world but is indeed a means of acting, to the degree that it is through it that we communicate with others and are therefore capable of influencing their actions. No doubt, it has always been evident to some that the use of a tool that produces such serious effects as language requires an extreme rigour from whomsoever would implement it. But the four years that have passed should make explode in front of everyone's eyes what a litigious duty the writer — that is, the man whose profession is to speak — takes on, to what compromises he can be led by the sole fact of treating his art as if it only had no other significance than a literary one, and what are, as a consequence, the moral exigencies to which it seems desirable to see him submit himself. As a man of language, the writer must also be a *man of his word*.[19]

In more than one respect, Leiris' remarks are close to the Sartrean doctrine of engaged literature, which also undertakes to conserve "the austere virtues of the Republic of Silence and of Night".[20] The two writers do indeed share the conviction that post-War literature must participate in the purification of language, but one confers this moral mission on prose, the other on poetry. In his presentation of *Les Temps modernes*, Sartre will oppose the irresponsibility of poets who enjoy "forging trinkets of sonorous inanity".[21] In *Qu'est-ce que la littérature ?*, he will condemn poets who "refuse to use language" and who, following Mallarmé, take refuge in an "icy silence".[22] When Sartre claims that only prose can guarantee communication between free men, Leiris believes on the contrary that it is the task of poetry to give a purer meaning to the words of the tribe. In November 1945, disappointed by the editorial line of *Les Temps modernes*, Leiris will note in his diary: "an abyss separates me from Sartre and the Beaver on the subject of poetry".[23] The disagreement is easily explained: the responsibility of the writer, according to Sartre, concerns free men as subjects of democracy, while literary engagement as Leiris understands it is rightly a politics of speech, which requires rigour and probity with respect to language more so than to speaking beings. According to Leiris, to refuse common language and to subtract oneself from the imperatives of common speech constitutes an act of resistance: engagement also consists in knowing how to be silent.

This interpretation of Mallarmé is allegorical in the etymological sense of the word: in the light of a new conjuncture, Leiris makes the poet say something *other* than what his readers from the end of the 19th century thought they had read in his texts. Half a century after his death, his defense of a pure art, radically distinct from universal reportage, signals according to Leiris a literary resistance to the ideological instrumentalization of language. The attribution of a political actuality to Mallarmé's poetry under the German boot supposes a work of memory — a work that, in rhetorical terms, falls under the trope of prosopopoeia. By calling on the poet in the political struggles of the present, Leiris makes him speak from beyond the grave, drawing from him a lesson capable of illuminating a state of affairs and legitimating actions to be undertaken in an epoch that is no longer his. The politics of reading inaugurated by Leiris does not appear *ex nihilo*. If it breaks with the majority of previous appropriations of Mallarmé and notably with those of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, which made the poet an ardent defender of a pure art who was resolutely "on strike before society", demanding of writers that they disassociate "literary opinions" and "political beliefs",[24] it builds on the ethical interpretation of his poetry proposed by Paul Valéry during the interwar years and on the nationalization of his work to which the interventions of Henri Mondor and Maurice Blanchot bear witness at the beginning of the German Occupation.

From pure poetry to the politics of the spirit: Paul Valéry

The testimonials and reflections of Paul Valéry, which appeared scattered between the newspapers and journals of the interwar years and were assembled in the post-

humous collection *Écrits divers sur Stéphane Mallarmé*, establish the conditions of readability of Mallarmé's work and determine its passage to posterity. Valéry's notoriety, elected as he was to the Académie française in 1925 and to the Collège de France in 1937, is not without an impact upon the man he recognized as his master. Now, during the interwar years, Valéry held that Mallarmé's teaching was not only literary, but ethical. This is, moreover, the lesson of *Existence du symbolisme*, which was published as a booklet in 1938 and takes an amused look at the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Symbolism, which Valéry explains is the fruit of a retrospective illusion. According to the man who many considered to be "the most direct and profound inheritor of Mallarméan thought",[25] nothing like Symbolism existed in the eyes of the principal actors of the movement, despite the publication in 1886 of Rimbaud's *Illuminations,* René Ghil's *Traité du Verbe* and of Jean Moréas' 'Literary Manifesto' in *Le Figaro*. Paradoxically, it is the commemoration of Symbolism that invents the past whose memory it claims to celebrate.

> The men who lived in the Middle Ages did not suspect that they were medieval and those of the 15th or 16th Century did not have engraved on their calling cards, "Messers So-and-So, of the Renaissance". The same is true of the Symbolists. That is what they are called today, not what they were. These few remarks might help us to recognize what we are doing at this moment: we are engaged in constructing Symbolism, as other have constructed a vast number of intellectual entities, which, if they have not achieved a bodily presence, have never lacked for definitions, since everyone was at liberty to present a definition of his choice. We are constructing Symbolism; we are announcing its birth today at the happy age of fifty, thus permitting it to dispense with the fumbling steps of childhood, the disorders and doubts of adolescence, the problems and anxieties of early manhood. It is being born with its fortune made — perhaps, alas, after its death. Yes, to celebrate this fiftieth birthday in 1936 is to create an entity which will always be the Symbolism of fifty years before; and the creation depends not at all on the existence in 1886 of something then called Symbolism. Nothing written, nothing remembered by survivors, existed under that name at the assigned date. It is marvellous to think that we are celebrating, as existent fifty years ago, something absent from the universe of fifty years ago. I am happy and honored to take part in the generation of a myth, in broad daylight.[26]

If we do not know that Symbolism is a conventional appellation attributed *a posteriori* to a movement of literary history, we risk placing our faith in a being of fiction that exists nowhere except in the memory of posterity. The anachronism of this commemoration is accompanied by a second paradox that Valéry amuses himself in insisting on. From an aesthetic point of view, Valéry emphasizes that nothing united Symbolist writers if not a shared refusal of classicism, of Romanticism and of realism: they remained "generally divided on almost all the questions of art".[27] When they formed a common front, it was to oppose their detractors, who addressed the same "charges" to all of them: obscurity, preciosity, sterility.[28]

No literary program brought them together and no artistic ideal inspired their adhesion: they shared nothing other than the vindictiveness of their contemporaries. As such, the fiftieth anniversary of Symbolism concerns "an event of aesthetic history that cannot be defined by aesthetic considerations".[29] The Symbolist nebula constituted above all an ethical community, essentially defined by its power of negation. More than a literary credo, it is a posture of rupture with respect to the world, taking the form of an ascetic ideal, which gathered the Symbolists together: "As dissimilar as they were to one another, they recognized themselves to be identically separated from the other writers and artists of their time. No matter how much they differed, opposing one another sometimes so violently that they hurled insults, excommunications, and even challenges on the field of honour, they continued to agree on one point, which, as I said, was foreign to aesthetics. *They agreed in a common determination to reject the appeal to a majority:* they disdained to conquer the public at large".[30] Similar affirmations are already to be found, a decade prior, in the 'Letter on Mallarmé', published by *La Revue de Paris*, which underscores that "harsh literary work manifests itself by *refusals*", and that "*it is at this point that literature joins up with the ethical domain*".[31] It is this attitude, which implies "a sort of revolution in the realm of values",[32] that must be commemorated. In the middle of contemporary chaos, it is imperative to pay homage to these beings of exception who remained faithful, in spite of everything, to the ethic of refusal:

> In any case the great disorder of human affairs, so much accentuated since the beginning of the 20th Century, could scarcely have failed to demonstrate the utter impossibility of this attempt to create a separate culture, to preserve taste and refinement, to stand aloof from publicity, from the course of statistical values, and from the agitation that increasingly jumbles together all the elements of life. […] How can we dedicate ourselves to long elaborations, how waste our time on theories and subtle distinctions, when events and manners hurry us as they do, when our days are divided between futility and anxiety, and when leisure, an assured livelihood, and the freedom to dream and meditate have become as rare as gold? These are the circumstances that confer its present value on Symbolism, besides enhancing the value of its past — that make it, in short, a *symbol*. The conditions for the development of talents in depth, in subtlety, in perfection, in exquisite power, have disappeared. Everything is opposed to the possibility of an independent life of art. The complaints that poets uttered sixty years ago seem to us purely rhetorical as compared with the lamentations that would be forced from poets today, if they did not feel that it would be useless to groan in the midst of universal hubbub, the tumultuous noise of machines and arms, the cries of the crowd, and the crudely imposing harangues of those who regard the crowd as a beast to be tamed or a herd of cattle to be driven. I shall therefore conclude by observing that 'Symbolism' is henceforth the symbol that names the intellectual qualities and conditions most opposed to those which reign, and even govern, today. The Ivory Tower never seemed so high.[33]

If the souvenir of Symbolism is pure invention, it should nevertheless be used judiciously for the reason of its possible impact upon the future: "The *past*, more or less fantastical or more or less organized after the fact, acts on the future with a power comparable to that of the present itself",[34] Valéry recalls in the foreword to *Regards sur le monde actuel*. And, conscious of taking part in the generation of a myth, Valéry hastens to associate it with the diagnosis of a *crisis of the spirit* he had pronounced in the aftermath of the Great War. The critical phase being traversed by the West is made manifest, according to the author of *La Jeune Parque*, by an acceleration of history, which provokes in the intellectuals a sense of powerlessness when faced with a world plunged into violence. For traditional knowledge, which is becoming fragmented, there are substituted cloistered specializations often marked by a short-term pragmatism. Finally, the generalized devaluation of the labour of the mind in the name of technical efficacy and profit threatens to destroy the very idea of culture. These are some signs of "the agony of the European soul".[35] It is precisely in the name of the survival of Western civilization and of its highest values that Valéry undertakes to project Symbolist asceticism into the ethical domain. He perceives in the regime of artistic singularity that Symbolism manifests — a regime to which the name of Mallarmé remains attached for him — the final hope for a regime of community that he defines in terms of a *politics of the spirit*, a veritable spiritual power capable of resisting through its force of refusal the demagogy of temporal powers. In this, the politics of the spirit brings together the two systems of value which, from the Dreyfus Affair to the Second World War, structure France politically: with the nationalist right, Valéry shares a sentiment of decadence, which expresses itself by a defensive ideology founded on unity, hierarchy and authority; from the political left, he borrows, despite his anti-Dreyfusard positions, an ethics that aims at the universal founded on the exercise of reason.[36] From the perspective of this politics of the spirit, the symbolists incarnate less a literary movement than a prophetic grouping that preserves, with a view to a future, the ardent and the imaginary rigour on which Europe had been built. Their ivory tower represents what the City of God was for Augustine: the last rampart against the invasion of the barbarians.

Jean Paulhan rightly remarks in his book *Les Fleurs de Tarbes* that "Paul Valéry expects from Letters what a philosopher would no longer dare hope for from philosophy".[37] This faith in the ethical power of literature links back up with the heritage of the German Romantics, who undertook at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries to substitute poetry for philosophy in order to respond to the spiritual and political crisis of their time. A famous text, no doubt written by Schelling under the influence, perhaps, of Hölderlin, but which was found amongst the papers of Hegel, held that poetry "becomes again in the end what it was in the beginning — *teacher* of *the human race*", since "the highest act of reason, by which it embraces all ideas, is an aesthetic act".[38] It is precisely this scenario that Valéry adopts in a conference on 'Stéphane Mallarmé' in 1933 in order to explain the intellectual origins of Symbolism:

> Forty years ago, we were at a critical point of literary evolution. The hour of Mallarmé's influence had sounded. The young people of my generation refused almost everything that the intellectual horizon of the epoch offered to them. They kept themselves apart from Parnassianism, naturalism and, moreover, from any tendency limited to a procedure. They were seeking — and it is here we find the singular trait of this moment — not only an art, an orientation of their art towards a new perfection, but more, a veritable *direction*, which I dare not call *moral* for it was not at all a *moral* matter in the ordinary sense of the word. It must not be forgotten that in this epoch there was talk at once of the failure of science and the failure of philosophy. Some followed the doctrines of Kant, which had demolished all metaphysics; the others reproached science for not having kept the promises that it hadn't made. In this state, and for lack of a faith that could satisfy them, it seemed to some that the kind of certainty they placed in an ideal of beauty was the only ideal in which they could find any peace.[39]

At the end of the 19th century, Symbolism lent over the cadaver of philosophy and, following the German Romantics, gave itself the mission of taking up again the flame of metaphysics that Kant had snuffed out.[40] Faithful to the beliefs of his youth up until the 1930's, Valéry attributes to poetry the task of substituting itself for Kantian rationality. In his eyes, pure poetry, stripped of all material reality, constitutes a "purely ideal state", "a fiction deduced from observation" whose function is to "guide us in the very difficult and very important study of the diverse and multiform relations of language with the effects it has on men".[41] As Valéry conceives it, pure poetry thus serves as a *regulative idea* for the practice and study of literature: in sum, it is a matter of "the tendency towards the limit of an art, a limit impossible to reach by the means of language, but the idea and the desire of which are essential to all poetic enterprises".[42] Exactly as in Kant, whoever believes themselves to be able to attest to the phenomenal presence of regulative ideas is the victim of a *transcendental illusion*. Just as the ideas of God, of the Cosmos and of the Ego, subtracted as they are from the judgements of pure reason, are necessary for the exercise of practical reason, pure poetry, which is necessary to the exercise of poetry, represents an asymptotic finality that determines the possibility of every poem and yet has no empirical existence. Pure poetry acts as the regulatory principle that maintains the ideality of thought in troubled times. Literature, when it bends itself towards the regulative idea of pure poetry — this being, according to Thibaudet, "the problem of Mallarmé, just as we say the theorem of Pythagoras"[43] — makes itself the guardian of practical reason in the place of a now obsolete metaphysical philosophy. The speculative theory of art inherited from German Romanticism finds in Valéry an influential mediator, who succeeds in adapting it to the literary context of the interwar years.

This slippage from poetic reason to practical reason is the occasion for a scene that has since become legendary. To justify his opposition to the scenic interpretation of *Un coup de dés*, which a few months prior a theatre troupe had prepared, Valéry

breaks for the first time his silence on Mallarmé in February 1920 and publicly offers up some of his memories in the journal *Les Marges*.[44] In this text, of which the *NRF* immediately published some extracts, Valéry presents himself as "the first man who had seen this extraordinary work" and recalls with emotion that he had perceived in it "a spiritual tempest raging from page to page all the way to the extremities of thought": "Was I not present at an event of a universal order, and was this not, in its own way, the ideal spectacle of the Creation of Language being presented to me on this table, in this instant, by this so audacious being, this so simple, so sweet a man, so naturally noble and charming?"[45] In Spring 1897, he consults the corrected proofs of the poem and admires, without completely understanding, its vertiginous typographical dispositif. That evening, at the moment of leaving Mallarmé to return from Valvins to Paris, Valéry feels the world of the book and the book of the world transform themselves one into the other, the textual constellations of *Un coup de dés* superimposing themselves on the infinity of the celestial vault.

> The evening of the same day, as he accompanied me to my train, the infinite July firmament enclosing all things in a sparkling cluster of other worlds, and as we went, dark smokers amidst the Serpent, the Swan, the Eagle, the Lyre, it seemed to me that *now* I was taken into the very text of the silent universe: a text made entirely of clarity and of enigmas; as tragic, as indifferent as one could wish; which speaks and does not speak; a tissue of multiple meanings; which brings together order and disorder; which proclaims a God just as powerfully as it denies one; which contains in its unimaginable entirety all epochs, each one associated with a distant celestial body; which recalled the most decisive, most evident and uncontestable successes of men, the fulfilment of their predictions, — right up to the seventh decimal; and which crushes this conscious animal, the sagacious contemplator, under the uselessness of this triumph… We walked. In the hollow of such a night, between the remarks we exchanged, I thought of the marvelous attempt: what a model, what teaching above! Where Kant, rather naïvely perhaps, believed he saw the Moral Law, Mallarmé undoubtedly saw the Imperative of a poetry, a Poetic. This radiant dispersion; these pale and ardent bushes; these almost spiritual seeds, distinct and simultaneous; the immense interrogation proffered by this silence charged with so much life and so much death; all this, a glory by itself, a strange totality made of reality and contradictory ideals, should it not have suggested to someone the supreme temptation to *reproduce its effect!*
>
> — He has tried, I thought, *at last to raise a page to the power of the starry sky!*"[46]

In the conclusion to his *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant associates the contemplation of the nocturnal sky with the universality of ethical judgement: "Two things fill the mind with an ever new and increasing admiration, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them: *the starry heavens above be and the moral law within me*".[47] Their vision, the philosopher continued, brings me back to the consciousness

of my existence and to the value of my intelligence. In the disorders of the modern world, when violence seems to be imposing itself as law, contingency putting an end to the reign of necessity and the volatility of opinion dethroning the rigour of thought, Valéry judges that it is the proper of poetry rather than of philosophy to offer the image of a rediscovered cosmic unity. The sublime spectacle that *Un coup de dés* offers him seems in an instant to effect the transition from the sensible to the intelligible, from the material to the spiritual, from the contingent to the necessary, from the finite to the infinite. The proofs of Mallarmé's poem do not impose upon Valéry a simple aesthetic experience, but reveal to him the spiritual destination of man, that is, his capacity to raise himself above animality by the recognition of the absolute. At the same time as the sentiment of the infinity of worlds and the universality of reason, pure poetry, substituting itself for a moribund philosophy, transmits a wisdom that reminds man of his moral force and supports him in his resistance to the withering away of intellectual values and the erosion of a shared culture. This is "the sacred legacy of the memory, the manuscripts, the glory of Mallarmé".[48] The revelation of the ethical implications of "poetry that had deliberately separated itself",[49] that is, of an autonomous literature subtracted from the laws of the market as from the prose of universal reportage, constitutes Valéry's contribution to the political interpretations of Mallarmé, which will multiply in the second half of the century. Asked about the relations between literature and politics, Valéry moreover remarked: "It happens that, unbeknownst to itself, the Ivory Tower emits powerful waves".[50]

Mallarmé in 1940: Henri Mondor and Maurice Blanchot

In the years preceding the centenary of his birth, which will be celebrated despite the German Occupation, the times when "the name Mallarmé was basically a sign for a cenacle to be placed in a museum of curiosities"[51] seem far behind. From 1937, an academy bears his name, whose founders, who count amongst their ranks Paul Valéry, hope that it will be for poetry what the Goncourt Academy is for prose. For a decade, the testimonials of former disciples have multiplied, including Jean Royère's *Mallarmé*, Camille Mauclair's *Mallarmé chez lui*, and Edouard Dujardin's *Mallarmé par un des siens*.[52] In his study *De Baudelaire au surréalisme*, Marcel Raymond demonstrated his influence on contemporary poetry.[53] Thirty years after Thibaudet's monograph, new exegeses appear, such as *L'Œuvre poétique de Stéphane Mallarmé* by Emilie Noulet and *Mallarmé l'obscur* by Charles Mauron.[54] The consecration of Mallarmé, underway since the beginning of the 1930's, would nevertheless not have been the same without the devotion of doctor Henri Mondor. In 1941, less than a year after the defeat of the French troops, the first volume of his *Vie de Mallarmé* is published by Gallimard. Punctuated by large extracts of correspondence and previously unpublished versions of poems and prose works, his biography is a summa from which Mallarmé criticism will draw for decades to come. The *NRF* immediately praises this "rich and passionate biography, which allows us to bet-

ter know and, as a consequence, better love one of the Princes of the French spirit, whose work will not cease to grow in importance and influence".[55] In the *Figaro*, the book is recognized as "the work that commands all of the others on the shelf of Mallarmé studies".[56] Twenty years later, after thirty re-editions of the biography, it will still be said of Mondor that he was the first "to give Mallarmé a real life, a biography and a face",[57] as if, in an inverse filiation, the biographer had given an incarnate form to a ghost who up to then had remained in Limbo. One year after the Liberation of Paris, in 1945, Mallarmé accedes finally to the prestigious 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade'. In their introduction, its editors, Henri Mondor and Georges Jean-Aubry, offer an observation about the time: "Preserved at once from the impudence of popularity and from all equivocal or noisy amplification, the glory of Stéphane Mallarmé is one of the purest. It shines at the greatest heights and more and more so".[58] His installation in the patrimonial collection of Gallimard, whose consecrating role is equivalent to that of the series 'Grands écrivains de la France' published by Hachette in the 19th century, is the culminating point for the transformation of Mallarmé into a monument of French literature.[59] "His glory is now that of a classic author",[60] Maurice Blanchot claims.

From 1940, Mallarmé figures in the pantheon of the great men of the country. This, at least, is what the foreword to *Vie de Mallarmé* would have us believe, where Mondor identifies the historical catastrophe with the occasion at which the "poet of the ivory tower" revealed himself to him as the sanctuary of the national memory and the guardian of French identity:

> On June 14th, 1940, when we saw the German regiments occupy Paris, some of the men who had remained from of a sense attachment to the city, by duty, or by a sedentary humour, went off in search of some opium from which they could expect an attenuation of their sorrow. We chose to study an existence that nobody had yet set out to recount and in which one finds, so as to reconcile oneself with life and with certain French prestiges, some extraordinary virtues. For twenty years, from bookstore to bookstore, from occasion to occasion, from chance to surprise, we had gathered manuscripts, letters, relics. Little by little, their reunion brought back to life the unpretentious adventure of a poet of the ivory tower.[61]

As if this allusion to the German invasion did not suffice, Mondor inscribes on the spine of the two volumes of his biography: "Paris 15th June 1950-15th December 1940".[62] The day after the arrival of Nazi troops and three days before General de Gaulle's appeal, the writing of the first volume of *Vie de Mallarmé* had begun; before its end, Mondor will have been the witness to the installation of the Vichy regime and its politics of collaboration with the German occupier. Everything happens as if the biographer, in these dark times, had found in Mallarmé a portion of Free France. Mondor responds to the military debacle inflicted by Germany by turning to "certain French prestiges" incarnated by a poet who was nevertheless withdrawn in his own life from any political engagement. For the biographer does not cease to affirm that Mallarmé, contrary to Victor Hugo, refused the submission of literature

to politics: he kept himself "far from the proletarian or megalomaniacal ardour of those utilitarian uses of poetry and of the beautiful".[63] Likewise, he assures us that Mallarmé, during the Franco-Prussian War, conserved an "elevated attitude" and commented very little on the events: "the contingencies, the opinions, the rivalries, remained foreign to him. He turned his gaze and his enthusiasms over and above the everyday and the human".[64] Commenting on the prose poem 'Conflict', in which Mallarmé, confronted by drunken workers who upset his retreat, wonders if he will give in to "a boxing match which would illustrate, on the lawn, the class struggle", Mondor passes over the social question in silence in order to appreciate only the talent of "a comic author of a taste and sparkle of which literature, in France, does not present us with many other examples".[65] The foundational paradox of political readings of Mallarmé, already present in Valéry, traverses Mondor's biography: the poet withdraws into an ivory tower from which he forever defends the kingdom of art for art's sake; yet this retreat, which keeps him at a distance from the conflicts and struggles of his time, circumscribes a place of resistance from which the injustices of the time can be opposed. Thus the poet becomes a *symbol*, no longer of a European spirit, as he was for Valéry, but of a national identity threatened by the violence of the second worldwide conflict. He incarnates what Charles de Gaulle will soon define as "a certain idea of France".[66]

The *Frenchness* of Mallarmé nevertheless did not go without saying. His work had for a long time been decried as a transgression of the genius of the language. In his lifetime, his poetry was described as Latin, Hebrew, Chinese, the difficulty of his syntax being associated with the transcription of a foreign language. In 1875, Georges Mayrant noted: "Previously, Boileau attacked Ronsard: *Whose French muse speaks Greek and Latin*. As for Monsieur Mallarmé, he has found the means of speaking American in French".[67] In 1989, Gide recognized that this "*a prioristic* and, as a consequence, uniquely French and Cartesian literature" borrowed a Latinate syntax "to the point that certain passages from *The Afternoon of a Faun* could give us a poetic emotion very similar to that which we seek in Virgil's *Eclogues*".[68] In 1912, Albert Thibaudet had left the question in suspense: "It will be necessary to determine to what degree the work of Mallarmé was or was not French".[69] Now, in 1941, there is no longer any doubt that Mallarmé and his work belong to the national memory and can henceforth signify, by metonymy, the French identity.[70] The nationalization of Mallarmé that occurs in the black years perfectly illustrates the two political functions of cultural memory. On the one hand, the canonization of works is the instrument of an *integration* inasmuch as it ensures that a community has a store of memory around which it can assemble itself through the recognition of a shared identity: Mallarmé recalls what France is at the moment of defeat, before the dilemma of collaboration and resistance imposes itself. On the other hand, it is the instrument of a *distinction* inasmuch as it undergirds the differentiation of one community with respect to its rivals: Mallarmé reminds us that the French are not the Germans and that the fascist ideology is foreign to them. Once it is inscribed in a shared memory, the work of Mallarmé no longer bears witness only to the Second

Empire and the Third Republic: it offers itself up to allegorical interpretations well beyond its time. His poetry, raised to the level of maxims and proverbs, enables one to state the conflicts and the struggles of the present, to reflect on the most burning actualities, and to discern the lines of fracture and legitimize political actions. It is thus that the authority of Mallarmé becomes that of a "professor of morals", as per the title of Michel Leiris' article in the clandestine *Les Lettres Françaises*.

Amongst the most influential actors in the nationalization of Mallarmé is Maurice Blanchot, a collaborator with diverse newspapers and journals of the far right during the 1930's, who abandons political journalism at the beginning of the Occupation so as to devote himself to literary criticism.[71] On April 16th, 1941, in the first 'Chronicle of intellectual life', which he writes for the *Journal des Débats*, a daily Vichyist newspaper, the memory of Mallarmé is associated once again with the shock of the defeat. Before evoking *Vie de Mallarmé*, Blanchot highlights the comfort that literature brings to the French, wounded and censored as they are by the recent course of events:

> Those scarred people who cannot express the feelings that disturb them retreat into reading. In particular, they seek in books, and even in difficult ones, an explanation of what they are. They turn with passion towards problems of which they had no idea. They thus think they are taking the measure of the mediocrities of their time, and they defend as they can their intellectual honour. There is more desperate pride than desire for amusement in such an attitude. It is a matter of abolishing time by considering human affairs in testimonials that cannot be effaced.[72]

Turning back to the editorial news of the last months, Blanchot reviews some "well-made, honestly composed books, which bear witness only to a certain fidelity to a certain mediocre tradition", before stopping, without any more enthusiasm, at tales of war, which "are too close to our own time to not participate in its enigmas". Certain works nevertheless merit being meditated upon "because they themselves have their own value and that they shed some serious light on the period we are living through".[73] Among these works is the biography of Mallarmé, which Blanchot claims will help his compatriots find "an explanation of what they are":

> The works that have received the most attention are works of intellectual and literary history. One cannot think too much of the work that Henri Mondor has just devoted to Stéphane Mallarmé: *Vie de Mallarmé* (Gallimard). It is the fruit of a long labour, and it is a happy labour. Doctor Mondor has gathered together admirable texts that clarify with an extraordinary light the destiny of this prince of the spirit. He has succeeded, thanks to patient work on a very large number of letters, in drawing words and even the confidences of the most silent of writers, the most unvarnished and the most capable of intellectual prudence. He has restituted the history of a man whose entire existence was in his work, itself close to nothingness by its very immensity. He has shown it in its simplicity and in its pride. Today, it represents for the

> mind a simple yet agreeable revenge to contemplate a man who in complete and obscure solitude knew how to dominate the world by the exercise of a power of absolute expression.[74]

Following Mondor, Blanchot believes that France's wounded pride can console itself in the life of Mallarmé: after the trauma of defeat, the destiny of the poet appears as "a simple yet agreeable revenge". Some weeks later, Blanchot reprises his argument. On May 26th, he notes the contribution of Paul Valéry to *La France et la civilisation contemporaine*, a collective work published by Flammarion. Valéry was interrogating "the spiritual work of France" and explained that the identity of the nation could not be circumscribed for lack of being able to "define or to create a BEING, an AUTHOR, who would be called FRANCE and who, in the course of a career of a thousand years, would have published this quantity of monuments, of precious works of all kinds, of expressions of intelligence or knowledge, which we consider our capital of pride and tradition".[75] Now, Blanchot takes up this anthropomorphic fiction to argue that "the French spirit" never manifests itself as powerfully as it does in poetry. Reprising a formula from the portrait of Mallarmé that the biography of Mondor had inspired in him, he explains that French poetry, "from Maurice Scève to Paul Eluard", has known how "with a curious happiness to associate the concern for dominating the universe of with a concern for submitting oneself via this very domination to the real universe".[76] And if it is true that the French spirit distinguishes itself by a poetic language that, far from reducing itself to an ornamental passion, exerts its power over the order of beings, of things and of the world, it is the work of Mallarmé which incarnates this language with the greatest force and purity.

> There are certainly very few literatures in which a poet, without the slightest delirium, by the simple effect of a rigorous meditation on forms, has been able to envisage the writing of a book that was the veritable equivalent of the absolute. This ambition, the torment and the glory of Stéphane Mallarmé, purifies French letters of many of the mediocrities that the vanity of writers brings to them. When we think of the author of *Un coup de dés*, we say to ourselves that literary pride, so characteristic of our spirit, is a phenomenon of which we need not to be ashamed since there is in our literature some texts which have demanded and which, to a certain degree, have succeeded in taking the place of universal creation.[77]

The nationalization of Mallarmé, as exemplified by Blanchot, borrows from two distinct regimes for the construction of grandeur. The first, which is Romantic in inspiration, considers works as monuments that bear witness to the permanence and specificity of the national genius. The second, firmly rooted in classicism, sings the praises of the universality of works, which belong *de facto* to the patrimony of humanity.[78] According to the commentaries of Mondor and Blanchot, the work of Mallarmé is French because it is universal and, inversely, it is universal because it is French. This paradox, which is common to the critical discourse of the time, is manifest also in Thierry Maulnier's *Introduction à la poésie française*, which argues

that, with respect to European poetries, the characteristic trait of French poetry is a concern for purity that strips it of all picturesque subject matter and all patriotic rhetoric, so as to raise it to the level of a clear consciousness of the art of language: "the homeland of French poetry is less France than literature".[79] In order to incarnate the genius of France, the writer does not have to illustrate the national legend nor win the appreciation of his contemporaries: following Mallarmé, it suffices for him to meditate, at a distance from the contingencies of his time, on the secret of a poetry capable of dominating the world by the sole power of language. In an article in *Les Temps Modernes* entitled 'The Nationalisation of Literature', Sartre underscores with irony the compensatory function that literature has taken on amongst a number of writers and critics humiliated by defeat, such as Mondor and Blanchot: "In their hearts, they do not stop wishing that France will become again the country of Turenne and of Bonaparte, but in the interim they fall back on Rimbaud or Valéry. Literature becomes in their eyes an activity of substitution".[80]

As Bergson remarked, there exists in all memory "dominant memories on which other memories lean on as supporting points".[81] In the second half of the 20th century, the political memory of Mallarmé will be integrated into two chains of memory, which the interpretations of Valéry, Mondor and Blanchot allow us to identify. On the one hand, the exegeses that will be proposed of Mallarmé by allegorical interpretations will be inscribed in the lineage of the speculative aesthetics of German Romanticism, which favour the appropriation of practical reason by poetic reason. They will consider the work of Mallarmé as a philosophical hieroglyph that demands to be deciphered and whose interpretations clarify not only the fractures of the present but also the promise of emancipation. In so doing, they will recuperate the principle of Valéry's politics of the spirit: Mallarmé's work, folded in on its regulatory idea and raised to its maximal autonomy, will impose itself as an historical power that sketches the ethical and political foundations of a community to come. This Romantic politics will impose itself from Maurice Blanchot to Jacques Rancière, passing by Philippe Sollers and the avant-garde of the journal *Tel Quel*. On the other hand, Mallarmé's posthumous destiny will for a long time bear the traces of the climate of deep identitarian uncertainty and intense ideological polarization that surrounded his entry into the pantheon of great French writers. The nationalization of his work under the Occupation will contribute to Mallarmé becoming associated with the memory of the Resistance, in conformity with the myth of a France that had risen up against the German invader. Thus, when, at the Collège de France, Roland Barthes will evoke a "*political* reception of Mallarmé", it will be after having affirmed that language is "neither reactionary nor progressive" but "quite simply fascist" due to the fact that it engenders at once "servility and power".[82] Mallarmé's restricted action will be conceived of as a contestatory engagement, which subtracts itself from the collaborationist gregariousness of universal reportage so as to better oppose itself to the ideological discourses through which an inherently conservative and authoritarian power is reproduced. This contestatory politics will become manifest once again at the close of the century in the readings of Alain

Badiou and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. It is thus at the meeting point between a philosophical tradition that sacralizes the historical power of literature and a political mythology that conceives the engagement of literature on the model of a resistance to power that there appears, more than a century after the death of the poet, the allegorical readings of "comrade Mallarmé".

Notes

1. This article is an abridged version of the chapter 'L'invention d'une politique de la lecture', in *Camarade Mallarmé. Une politique de la lecture* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 2014), pp. 19-63.

2. Jean-Pierre Faye, 'Le Camarade "Mallarmé"', *L'Humanité*, September 12, 1969, p. 9.

3. Roland Barthes, 'Inaugural Lecture, Collège de France', in *A Barthes Reader* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 466.

4. Michel de Certeau, 'Lire: un braconnage', *L'Invention du quotidien. I. Arts de faire* (Paris, Gallimard, 1990), pp. 239-255; Jean-Marie Goulemot, 'La lecture comme production de sens', in eds. Roger Chartier, *Pratiques de lecture* (Paris: Payot, 2003), pp. 119-130; Michel Charles, *Introduction à l'étude des textes* (Paris: Seuil, 1995); Pierre Bayard, *Enquête sur Hamlet. Le Dialogue de sourds* (Paris: Minuit, 2002).

5. Antoine Compagnon, 'Allégorie et philologie', in eds. Anna Dolfi and Carla Locatelli, *Retorica e interpretazione* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1994), pp. 191-202.

6. Gustave Lanson, 'L'histoire littéraire et le sociologie', *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, vol. 12, 1904, p. 622.

7. Ibid., p. 631.

8. Michel de Certeau, *Histoire et psychanalyse entre science et fiction* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), pp. 85-88.

9. Antoine Compagnon, *Chat en poche. Montaigne et l'allégorie* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993), p. 50.

10. André Rousseaux, 'C'est la faute à Voltaire ou la querelle des mauvais maîtres', *Le Figaro*, September 8, 1940. On this polemic, see Wolfgang Babilas, 'La querelle des mauvais maîtres', *La Littérature française sous l'Occupation* (Reims: Presses universitaires de Reims, 1989), pp. 197-226; Gisèle Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains. 1940-1953* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), pp. 161-207.

11. Camille Mauclair, 'Pour l'assainissement littéraire', *La Gerbe*, no. 26, January 2, 1941.

12. Thierry Maulnier, 'Les "intellectuels" sont-ils responsables du désastre ?', *Candide*, No. 899, June 4, 1941.

13. 'Mallarmé, professeur de morale', *Les Lettres Françaises*, No. 9, September 1943.

14. Henri Mondor, 'Un sonnet inédit de Mallarmé'; Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Sonnet'; Marcel Raymond, 'Mallarmé', *Poésie 42*, No. 9, May-June 1942, pp. 63-70.

15. André Gide, 'Saint Mallarmé l'ésotérique', *Le Figaro*, March 14, 1942; *Essais critiques*, ed. P. Masson (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), pp. 367-372.

16. It is more than twenty years after its publication that the text is re-edited in his name: Michel Leiris, 'Mallarmé, professeur de morale' in *Brisées* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), pp. 82-83.

17. Michel Leiris, *Journal, 1922-1989*, ed. J. Janin (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), pp. 335-337.

18. Ibid., p. 346.

19. Michel Leiris, 'Ce que parler veut dire', *Les Lettres Francaises*, October 28, 1944; reproduced as an appendix to *La Règle du jeu*, ed. D. Hollier (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), pp. 1266-1267.

20. Jean-Paul Sartre, 'La République de silence', *Les Lettres françaises*, September 9, 1944; *Situations, III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 14.

21. Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Présentation', *Les Temps modernes*, No. 1, October 1945; republished in *Situations II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), p. 11.

22. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature ?* [1947], *Situations, II*, *op. cit.*, p. 61, 161.

23. Michel Leiris, *Journal*, *op. cit.*, p. 422.

24. Jacques Rivière, 'La Nouvelle Revue française', *La Nouvelle Revue française*, No. 69, June 1, 1919, pp. 10-11.

25. Camille Mauclair, *Mallarmé chez lui* (Paris: Grasset, 1935) p. 29.

26. Paul Valéry, 'Existence du Symbolisme', [1938], *Œuvres I*, ed. J. Hytier (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), p. 688.

27. Ibid., p. 693.

28. Ibid., p. 704.

29. Ibid., p. 690.

30. Ibid., p. 690. Valéry's emphasis.

31. Paul Valéry, 'Lettre sur Mallarmé' [1927], *Œuvres, I*, *op. cit.*, p. 641.

32. Paul Valéry, 'L'Existence du Symbolisme', [1938], *Œuvres I*, *op. cit.*, p. 691.

33. Ibid., p. 705.

34. Paul Valéry, 'Avant-propos', "Regards sur le monde actuel", *Œuvres II*, ed. J. Hytier (Paris: Gallimard, 1960) p. 917.

35. Paul Valéry, 'La crise de l'esprit', [1919], *Œuvres I*, *op. cit.*, p. 990. On this claim regarding crisis and the solutions envisaged by the author of *La Jeune Parque*, see 'La politique de l'esprit. Notre souverain bein' [1933], *Œuvres I*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1014-1040, and 'La liberté de l'esprit' [1939], *Œuvres II*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1077-1099. See also: Marc Fumaroli 'Pouvoir temporel et pouvoir spirituel. Renan, Valéry et la politique de l'esprit', *Exercises de lecture. De Rabelais à Valéry* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), pp. 755-776.

36. See notably: Michael Winock, 'Les Affaires Dreyfus', *Vingtième siècle*, no. 5, January-March 1985, pp. 19-38; and *Le Siècle des intellectuels* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2006).

37. Jean Paulhan, *Les Fleurs de Tarbes ou la Terreur dans les Lettres* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), p. 29.

38. Ernst Behler, 'The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism', in *Philosophy of German Idealism: Ficthe, Jacobi and Schelling* (London/New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 162 (*Translation modified*).

39. Paul Valéry, "Stéphane Mallarmé," *Œuvres I*, *op. cit.*, p. 674.

40. Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *L'Art de l'âge moderne. L'esthétique et la philosophie de l'art du XVIIIème siècle à nos jours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992). In 1891, Jean Thorel had already highlighted "the striking resemblance" between German Romanticism and French Symbolism and had underscored the fact that "in such a manner of conceiving poetry, art, philosophy and religion end quickly by being confused": 'Les romantiques allemands et les symbolistes français', *Entretiens politiques et littéraires*, vol. III, no. 18, September 1891, p. 1457.

41. Paul Valéry, 'Poésie pure. Note pour une conférence', *Œuvres, I, op. cit.*, p. 1437.

42. Paul Valéry, 'Discours sur Henri Bremond', *Œuvres, I, op. cit.*, p. 766.

43. Albert Thibaudet, 'Etats généraux', *Nouvelle Revue Française*, no. 160, January 1927, p. 105.

44. On this episode see Thierry Roger, *L'Archive du* Coup de dés. *Etude critique de la réception d*'Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard *de Stéphane Mallarmé (1897-2007)* (Paris: Gariner, 2010), pp. 182-198.

45. Paul Valéry, "Le *Coup de dés*. Lettre au directeur des *Marges*," *Œuvres, I, op. cit.*, p. 624.

46. Ibid., p. 625. Valéry's emphasis.

47. Emmanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 133.

48. Paul Valéry, "Réponse à une enquête (sur la chose littéraire et la chose pratique)," *Œuvres I, op. cit.*, p. 1149.

49. Paul Valéry, "Stéphane Mallarmé," in *Collected Works of Paul Valéry, Volume 8: Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé*, *op. cit.*, p. 675.

50. Paul Valéry, "Réponse à une enquête (sur la chose littéraire et la chose pratique)," *Œuvres I*, *op. cit.*, p. 1149.

51. Albert Thibaudet, "Epilogue à la poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé," *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, "Hommage à Stéphane Mallarmé," no. 158, November 1, 1926, p. 553.

52. Jean Royère, *Mallarmé* (Paris: Messein, 1931); Camille Mauclair, *Mallarmé chez lui* (Paris: Grasset, 1935); Edouard Dujardin, *Mallarmé par un des siens* (Paris: Messein, 1936).

53. Marcel Raymond, *De Baudelaire au surréalisme. Essai sur le mouvement poétique contemporain* (Paris: Corrêa, 1933); nouvelle édition revue et remaniée (Paris: José Corti, 1940).

54. Emilie Noulet, *L'Œuvre poétique de Stéphane Mallarmé* (Paris: Droz, 1940); Charles Mauron, *Mallarmé l'obscur* (Paris: Denoël, 1941).

55. André Rolland de Renéville, "*Vie de Mallarmé*, by Henri Mondor," *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, no. 326, April 1, 1941, p. 635.

56. André Rousseaux, "Mallarmé 1942," *Le Figaro*, March 14, 1942.

57. Jean-Pierre Richard, *L'Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1961), p. 13.

58. Henri Mondor and Georges Jean-Aubry, 'Introduction' in Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, eds. H. Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. IX.

59. Alain Viala, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un classique ?', *Bulletin des Bibliothèques de France*, vol. 37, no. 1, 1992, pp. 6-15; Jacques Dubois, 'Le Sacre des écrivains', in *La Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Travail éditorial et valeur littéraire*, eds. Joëlle Gleize and Philippe Roussin (Paris: Editions des archives contemporaines, 2009), pp. 67-73.

60. Maurice Blanchot, "The Myth of Mallarmé,"in *The Work of Fire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 27.

61. Henri Mondor, *Vie de Mallarmé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), p. 7.

62. Ibid., p. 318.

63. Ibid., p. 123.

64. Ibid., p. 305.

65. Ibid., p. 359.

66. Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre. L'Appel: 1940-1942* (Paris: Presses Pocket, 1999), p. 7.

67. Georges Mayrant, 'Revue du jour', *Le Gaulois*, June 9, 1975. Reprised in Bertrand Marchal, *Mallarmé* (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne, 1998), p. 88.

68. André Gide, "Stéphane Mallarmé," *L'Ermitage*, October 1898. Reprised in *Essais critiques*, *op. cit.*, p. 831.

69. Albert Thibaudet, *La Poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé. Etude littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), p. 19.

70. Some years later, Jacques Schérer will moreover refuse any English influence on the poet and will minimize the importance of the Latinisms in his "literary expression". Jacques Schérer, 'L'influence anglaise', 'L'influence latine', *L'Expression littéraire dans l'œuvre de Mallarmé* (Paris: Nizet, 1947), pp. 19-33 and pp. 33-36.

71. On the political interpretations that Blanchot proposes of the work and the experience of analysis, I take the liberty of referring to the second chapter of my book ('Le terroriste de la dialectique', *Camarade Mallarmé*, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-106) and to my contribution to the recent *Cahier de l'Herne:* 'Mallarmé pour comprendre le siècle', in *Maurice Blanchot*, eds. Eric Hoppenot and Dominique Rabaté (Paris: L'Herne, 2014) pp. 255-260.

72. Maurice Blanchot, 'Chronqiue de la vie intellectuelle', *Journal des Débats*, April 16 1941. Reprised in *Chroniques littéraires du Journal des Débats*, ed. Ch. Bident (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), p. 11.

73. Ibid., pp. 12-13.

74. Ibid., p. 13.

75. Paul Valéry, "Pensée et art français," [1941], *Œuvres II*, *op. cit.*, p. 1047.

76. Maurice Blanchot, 'La France et la civilisation contemporaine', *Le Journal des Débats*, May 26, 1941. Reprised in *Chroniques littéraires du Journal des Débats*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

77. Ibid.

78. Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La Création des identités nationales. Europe XVIIIème-XXème siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1999); 'Communautés immaginées et littératures', *Romantisme*, no. 143, 2009, pp. 61-68.

79. Thierry Maulnier, *Introduction à la poésie française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1939), p. 36.

80. Jean-Paul Sartre, 'La nationalisation de la littérature', *Les Temps modernes*, no. 2, November 1945; *Situations II*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

81. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Dover, 2004), p. 223.

82. Roland Barthes, "Inaugural Lecture, Collège de France," in *A Barthes Reader*, *op. cit.*, p. 461.